

Constitutional Court tells SASSA it has more to answer for

The Department of Social Development has welcomed the decision of the Constitutional Court to request more information on the supplementary report from the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) regarding the payment of social grants.



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The Constitutional Court has given SASSA until Monday, 12 March, to answer questions regarding the payment of grants.

Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng on Wednesday ordered SASSA to provide information on who was responsible for deciding that the agency cannot pay grants itself after March 2017 and the date when that person realised that SASSA could not pay grants itself.

SASSA presently relies on Cash Paymaster Services (CPS) to deliver grants to 17 million beneficiaries. The CPS contract expires on 31 March 2017. While SASSA is still in talks with CPS, an agreement has not been signed yet.

“Minister Bathabile Dlamini has instructed the department and SASSA to work around the clock to provide the necessary information required by the Constitutional Court. The department and SASSA are committed to providing the public with

further updates on progress in this regard.

“[The Minister] also wishes to take this opportunity to reassure all grant beneficiaries that they will receive their social grant money on 1 April 2017,” the department said in a statement on Thursday.

The Constitutional Court had previously made a ruling that the contract between SASSA and CPS was invalid and ordered a rerun of the tender process. However, CPS was allowed to continue to fulfil its contractual obligations so that social grants payments would not be disrupted.

DA’s motion to join Black Sash dismissed

Meanwhile, the department also welcomed the court’s decision to dismiss what it says is an opportunistic decision by the Democratic Alliance (DA) to join in the court application by Black Sash.

Black Sash wants the court to force the department and SASSA to make a full disclosure of the costs and arrangements between SASSA and CPS for the payment of social grants from next month.

Black Sash also asked the court to compel both SASSA and Minister Dlamini to ensure that the rights of beneficiaries are protected when the agency enters into a new contract with CPS.

The court on Wednesday dismissed the DA’s request to join Black Sash’s court application.

The department, however, said it does not intend to oppose the application by Black Sash, which “seeks to essentially protect the rights of the social grant beneficiaries”.

“These relate to the protection of personal data of social grant beneficiaries as well as illegal deductions.

“The department has always contended that the Constitutional Court is best placed to deal with the matter at hand because social assistance in South Africa is a human right enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa,” said the department.

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