# NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO. 3610**

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**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 38)**

**Ms A M M Weber (DA) to ask the Minister of Health:**

(1) With reference to the reply to question 912 on 14 October 2019, what steps are being taken by his department to (a) remove all advertisements for backstreet abortions (i) from the cyber world and/or social media (ii) pasted illegally on infrastructure such as lamp posts and bridges and (b) stop the illegal sale of the abortion pill to women even into their 3rd term of pregnancy;

(2) whether there is a special unit in his department that is trained to deal with the illegal google, phone and posting of the illegal activity of selling an abortion pill to women in order to terminate their pregnancy;

(3) (a) where do the illegal sellers get the pill from as it can only be received from a registered doctor at his or her practice, hospital and/or clinic and (b) what control and/or monitoring system is in place to ensure that the pills are not sold illegally and/or stolen from the doctors, clinics and/or hospitals? **NW4425E**

**REPLY:**

1. (a) Steps to remove all advertisements for backstreet abortions –

The Department of Health has been working with SAPS to arrest the people who paste illegal adverts and providing illegal Termination of Pregnancy services. Currently, the Department of Health has engaged Municipalities to strengthen the BYLAWS, and make it point that towns are clean. Furthermore, the Department of Health is working with Department of Justice to prosecute those who paste illegal adverts and provide illegal Termination of Pregnancy services in the country. On the other hand, The National Department of Health in collaboration with Provincial Department of Health, has started to place facilities providing Termination of Pregnancy on the Departmental website.

1. from the cyber world and/or social media

The Department makes use of BWISE as the social media platform to share Sexual and Reproductive Health information including Termination of Pregnancy and information where the people can go to and what to do if one needs to Terminate the Pregnancy. The Department of health, through the Communication unit, monitors information on the social media platform that contributes to the mis-information to the public. Once the unit picks up any mi-information, it issues the correct information or label the mis-information as fake news and re-post the information to the social media platforms.

1. pasted illegally on infrastructure such as lamp posts and bridges

The Department of Health has started a campaign called “Action March Against Illegal advert on Termination of Pregnancy” in the country. The action march (actual removing of adverts) against illegal adverts is led by Deputy Minister of Health, Members of Executive Council, Mayors, Department of SAPS, Department of Justice, Traditional Leaders and Healers and other important Stakeholders. The Deputy Minister of Health, MEC, Mayor (District/Local), SAPS Commissioner share the platform on the day of the march, and they make joint statement against illegal Termination of Pregnancy. Furthermore, the Deputy Minister talks to young people/women on the issues that are central to the ToP, which respond to these questions: who is supposed to provide Termination of Pregnancy, where the ToP is supposed to be provided and when is the ToP supposed to be provided according to the ACT 92 of 96

(b) Stop the illegal sale of the abortion pill to women even into their 3rd term of pregnancy

The Provincial Department of Health introduced control book, whereby all ordered abortion pills are entered into the book. The pills are counted daily, in the morning and afternoon as part of stock management.

1. The Communications Unit in the Department of Health manages all misinformation posted on google regarding services provided by the Department. The Unit however does not have capacity to monitor and respond to general illegal google, phones and posting of illegal activity of selling an abortion pill to women.

(3) (a) The pills are not schedule 5 and above drugs, they are classified as over the counter medication in other countries, thus making them easily accessible for online purchase from different countries.

(b) The facilities providing ToP services count the pills daily in the morning and afternoon, the officials sign off the control book.

END.