# NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO. 4231**

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**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 51)**

**Ms T Stander (DA) to ask the Minister of Health:**

(1) Whether he supports the draft Strategy to Address Air Pollution in Dense Low-Income Settlements presented to his department and other departments in 2013; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details;

(2) whether he has taken any steps to address the ongoing harmful health impacts of domestic fuel burning being suffered by residents of dense low-income settlements; if not, why not; if so, what are the full details of the steps undertaken?

###### NW5108E

**REPLY:**

1. Yes, the intentions of the strategy to address air pollution in dense and low-income settlements are supported.

The effects of indoor air pollution to human health as a result of the use of solid fuels remain of grave concern to the Ministry of Health. Many households still cook and heat their homes using wood, coal and even dung, in open fires and leaky stoves, and these practices contribute to premature death and illness from respiratory and cardiac conditions and also results in burns, injuries and poisoning from fuel ingestion. We support an approach that addresses the social determinants of health and sustainable development.

The Department aligns with strategies that ensure healthy air in and around the household. The Department of Health supports programmes for clean household energy in contributing towards addressing child and maternal health as a core preventative public health measure.

The intersectoral approach, including roles for critical departments and national, provincial and local government, is supported to address air pollution effects and the Department of Health will continue to partake in programmes aimed at addressing such effects.

1. Yes.

The Department of Health is involved with the assessment and control of biological agents in the environment and improving social concerns and thereby addressing the ongoing health impacts of domestic fuel burning through ongoing Environmental Health programmes. Environmental Health Practitioners are trained on monitoring of Indoor Air Quality and capacitating members of the public through awareness creation. Health awareness campaigns focus inter alia on improved ventilation and lighting.

Within the National Department of Health, Environmental Health has recently been elevated into a Chief Directorate to prioritize prevention of ill health that is caused by environmental factors. The relevant Manager has been tasked with engaging with the Department of Environmental Affairs as well as Non-Governmental Organizations to address the environmental determinants of ill health. Government is committed to the increased use of renewable/subsidized residential housing. It is acknowledged however that more is required to effectively respond to the dangerous energy sources burned in dense low-income communities.

While we collectively work with our partners to prevent ill health caused by environmental factors my Department will also ensure that good health care is provided to poor communities that are forced by poverty to continue burning unsafe fuels that cause ill health.

END.