



LEGAL RESOURCES CENTRE

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Our Ref: WW/HS

11 October 2013

Mr Mlungisi Johnson
Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

For attention: Ms Albertina Kakaza.
Per email: akakaza@parliament.gov.za

Dear Mr Johnson

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS ON THE MLRA AMENDMENT BILL

1. The Legal Resources Centre (LRC) is an independent non-profit public interest law clinic which uses the law as an instrument of justice. It works for the development of a fully democratic South African society based on the principle of substantive equality, by providing free legal services for the vulnerable and marginalised, including the poor, homeless, and landless people and communities of South Africa who suffer discrimination by reason of race, class, gender, disability or by reason of social economic or historical circumstances.
2. In the area of land and other resource reform, the LRC's work has a strong focus on law and policy reform and active collaboration with other stakeholders. Relevant litigation with which the LRC has been actively involved are:
 - 2.1. *Kenneth George and Others v Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism*, EC 1/2005. 2 May 2007 ("KG 1")
 - 2.2. *Kenneth George and Others v Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries*, EC 1/05 30 April 2010 ("KG 2")
 - 2.3. *S v Gongqose and 2 Others* E382/10 22 July 2012 (unreported)
 - 2.4. *Alexkor Ltd v The Richtersveld Community* 2004 (5) SA 460 (CC)
3. The LRC's interest in submitting these comments relates to our representation of the fishers who challenged the Minister in the Equality Court in 2005 and again in 2010. That litigation culminated in the small scale policy which was finally gazetted in June this year and which is the subject of these amendments. It is our duty to report

to our clients whether the Minister is complying with the Court Order, handed down on 2 May 2007, compelling the Minister to

“develop a new legislative and policy framework to accommodate traditional fishers more effectively. The framework will be developed taking into account the principles and objectives contained in section 2 of the Act and should take into account international and national legal obligation and policy directives to accommodate the socio-economic rights of these fishers and to ensure equitable access to marine resources for those fishers”.

4. The amendments to the MLRA fall within the parameter of the Court Order in ensuring that the rights of our clients are realised.
5. Moreover, we represented the members of the Hobeni fishing community who defended themselves against the charge of intention to fish illegally in terms of the MLRA on the basis that they had a constitutionally protected right to do so arising from their community’s customary system. We will also have to report to them whether the MLRA will continue to infringe upon these rights in a manner inconsistent with the Constitution. These clients have instructed us to challenge the MLRA on its current version.
6. Indeed, the draft Implementation Plan for the Small Scale Fishing Policy noted the Legal Resources Centre as a key stakeholder in the process.
7. It goes without saying that all our clients are anxious to see the new small scale policy implemented to have their rights realised. They have already waited too long. Given that fishing is, for many of them, a matter of life and death, the urgency of this process can hardly be over-emphasized. However, they are as anxious to see the policy implemented properly both through a dedicated implementation plan and through the thoughtful amendment of the MLRA.
8. Our submissions attached hereto deals with the following issues:
 - 8.1. The proposed two-stage amendment process
 - 8.2. The legal entity proposed to represent communities
 - 8.3. The recognition of customary rights
 - 8.4. The consideration of international and foreign law
9. We have written to your office requesting to make oral submissions during your public hearings on 15 and 16 October 2013. We requested whether you would kindly afford us a slot on the 15th of October.

Yours sincerely

LEGAL RESOURCES CENTRE

Per:

[SIGNED]

WILMIEN WICOMB