**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION No. 1351- 2021**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

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 **Mr S Ngcobo (DA) to ask the Minister of Sport, Arts and Culture**:

Whether any plans are in place to include sign language as one of the official South African languages; if not, why not; if so, what (a) are the details of the plans and (b) total budget has been allocated in this regard? **NW1547**

**REPLY**

(a) Yes, after the Constitutional Review Committee of Parliament had recommended that section 6(1) and (5)(a) of the Constitution be amended to include South African Sign Language (SASL) as the 12th South African official language, the Department of Justice and Correctional Services (DoJ) took the necessary steps to kick-start the Constitutional amendment process. The first working session for all national departments to make contributions to the draft 19th Constitutional Amendment Bill was held in March 2021. DSAC and PanSALB as the key implementers of section 6 of the Constitution were working closely with DoJ. A follow-up working session was facilitated by DSAC in April 2021 where all affected stakeholders mainly the deaf community gave input into the draft Bill.

DSAC is also planning to conduct further consultative meetings with all relevant structures of the Deaf Community as users of the South African Sign Language (SASL) to understand their specific needs that will inform the draft implementation plan to give effect to section 6 of the Constitution when it is amended.

 In the meantime, PanSALB is workshopping stakeholders on the SASL Charter, which sets out key obligations to improve access to quality services and effective protection of the linguistic rights of deaf people.

(b) There is no budget yet allocated for the SASL as the constitutional amendment process is still ongoing. When SASL is finally adopted as the 12th official language of the Republic of South Africa, DSAC will include it in its plans with cost implications.