

Woman sentenced for R16m theft

Lizette Marielle Steyn, 56, has been sentenced to at least 12 years imprisonment after being found guilty of 85 counts of theft.



Image source: sakhorn saengtongsamarnsin – [123RF.com](https://www.123RF.com)

The former Finance and Administration Manager of AgriCAD was sentenced in the Pretoria Specialised Commercial Crimes Court.

National Prosecuting Authority spokesperson Lumka Mahanjana explained that Steyn was arrested in July last year.

“Steyn was employed by AgriCAD [and her] responsibilities, amongst others, were to load the creditors for payment on the business bank account monthly and do the day-to-day bookkeeping and accounting. As such Steyn had full access to the AgriCAD Absa bank accounts.

“During her employment, Steyn would change the details of one of the AgriCAD Absa bank accounts and replace it with her six different personal Capitec accounts.

“From 27 October 2020 until 09 May 2023, 85 different payments of over R16m for the company were paid into her personal bank accounts. With the funds, Steyn installed solar panels in her house and bought luxury items, a caravan, and a vehicle for her son-in-law. She also paid for her daughter’s wedding, and her family’s weekends away and holidays,” she said.



Former Eskom contract employee arrested for fraud, corruption

15 May 2023



Plea for leniency

Mahanjana said Steyn pleaded guilty to charges against her and explained that she “stole the money to pay debts because her husband lost his job”.

The thief then asked the court to consider leniency upon sentencing due to her ill-health and the fact that she is a first time offender.

“However, the prosecutor, advocate Rachelle van der Walt, argued that as much as Steyn was a first-time offender, her offences were committed over three years. Furthermore, Steyn was in a position of trust, her employer trusted her, but she betrayed that trust and was not hesitant to hide her dishonest conduct.

“She opened Capitec accounts in her name which she used to receive the stolen money for luxurious items and extravagant lifestyles. Therefore, Adv van der Walt asked the court to consider long-term imprisonment when imposing the sentence.

While delivering the sentence, Magistrate Ignatius du Preez said Steyn was left with no option but to plead guilty.

“Her change of heart and acknowledgement of her criminal conduct originated from being caught and not from her true inner feelings of regret. Therefore, she had no choice but to concede defeat.

“Steyn committed the offence when she was at an age where it was expected of her to be able to distinguish between right from wrong, but she failed dismally. Furthermore, courts are increasingly faced with the situation where offenders with medical challenges commit serious offences, and such illness cannot be used as a license to commit crime,” du Preez said.

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