# NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO. 181**

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**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 01)**

**Dr P J Groenewald (FF Plus) to ask the Minister of Health:**

(1) What (a) is the total backlog of toxicological reports at the laboratories currently, (b) is the total number of reports that have been outstanding for (i) 1-5 years, (ii) 5-8 years, (iii) 8-9 years, (iv) 9-10 years and (v) more than 10 years, (c) are the reasons for the specified backlog and (d) how does he intend to eradicate the backlog;

(2) whether his department intends to establish public-private partnerships to assist the State in conducting toxicology tests in order to reduce the significant backlog; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details? **NW214E**

**REPLY:**

(1) (a) Total backlog for FCLs is 35 776 tests (CPT, JHB and PTA labs

(b) Outstanding reports:

(i) 1-5 years = 11 948

(ii) 5-8 years=3 391

(iii) 8-9 years= 2 158

(iv) 9-10 years = 1 749

(v) more than 10 years = 2555

(c) Backlogs were cause by, amongst others:

● old laboratory equipment that constantly broke down.

● Insufficient goods and services

● Delays in procurement

● Shortage of skilled staff

The nature of the samples that must be tested, and the volume of new samples and a high incidence of urgent requests. There normally are multiple samples per case, thus one case can consist of blood, urine, stomach content, liver, bile and a drug which all linked to one body.

Additionally the import of Certified Reference Materials to confirm and quantify controlled substances, is a very lengthy process which delays laboratory testing.

(d) The NHLS is streamlining activities in this discipline and the focus is on improving productivity to reduce the backlog.

(2) The backlog developed since the National Department of Health did not have the expertise and resources to effectively address the backlog. The laboratories have now been transferred from the NDOH to the NHLS given the efficiency of the NHLS as a specialised laboratory service. NHLS is leveraging its resources and expertise to turn things around and strives to address the backlog.

Public private partnership is a legislated process which requires a defined procurement approach which requires Treasury approval. The NHLS will explore amongst others the possibility of a public private partnership.

END.