

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FOR ORAL REPLY ON WEDNESDAY, 12 MARCH 2008

QUESTION NO 59

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★59. Mr J J Combrinck (ANC) to ask the Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry:

- (1) What programme has been established by her department in spending the money set aside for water quality and infrastructure refurbishment;
- (2) whether her department has done any audit on water quality and infrastructure refurbishment; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details? NO878E

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REPLY:

(1)

The programmes of the department dealing with Water Quality are:

(1) The Directorate of Resource Protection and Waste deals with:

- Policy, strategy and guideline development
- Water use authorisations
- Rehabilitation of abandoned mines

(b) The Directorate Resource Quality Services are responsible for a number of national water resource quality monitoring programmes, which are either operational or in a pilot implementation or developmental phase.

National Water Resource Quality Monitoring Programmes:

- National Microbial Monitoring Programme (NMMP)
- National Eutrophication Monitoring Programme (NEMP)
- National Chemical Monitoring Programme (NCMP)
- Global Environmental Monitoring Systems (GEMS)
- National Aquatic Ecosystem Health Monitoring Programme (NAEHMP) (of which the River Health Programme (RHP) forms a component)
- National Radioactivity Monitoring Programme (NRMP)
- National Toxicity Monitoring Programme (NTMP)
- National Groundwater Monitoring Programme (NGMP)
- National Hydrological Monitoring Programme (NHMP)
- Dam Wall Safety Programme
- National Alien Vegetation Monitoring programme
- Sediment Monitoring Programme
- River Conservation Monitoring Programme

The objectives of these programmes are to determine and report on the status of, and trends in, the quantity and quality of South Africa's surface and groundwater resources. The design of these programmes is based on scientific systems where design principles and data collection are subject to strict quality control measures.

With regard to drinking water quality the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry has established the Drinking

Water Quality Programme which includes all municipalities designated as water services authorities (WSAs). This programme aims at regulating drinking water quality compliance levels with the standards as outlined in the national standard (SANS 241:2006). Compliance with this standard would mean that the water is safe for human consumption and this intervention has seen a huge improvement in the way municipalities are performing their responsibility to manage the quality of drinking water.

Drinking water quality audits are being conducted and in cases where failures are detected the relevant institutions (WSAs) are notified and requested to implement appropriate measures to rectify the problems. Regulatory assessments of drinking water quality systems are initiated when the available information indicates possible inadequacies. During these assessments the condition and operability of the treatment facility and process controllers would be assessed to inform the recommendations made to the Authority for implementation. The process for notification of non-compliance is guided by the Enforcement Protocol for Organs of State which DWAF has developed to serve as a regulatory tool.

One of DWAF's most effective initiatives in the drinking water quality management domain was the supply of an electronic water quality management system to all municipalities which allows municipal management to have access to regular reporting on drinking water quality management. We are in the process of extending this functionality to provide for waste water quality management as well.

Infrastructure

In terms of national infrastructure DWAF is well advanced in developing a comprehensive asset register. Based on its commitment to ensure effective management, DWAF initiated a study to investigate the condition of its works including dam safety issues. Based on this study, the need was identified to improve the situation which resulted in special funding being allocated to DWAF by National Treasury, to address the National water infrastructure needs.

A plan is in place to do the necessary rehabilitation and refurbishments and in 2006 we set aside R1.3 billion over a five year period to ensure that our dams are maintained and they are in line with international standards. The maintenance programmes has already commenced with repair work on 42 of the dams.

A new directorate, Strategic Asset Management has been established to focus on the planning and implementation of major refurbishment and rehabilitation projects on the existing infrastructure. Examples of such projects include the Dam Safety Rehabilitation Programme, Rehabilitation of the Vlakfontein Canal and Gamtoos Irrigation Schemes in the Central and Southern Operations, respectively.

(2) Yes.

a) DWAF developed comprehensive assessment criteria, which covered resources, institutional aspects, infrastructure and condition, finances, functionality and operations as well as outcome which includes environmental, health risks and compliance.

b) DWAF assessed 51 water works representing medium to small systems in each province.

The results assist us in making other interventions, like:

- Extending the criteria to also include ownership and governance.
- Extending this assessment to all Waste Water Treatment Works in South Africa. To this extent we are establishing a data base on Waste Water Treatment Works.
- Developing a Waste Water Management monitoring system which not only covers licence compliance but also ownership, management, etc. A first level system is already in place, e.g. Free State.
- Developing with various provincial studies, assessment and strategies e.g. Free State.
- The system and assessments have been developed to facilitate appropriate intervention e.g. financial, operation maintenance, institutional, planning, water resources, infrastructure (refurbishment, replacement and new), discipline as well as regulate.

- A special Bulk Infrastructure Fund has been established.
- Other interventions include institutional support, training, one-on-one intervention.