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| MEMORANDUM FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE |

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 1250**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION OF INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 14/05/2021**

**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO 13 OF 2021**

**Inkosi B N Luthuli (IFP) to ask the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation:**

Whether the Government intends to assist indigent former students who owe universities for fees incurred after the National Student Financial Aid Scheme discontinued their funding; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the relevant details?

**NW1441E**

**REPLY:**

Government has contributed R1.7 billion to NSFAS as a result of the due diligence exercise that was undertaken in 2018 towards the historic debt owed to universities by continuing or returning NSFAS qualifying students, registered in 2018.  This allocation specifically targets students who were subject to the R122 000 family income threshold and the NSFAS funding cap, and also covers students registered in 2019, 2020 and 2021.  In many cases, the amount of funding provided was insufficient to cover the actual fees and costs of the study, where the cost of the study was higher than the NSFAS cap. These students (referred to as capped students) therefore accrued debt with their institutions.

Students, including former qualifying NSFAS students, had to meet the academic progression criteria for the years being claimed for and had to sign an acknowledgment of debt with their institutions. Students (including former NSFAS students) who did not meet the NSFAS academic criteria do not qualify for continued funding.

This project is work in progress as it is subject to an audit process required by NSFAS and has not yet been finalised.