Official reply: 10 May 2017

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

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**405. Ms E R Wilson (DA) to ask the Minister of Social Development:**

Does her department take the nutritional needs of children into account when calculating the value of the child grant? **NW458E**

**Reply:**

Today we pride ourselves on having reached out to the poorest of the poorer. We have proved to be a developmental state that has been able to take decisive action to support more than 12 million children through the social grant system. When the policy on the Child Support Grant (CSG) was developed, the Lund committee (1996) recommended a small amount (R70) derived from the Household Subsistence Level for food and clothing for children. Drawing on the Committee’s recommendations, Cabinet approved the CSG at a higher amount of R100 when implemented in 1998. This amount has been increased by inflation since then. Government is continuously faced with the policy question as to whether the value of the grant should be increased (above inflation) to be in line with more recent food nutritional indexes, or to expand the reach of the grant. In the last two decades, Government has focused mainly on extending the reach of the CSG to poor children. Currently our focus is on ensuring that the low take up between 0-1 is addressed through programs such as the Integrated Community Outreach Programme (ICROP) and Mikondzo, which target areas of greater deprivation. This is in line with the objectives set in the National Development Plan and the Medium Terms Strategic Framework for 2019.

Historically only a few children accessed social assistance through the State Maintenance Grant. Today the vast majority of children in need of assistance is able to access the support, not only through the grant but through a range of other government interventions.

This is also in line with the Taylor Committee report (2002) that assessed the effectiveness of the CSG in relation to nutrition. The Committee recommended that the CSG be supplemented by an appropriate nutrition programme. To this effect, Government provides essential services for example, food nutrition programme to poor children through the Department of Basic Education and other free basic municipal services at reduced and controlled costs to impoverished households. In addition Government has ensured that basic food items such as brown bread, maize meal, vegetables, fruits, eggs, samp, mealie rice and milk are zero-rated, meaning the 14% VAT is not paid on these goods.