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water affairs

Department:
Water Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MINISTRY OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS
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Enquiries: Mr H. Muller
 Telephone: 012-336-6567
 Reference: 2/1/5/1

MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY: QUESTION 1268 FOR WRITTEN REPLY

A draft reply to the above mentioned question asked by Mr M W Rabotapi (DA) is attached for your consideration.

Pearl
 ACTING DIRECTOR-GENERAL

DATE: 29/04/2011

DRAFT REPLY APPROVED/AMENDED

BEE
 MRS B E E MOLEWA, MP
 MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

DATE:

Act urgently and return for final sign off 2/5/2011.

2



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ACTING DIRECTOR-GENERAL

DATE:

DRAFT REPLY APPROVED/AMENDED

9 ✓
Amend under 3 & 5 of the response on pg 2 and send off

[Signature]
MRS B E E MOLEWA, MP
MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

DATE: 20.5.2011

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FOR WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION NO 1268

DATE OF PUBLICATION IN INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 15 APRIL 2011
(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 11)

1268. Mr M W Rabotapi (DA) to ask the Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs:

- (1) What is the maximum permitted quantity of fluoride that is permitted in water;
- (2) whether water is regularly tested to determine that fluoride levels do not exceed maximum permitted levels; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details;
- (3) whether she has been informed of any studies to determine the health effects of fluoride in water; if not, why not; if so, what were the outcomes of these studies;
- (4) whether there has been any cases of (a) dental and (b) skeletal fluorosis as a result of the consumption of fluoride in drinking water; if not, how was this conclusion reached; if so, what are the relevant details;
- (5) whether she intends reviewing the addition of fluoride to drinking water; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details?

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REPLY:

- (1) The SA Drinking Water Standards (SANS 241:2005) specifies a maximum allowable concentration for fluoride of 1.0 mg/l (milligram per litre) which is actually more stringent than the World Health Organization (WHO) guideline for drinking water over the long term, which is 1.5 mg/l maximum for fluoride.
- (2) Municipalities use various SANAS (South African National Accreditation System) accredited laboratories to monitor hundreds of thousands of water quality samples around the country. Fluoride is one of the chemical attributes that is analysed in drinking water and is monitored to ensure compliance with SANS 241 and the results of compliance is reflected in the annual Blue Drop Reports.
- (3) Officials in the Department have informed me that the Water Research Commission (WRC), in partnership with the Department, has conducted research and published a booklet called "Quality of Domestic Water Supplies, Volume 1: Assessment Guide" (see attached hard copy) which lists all the determinants that need to be monitored and indicate if they have health effects or aesthetic effects. There was another report published by the WRC titled: "Feasibility of water fluoridation for South Africa" (available on the WRC website as report number TT 222/04.) I can confirm that a briefing was held by CSIR with parliamentary Monitoring Group on 25 August 2004. This information is available in more detail on <http://www.pmp.org.za/minutes/20040824-council-scientific-and-industrial-research-csir-briefing>.

Medical and dental issues were addressed (including dental and skeletal fluorosis) and fluoride thresholds were established for these effects. Fluoride thresholds were established for these effects. Other findings included noting that dietary intake of fluoride is more than just from water. This study also confirmed that the margin between harmful and beneficial effects is narrow. Furthermore, the study shows that SA has a very large potentially sensitive sub-population affected by malnutrition and HIV/AIDS that may be more susceptible to detrimental effects from the then proposed water fluoridation concentration.

(4)(a)

and

(4)(b) Skeletal and dental fluorosis are typically human health effects and as a result reporting on medical conditions such as this is not in the scope of the Department and therefore this question should be referred to the Department of Health.

(5) Fluoridation of drinking water is a very sensitive and controversial issue and is being debated across the globe. Some countries do it whilst it is banned in others. I may decide to review the addition of fluoride to drinking water and re-consider my predecessor's opinion of not supporting fluoridation; but only after a technical team has advised both the Minister of Health and me on whether it will be advisable to support the roll-out of fluoridating water supplies in specific coastal municipalities. Such a technical team will have to look into international best practices, engage with the WHO, as well as the negative effect of fluoride on the environment, practical dosing issues, and costs of dosing and consider the public perception and opinion.

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