**Memorandum from the Parliamentary Office**

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 3857**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION OF INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 30/10/2015**

**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER 45 OF 2015)**

**Mr W M Madisha (Cope) to ask the Minister of Higher Education and Training:**

1. Whether he has tabled a proposal to the Cabinet in respect of free tertiary education; if so,
2. whether the specified proposal has been considered by the Cabinet; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the relevant details;
3. whether he has been mandated by the Cabinet to work with the National Treasury to prepare a funding model for free tertiary education that was practical, achievable and sustainable; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the relevant details?

**NW4667E**

**REPLY:**

1. No, I have not tabled a proposal to Cabinet in respect of free tertiary education.
2. Not applicable.
3. No, Cabinet has not mandated me to work with the National Treasury in preparing a funding model for free tertiary education.

In terms of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, White Paper 3: A programme on Transformation of Higher Education in South Africa of 1997, or the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training of 2013, it is not government’s policy to consider free tertiary education for all. The position has consistently been to ensure affordable university education, support those who cannot afford to pay through financial aid, and progressively introduce free university education for the poor in South Africa.

The National Development Plan affirms this position indicating that:

* all students who qualify for the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) must be provided access to full funding through loans and bursaries to cover the costs of tuition, books, accommodation and other living expenses; and
* students who do not qualify for NSFAS should have access to bank loans, backed by State sureties.

In order to support this position, the Department of Higher Education and Training has, in line with the recommendations of the Ministerial Working Group on Fee Free Education for the Poor of 2013, submitted annual bids to National Treasury in 2013, 2014 and 2015 as part of the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) budget process.

In the 2015 MTEF bid process, the Department focused on the increase required for NSFAS funding to assist financially needy and academically deserving students as identified in the Ministerial Working Group. The emphasis of the bid was to address the need to fully fund all qualifying NSFAS students at university level through Full Cost of Study (FCS) loans, for which an amount of R36.983 billion was requested over the 2016/17 to 2018/19 MTEF period for university students.

The Department has also brought this matter to the attention of the Standing Committee on Appropriations at meetings held on 21 October 2014, 26 May 2015 and 4 November 2015. At the Standing Committee on Appropriations meeting of 4 November 2015, as part of the parliamentary/political process for the finalisation of the 2016 MTEF allocations., requirements of supporting university and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) college students through NSFAS loans and bursaries were discussed.

National Treasury attended the Committee meeting and is fully aware of the status of NSFAS funding.

In addition, National Treasury and the Department of Performance, Monitoring and Evaluation are undertaking an Expenditure and Performance Review of the NSFAS, which was initiated in October 2014.

Compiler/Contact persons:

Ext:

DIRECTOR – GENERAL

STATUS:

DATE:

REPLY TO QUESTION 3857 APPROVED/NOT APPROVED/AMENDED

Dr BE NZIMANDE, MP

MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

STATUS:

DATE: