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| **PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**  **NATIONAL ASSEMBLY** |

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION NO: 658**

**DATE OF QUESTION: 24 APRIL 2020**

**DATE OF SUBMISSION: 12 MAY 2020**

**Adv G Breytenbach (DA) to ask the Minister of Justice and Correctional Services:**

(1) (a) On what date was the first infection reported with regard to the outbreak of the COVID-19 infections at the East London Correctional Facility and (b) what number of days after the first patient became symptomatic was the person tested for COVID-19;

(2) (a) what are the full relevant details of containment measures that were put in place (i) before and (ii) after the first infection was reported at the East London Correctional Facility, including but not limited to measures aimed at (aa) isolating the infected patient from the prison population, (bb) identifying and isolating the contacts of the first infected patient and (cc) testing of the contacts of the first patient and (b)(i) on what date and (ii) for what period were each of these measures implemented? **NW860E**

**REPLY:**

(1)(a)The first infection was confirmed on 06 April 2020.

(1)(b) From 30 to 31 March 2020 the index official reported sick to the supervisor and was admitted to hospital on 01 April 2020. The index-official was accompanied by two colleagues also working at the same Centre and was tested for COVID-19 on arrival and result were to be available on 04 April 2020. However, the doctor immediately referred the two colleagues as well for self-quarantine pending the outcome of the results of the admitted patient.

(2)(a)(i) The East London Correctional Centre implemented Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for Preparedness, Detention and Response to Coronavirus diseases (COVID-19) as approved by the National Commissioner on 14 March 2020. The SOP was implemented together with the Department’s COVID-19 National Disaster Response and Mitigation Plan for prevention, containment and recovery or re-integration. All officials and offenders, were trained both internally by the Department and the Provincial Department of Health on COVID-19 on how to prevent infection and handle infected cases.

In addition, the Management Area procured Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) in order to prevent the spread of the virus and continued to maintain a virus free environment through proper use of PPEs.

The Management Area COVID-19 response plan was activated resulting in mass screening and testing of both officials and inmates. Identified cells within the correctional centre were utilised to quarantine and isolate presumptive cases during the mass screening. These cells were already identified and prepared for this purpose as required by the SOP. Guest houses and isolation sites were also identified through the assistance of the Department of Health.

*(2)(aa)* The index official was tested for COVID-19 on 01 April 2020, where the medical doctor immediately referred the two colleagues for self-quarantine pending the outcome of the results. Furthermore, one of the two officials tested positive upon testing and was subsequently isolated. The other colleague who tested negative is back at work after having been quarantined.

The 56 inmates who tested positive for COVID-19 were moved to the other section of the Centre as it is not overcrowded. The following processes in the management of inmates were followed:

* COVID-19 Response team with clear Roles at all levels (Centre, Area, Regional level) was established;
* Conducted awareness sessions to all inmates on COVID-19;
* Continuous screening of all inmates;
* All inmates with COVID-19 signs and symptoms are identified and referred for testing;
* Partner Departments (SAPS, DoH, NICD etc) are involved in this process;
* Presumptive, positive and negative cases are separated and monitored according to the three cohorts;
* Inmates awaiting COVID-19 results are quarantined / isolated;
* All positive cases are monitored for complications and referred to secondary hospital for treatment;
* Vulnerable inmates (i.e above 60, diabetics, HIV positives, TB patients, Asthmatics, cancer patients, pregnant females), are identified, classified and monitored as per risk factors;
* Isolated/Quarantine inmates are retested for COVID-19 before exit out of quarantine;
* Psychological, Spiritual care are provided to confirmed inmates;

(2)(bb) The three officials were interviewed in line with Disease Outbreak guidelines of Department of Health to establish places that they visited in order to determine possible point of contamination. Identification and tracing of contacts was done resulting in the testing of 268 inmates of which 56 being positively diagnosed with COVID-19. Furthermore, identified officials on the same shift as the index official were immediately quarantined and 92 officials from Med C, where the index official is working, were tested and 23 were positive including the index patient who recently recovered and has tested negative.

(2)(cc)Contacts of first patient were tested through assistance from Department of Health and National Health Laboratory Services (NHLS) from 08 to 09 April 2020. Subsequent to the tracing, Department of Health initiated mass screening and testing at the Port St Johns area.

(2)*(*b)(i) Implementation of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for Preparedness, Detention and Response to Coronavirus diseases (COVID-19) and the Department’s COVID-19 National Disaster Response and Mitigation Plan for prevention, containment and recovery were implemented on 15 March 2020.

(2)(b)(ii) All these measures are still applicable to date as per the availability of NHLS or the Department of Health testing team. The Correctional Centre continues to implement containment and recovery measures while also intensifying prevention measures. The recent date for testing conducted by NHLS was on 24 April 2020.

**END**