NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

# QUESTION NO. 229

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## INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER 5 OF 2020

**229. Mr A C Roos (DA) to ask the Minister of Home Affairs:**

 What (a)(i) has been done in the Umgeni Road Home Affairs Office in KwaZulu-Natal to address the breaches of the regulations of the Occupational Health and Safety Act, Act 85 of 1993, at the specified office and (ii) who is being held accountable and (b) has been done to investigate allegations (i) of corruption at the office and (ii) that the queues are being closed early? NW312E

 **REPLY:**

(a)(i) The breaches were mostly as a direct result of the air-conditioning system that broke down during December 2019 and other day to day maintenance issues that occurred during this period. The reason for delay in dealing with these issues was due to the fact that service providers closed down during the festive period and that contractors were not available. In the interim the air-conditioning system was fully restored, and the toilets and water leaks have been attended to. In addition to this the following steps have been taken in order to ensure full compliance of the Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1993 (OHS Act).

* A meeting was held with National Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI), the landlord and other stakeholders on 8 January 2020 regarding the condition and maintenance of the building. As a direct result of this further commitments were made for upgrades and maintenance on the building by both the landlord and the department.
* A full OHS inspection was done by the OHS representatives of the Department of Home Affairs, DPW and the landlord and all identified issues were recorded and included in a repair program to be finalised before end of March 2020. Additional issues identified include signage in addition to the current signage, replacement of blinds, replacement of windows that members of public leaned against and cracked, replacement of some door locks, and looking at more and additional wheelchair accesses points. All of these issues were reported to the various responsible parties and is in the process of being dealt with.
* A full maintenance plan was received from the landlord that cover aspects such as the regular servicing of the air-conditioning systems, regular servicing of fire equipment (which is currently compliant with the legislation), regular quarterly fumigation of the building and the regular replacement of globes (lighting) in the building.

(a)(ii) The building is leased and the landlord is responsible for ensuring the office meets and maintains the required OHS standards in respect of the building itself.

(b)(i) All possible cases of corruption that is reported or detected at this office are immediately reported to the counter corruption and security services of the department and are subsequently investigated and actions taken were necessary. Two officials were dismissed in the 2019/20 financial year for cases of corruption relating to the fraudulent registration of births at this office.

(b)(ii) There is a misperception that queues are being closed early. The procedure followed at this office is as follows:

* The office knows how many persons they can approximately assist during the day and with this in mind and considering the time left and the number of persons in the office already awaiting services, the officials keep an eye on the outside queue to see if they will definitely be able to assist all in the queue.
* At a stage where they realise that the number of persons outside is more that the capacity of the office they will start warning persons after the cut-off point that there is a possibility that they might not be assisted. At no stage at this time is the queue cut, as there is always the possibility that a few extra people might be assisted. The public is however informed as early as possible to enable them to make an informed decision and to not allow persons to waste their time waiting in line if there is a possibility of them not being assisted at the time of closure. It is up to the clients whether or not they leave at this stage.
* Only around 30 minutes prior to closing will the line be cut and the last persons brought into the office. This is done due to the fact that officials do not have permission to work overtime as a rule and the department due to austerity measures cannot afford to pay officials overtime on a daily basis to work till after 16:00. It should be mentioned that on more than one occasion officials in this office will continue to work well after 17:00 in order to finish persons already inside the office.
* The only time that queues are cut other than at this time is when the office has gone offline and there is clear indication that the system will not be back online for the rest of the day.

**END**