**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**FRIDAY, 21 OCTOBER 2022**

**DUE DATE: 4 NOVEMBER 2022**

**3810. The Leader of the Opposition (DA) to ask the President of the Republic:**

1. With reference to the review of the Ministerial Handbook which he signed off in April 2022 but later did an about-turn, what considerations motivated him to introduce a new provision to the Ministerial Handbook that enables himself, his Ministers and Deputy Ministers to use unlimited amounts of taxpayer money to settle water and electricity bills at their official residences;
2. what (a) considerations motivated him to remove the limit on the number of staff members that may be employed in the private offices of Ministers and Deputy Ministers and (b) mechanisms have been put in place to ensure that this is not a scheme to utilise taxpayers money to pay the salaries of the staff of a certain political party (details furnished)?

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**REPLY**

The State is required to ensure that political office bearers, including Ministers, Deputy Ministers, Premiers and Members of Executive Councils are provided with resources and enabling facilities (tools of trade) to perform their duties effectively.

The Guide for Members of the Executive provides a framework to manage the extent to which the State provides these tools of trade. The determination of tools of trade takes into account the nature of the work or duties to be performed by Members of the Executive. These tools of trade include official and private accommodation, offices, office Supplies and stationery, ICT, support staff, travel facilities and security.

The Ministerial Handbook seeks to ensure the appropriateness of the tools of trade, to manage the costs related thereto, to ensure the transparency of their use and ultimately to ensure accountability for the use of tools of trade.

Following various discussions in Cabinet and between the Minister for Public Service and Administration, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure, two amendments were proposed and approved by the President on 13 April 2022.

The first amendment dealt with the provision of capacity to Members of the Executive where additional resources are required to support certain tasks. These additional resources would be subject to the authorisation of the Minister for Public Service and Administration to ensure these resources are required and to mitigate any abuse.

The second amendment removed the limit of R5,000 for which the State would bear the cost of electricity and water at a Member's private residence which was designated as an official residence.

Following public concerns about these amendments, it was decided to revert to the previous version of the Guide for Members of the Executive, adopted 2019, pending an independent review.