**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 2593**

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**2593. Ms H S Boshoff (DA) to ask the Minister of Basic Education:**

(1) Whether she issued any directives to the Acting Chief Executive Officer of the National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU) after a meeting with the specified person in August 2016; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the full details of the directives;

(2) whether she raised any concerns with the specified person regarding the manner in which the NEEDU handled certain issues in the past; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the full details of her concerns;

(3) whether she suggested that the NEEDU must be brought closer to her department; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, on what statutory grounds did she rely in this regard to safeguard the mandate of NEEDU to remain independent of the civil service responsible for the administration of schools;

(4) on what grounds was the decision taken to shelve the National Education Evaluation and Development Unit Bill that was gazetted for public comment on 23 December 2011? NW3006E

**Response:**

1. The meeting between the Minister and the NEEDU management took place in July 2016. There was no meeting with the Minister in August 2016. The meeting was to brief the Minister on the work of the Unit in the first five-year cycle of systemic evaluations (2012-2016), and, second, to present the plan for the Unit in the second five-year cycle (2017-2021).

After the briefing, the Minister asked the NEEDU to conduct deeper investigations on the areas that continue to cause concern in the system. The Minister’s request or ‘directive,’ is in line with section 6 (1) (h) in the NEEDU Bill and section 7(1) in the *Regulations for the Establishment of the OSCBE*, another NEEDU founding document.

1. The Minister raised concerns on how findings made by NEEDU find their way into the Department quickly enough for remediation to take place.
2. In the July meeting between the Minister and the NEEDU management, the Minister encouraged a “close” working relationship between the Ministry and NEEDU. This relationship is envisaged in all NEEDU founding documents. To safeguard the independence of the OSCBE, the *Business Case and Business Plan for the Establishment of the OSCBE* provides as follows:

*“Two factors must be present in the structure of OSCBE: independence from the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the requirements to report to the Minister of Basic Education on the activities and outcomes of its work. These two factors are not in contention with each other, as the need for independence is related more to location, internal processes and a perceived separateness from the DBE whereas the need to report to the Minister is quite clear in terms of hierarchical accountability.”*

1. The NEEDU Bill was shelved following advice by the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) to establish NEEDU, not as a statutory body, but as an independent government component called the Office of Standards and Compliance.