**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NUMBER: 260**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION IN INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 19 FEBRUARY 2021**

**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NUMBER: 2 - 2021**

**260. Ms L H Arries (EFF) to ask the Minister of Social Development:**

What are the reasons that there are no assessment doctors to assess persons who qualify for temporary and/or permanent disability grants in (a) Mossel Bay and (b) Knysna in the Western Cape? NW263E

**REPLY:**

Since the inception of the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), a service level agreement (SLA) has been in place between SASSA and the Western Cape Provincial Department of Health which includes the Garden Route district. The SLA makes provision for medical assessment services to be performed by the Provincial Department of Health for all disability related social assistance applications, for which they are reimbursed.

In 2018, the WC Department of Health indicated their inability to provide medical practitioners for provision of assessment services in the Garden Route district due to other competing priorities. SASSA then embark on a procurement process through an open tender process to recruit medical practitioners to service the area. However, this did not yield good results as only 4 doctors could be contracted to service the entire Garden Route District on a part time basis. One of the doctors who serviced Mossel Bay passed away and another who previously serviced Knysna is also no longer available for this area.

The Covid19 pandemic has had an immense impact on assessment services as doctors are mostly needed by the Provincial Department of Health.

Given the poor response to the open tender, SASSA approached National Treasury in 2019, for authority to deviate from the open tender process, and recruit doctors through a closed tender process. This involved sending bid requests for the required service directly to doctors registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa.

The above process has yielded some positive results, in that SASSA has now contracted 2 additional doctors to add to the 3 remaining contracted doctors. Services both in Mossel Bay and Knysna, commenced in March 2021.