

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FOR WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION NO 466

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466. Mr M M Swathe (DA) to ask the Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry:

- (1) Whether her department is taking any measures to promote adaptation to climate change in the water sector; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details;
- (2) whether a study has been conducted to determine the costs the water sector will incur in adapting to climate change; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details;
- (3) whether any measures are being examined to finance adaptation to climate in the water sector; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details?

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REPLY:

- (1) Yes.

Measures that were taken by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry to promote adaptation to climate change include research undertaken in collaboration with the Water Research Commission to understand the science and effects of climate change including studies on impacts, vulnerabilities, scenarios and adaptation. As part of implementation of research results, model projections that indicated the likelihood of reduction in rainfall in the south western part of the Western Cape, was considered in our planning for future water requirements in that region.

As the impact of climate change will be gradual; continuous reassessments are made of the risk of supplies and appropriate adjustments are made to implement measures to ensure water availability. These measures include increasing bulk water storage such as the building of additional dams (e.g. Berg River Dam), increasing capacity of existing dams (e.g. the raising of Flag Boshielo Dam wall) or injection of water into aquifers (i.e. underground rock formations that store and transmit water) to increase underground storage (e.g. artificial recharge in Prince Albert). Demand management strategies, including water conservation campaigns, eradication of invasive vegetation and development of operating rules for reservoirs to ensure efficient water use, are other adaptation options undertaken by the Department to build resilience against climate change effects.

Attention is also given to ensure that a monitoring network is in place to measure the actual effects of climate change accurately and to ensure that this information is readily available.

(2) No.

My Department has not undertaken studies to specifically determine costs that are likely to be incurred in adaptation to climate change. However, our budget for infrastructure development, operation and maintenance for the economy and social needs of South Africa increased from R336 million in 2005/2006 to R1,6 billion in 2008/09 markedly informed by our commitment to cater for the multiple stresses on water resources including climate change impacts.

(3) Yes.

Funds have been secured with donor organisations to undertake investigations in the Orange Basin, amongst other to identify climate change adaptation strategies, including funding thereof. These investigations are to take place over the next three years.