NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

# QUESTION NO. 317

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## INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER 6 OF 2019

**317. Mr J J Mcgluva (DA)) to ask the Minister of Home Affairs:**

What plans does he have in place to address the (a) insufficient capacity at the Department of Home Affairs Contact Centre, (b) continued inability of the State Information Technology Agency that has led to endless network and power down times including excessive long lines and (c) issuing of identity documents on weekends? NW1284E

**REPLY:**

(a) Due to budget cuts, the Department has not been in a position to fill vacant posts. The Department is, however, in the process of prioritising the filling of critical positions, which when filled, will aid in the reduction of interaction volumes in the Contact Centre.

 The implementation of the modernisation strategies at both Front and Back Offices will further reduce Contact Centre volumes, thereby improving efficiency.

 To ensure that the current resources are utilised efficiently, the Department reviewed the performance standards and introduced performance measures that will guarantee that production time is utilised optimally. Coupled with this, we enhanced the Contact Centre systems to allow visibility into staff daily activities. This assists management to better manage productivity.

 To further increase accessibility to the public, the Contact Centre operates on a shift system, with the working hours being 07h30 to 17h30 on week days and 08h00 to 12h00 on Saturdays.

b) A comprehensive assessment was done by SITA in the last financial year and produced a new network architecture and implementation plan which will provide a fully redundant and high availability network throughout the DHA footprint. DHA has also rolled out power generators in modernised offices to provide alternative power supply during outages or load shedding.

c) The Department is addressing the issuing of identity documents on weekends through its various heads of offices that on voluntary basis, arrange with communities to open offices on weekends as well as during holidays. However, this is not sustainable and as it depends on the volunteerism.

 The Department engaged organised labour on working hours at the Departmental Bargaining Chamber with a view to ensure service delivery is not affected and that our offices open on weekends. Work performance over weekends however requires payment of overtime as the staff is not prepared to work ‘voluntarily’ after completing their 40-hour work week, i.e. Mondays to Fridays.

 In order to normalise the environment and to ensure our offices open on Saturdays or weekends, the Department is to re-open negotiations with organised labour as well as the Department of Public Service Administration (DPSA), to allow work on weekends through the introduction of a shift system or alternatively performance of remunerated overtime. This will assist clients who find themselves not able to visit DHA offices during the week, to access services on weekends. However due to the current financial constraints in the Department, it is currently not feasible to pay for the performance of remunerated overtime over weekends.

 The Department will however explore possibilities of using alternative channels for collection of enabling documents over weekends.

**END**