



**WOMEN'S
LEGAL
CENTRE**

2nd Floor, 5 St Georges
St Georges Mall
Cape Town
8001

+27 21 424 5660

info@wlce.co.za

www.wlce.co.za

MEDIA STATEMENT

12 January 2025

Historic Sexual Harassment Tribunal Against Judge President of the Eastern Cape

For the first time in South Africa, a sexual harassment complaint against a judicial officer will be heard at a Tribunal constituted under the Judicial Service Commission (JSC) Act 9 of 1994.

The complaint was lodged by a judge's secretary who was repeatedly sexually harassed by the Judge President of the Eastern Cape. The matter was reported to the Office of the Chief Justice, which, recognizing the gravity of the allegations, referred it to the Judicial Conduct Committee (JCC) for further inquiry.

The Women's Legal Centre (WLC) represented the complainant during the JCC inquiry, providing both oral and written submissions. The JCC found that the complainant had established a **prima facie** case which, if substantiated, could lead to a finding of gross misconduct by the Judge President. The matter was subsequently referred to a Tribunal in terms of the JSC Act.

Details of the Complaint

Our client has been working in the Department of Justice for over eleven years and was subjected to ongoing harassment by the Judge President, resulting in severe emotional, physical, financial, and psychological harm. This conduct violated her constitutional rights to dignity, equality, and a safe working environment.

Tribunal Proceedings

The Tribunal is scheduled to run from **13 January to 24 January 2025**. It is mandated to:

- Facilitate the inquiry into the allegations of gross misconduct as outlined in section 177 of the Constitution.
- Collect and evaluate evidence related to the complaint.
- Conduct formal hearings and determine the merits of the allegations under the JSC Act and applicable rules.
- Submit a report of its findings to the Judicial Service Commission (JSC), which will decide whether the Judge President is guilty of gross misconduct and whether this constitutes an impeachable offense.

ACTING DIRECTOR: Charlene May

LEGAL PRACTITIONERS: B Pithey, C Blouws, A Stemele, K Motileni, K Managa, S Madlala

NPO NUMBER: 032-685 NPO

PBO AND SECTION 18A: 930 00 242

VAT NUMBER: 419 025 3296



WLC's Role and Expectations

The Women's Legal Centre, represented by Attorney Chriscy Blouws and Junior Associate Andrea-Joy Jantjies, will be present at the Tribunal, supporting our client and advocating for fair, transparent processes that ensure justice for victims of sexual harassment.

Attorney Chriscy Blouws states: *"Powerful men often succeed in silencing victims, particularly in workplaces like the legal profession, where systemic power imbalances are entrenched. Our client's courage to come forward underscores the urgency of creating workplaces where women feel safe and protected."*

The Tribunal's outcome will be pivotal in shaping accountability within the judiciary and the legal profession. This case highlights the need for judicial processes that understand the complexities of sexual harassment, including its power dynamics and devastating impact on victims.

WLC hopes this process will restore confidence in the judiciary and inspire other women in the legal profession to speak out. Sexual harassment is rife in South African workplaces, including the judiciary and legal profession. It is imperative that this Tribunal acknowledges sexual harassment as gross misconduct and establishes it as wholly unacceptable in any workplace.

About the Women's Legal Centre

The Women's Legal Centre is an African feminist legal organisation that advances women's rights and equality through litigation, advocacy, education, legal advice, research, and training.

For media enquiries:

Contact Moenieba Abrahams at 082 512 0000 or email communications@wlce.co.za

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