

**MINISTRY:**

**HUMAN SETTLEMENTS, WATER AND SANITATION**

**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO.: 411**

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**Ms E L Powell (DA) to ask the Minister of Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation:**

What are the details of the (a) recruitment and (b) selection processes that were followed in the appointment of all staff members serving on the National Rapid Response Task Team? NW590E

**REPLY:**

Honourable Member, in my Budget Vote speech on 7 May 2015 I announced the creation of a National Rapid Response Task Team and explained its purpose as follows:

“Communications and outreach programmes are part of our frontline services to ensure that the correct messages reach our people, in order to reduce the social distance referred to. I have decided to appoint a National Rapid Response Task Team that will help us communicate with our communities before implementing any policies, so that they understand the benefits, who would qualify and who would not, etc. This, we believe will lessen the tension that always arise when there is a development. This Task Team will also assist us understand where there is a problem and allow us to rapidly respond to problems as they arise.”

The Rapid Response Task Team has been in existence since 2015 and their main responsibilities are to address sector related challenges including:

* + - Community engagements, before any policy implementation, to enable better understanding of citizenry criteria and benefits on sector subsidies;
		- Proactive and responsive intervention to community needs to identify incidents/ issues before they reach the media, leading to public protests;
		- Proactive alerts on problems, for prompt and rapid response, before and as when they arise in order to lessen potential tensions during housing developments;
		- Liaison and engagement with various communities and key stakeholders in areas identified as hotspots in which there are pending and/or outstanding human settlements challenges, and to reduce social distance/ communication gaps between Government and communities;
		- Provide reports on proposed investigations on concerns and allegations of irregularities and malpractices in implementation and delivery of human settlement programmes and report findings with recommendations to the Minister;
		- Identify appropriate steps and actions to improve implementation and delivery of human settlements programmes and provision of support to distressed communities and make recommendations to the Minister.

In line with the above, in the Budget Vote of 10 May 2018 the former Minister of Human Settlements, Ms Noma-India Mfeketo, announced that,

“These are protests of communities who are crying for services and houses. It is therefore important that we act swiftly to resolve the challenges faced by our communities. The solution to these protests lies in a well-coordinated cooperative government intervention involving all spheres of government and multi-sector departments.  We will immediately **deploy the National Rapid Response Team** to engage the affected communities, while we also coordinate the integrated government intervention to address the community challenges.”

Since 2019 my new portfolio now includes Water and Sanitation, resulting in an increased scope of work, which require further intensified community and stakeholder interactions, consultations and coordination.

In order to achieve these objectives, we have since 2015 appointed persons with the necessary skills and competencies, taking into account their respective track records, experience, knowledge and expertise.