**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION NO. 2351-2021**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 25 –2021, DATE OF PUBLICATION 5 NOVEMBER 2021:**

**Mrs V Van Dyk (DA) to ask the Minister of Sport, Arts and Culture;**

1. What is the current status of Downtown Music Hub and (b) how successful is the specified project;
2. (a) what total amount has been spent by his department on maintaining the Downtown Music Hub project and (b) since what date has Downtown Music Hub been receiving financial support from his department annually;
3. whether he will furnish Mrs V van Dyk with the (a) financial reports and (b) business plan(s) upon which the project was funded; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details in each case? **NW2599E**

**REPLY**:

1. The Downtown project is very important in the history of our music industry. It is the most sacred place where most of our well-known musicians and producers from across the racial divide busied themselves, creating top local and international hits. For many years, the studios remained a haven of these legendary musicians who also were instrumental in the progressive politics of this country, when they used their music to further the objectives for the emancipation of our people, thereby bringing the atrocities of apartheid to the eyes and ears of the world. It was for this reason that the Department saw it fit to preserve its legacy, when that opportunity was presented to us by Gallo Records when they took a decision to sell the asset.

The studios boast, inter alia, a collection of historical artifacts including gold and platinum discs covering what SA had produced over the past years, an accomplishment for which we should be immensely proud of. The Department aligns itself with the notion that, a generation which ignores its history has no past and no future.

Since it was purchased, the asset had been transformed from just being a mere studio into a Music Industry Hub for people to be empowered as we also ensure accessibility to recording opportunities. Certain parts of the building were renovated, and the recording facilities were also upgraded to be one of the best spacious control room and large versatile studio area, making it the flagship studio ideal for large ensembles and is now regarded as one of the best in the entire continent. A permanent exhibition has been set up on the first floor of the Hub titled ***A Glimpse of South African Music Industry***.

The exhibition includes a presentation of old multi-media recordings, historical landmark recording equipment’s and information about many musicians who went through the Downtown Studios such as the late Mama Miriam Makeba and many others. The exhibition is accessible to many students, among others, who want to get further information about the development of the SA music sector. The Hub has also been used to provide educational information for many practitioners and has hosted workshops and master classes in areas such as sound engineering and general music business insight.

The studio section of the Hub has recorded over 1500 recordings per annum and such services are provided at a more affordable rate to benefit the historically disadvantaged, especially those with talent who cannot afford the exorbitant fees charged by some of the prime studios. This speaks to the access to quality recordings that the industry now has. Recent recordings from Downtown have won well known accolades such as the South African Music Award, and a Grammy.

Although not yet at the level that we have envisaged, the Downtown project plays a significant role in nurturing the development of all forms of South African music from traditional sounds such as Maskandi, Isicathamiya, choral and other genres. Therefore, investing in this project is one way of contributing to the upliftment of the lives of our people, in particular, assisting many local investors to move from the periphery economy into the more mainstream, while also preserving the history of our music industry.

1. The Department has either directly or indirectly through the National Arts Council (NAC) provided just over R60 million to support the Downtown project since its inception in 2008. The total amount includes funds allocated for the purchasing of the assets (both immovable and movable), refurbishment of some spaces in the building, installation of recording studio equipment’s and for the day-to-day operations and management.

Abiding by the parameters laid down in the Promotion of Access to Information Act, the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) and other relevant legislation/s and all protocol observed, the Department would be in a position to furnish or provide access to honourable Mrs Van Dyk of the relevant information that is in its custody.