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**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NUMBER: 86**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION IN INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 11 FEBRUARY 2021**

**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NUMBER: 1 - 2021**

**86. Ms L L van der Merwe (IFP) to ask the Minister of Social Development:**

(1) With regard to the tender that has been awarded to a company in order to boost capacity to the SA Social Security Agency (SASSA) National Call Centre as well as the communications Company to render support to SASSA, what is the (a) name of the company that was awarded the communications tender and (b) cost of the tender,

(2) whether the communications tender was advertised; if not, why not; if so, (a) on what date and (b) was due process followed in awarding the tender;

(3) what is the (a) name of the company that was awarded the call centre tender and (b) cost of the tender;

(4) whether the call centre tender was advertised; if not, why not; if so, (a) on what date and (b) was due process followed in awarding the tender;

(5) (a) what number of (i) call centre agents are manning the national SASSA call centre, (ii) employees are employed at each provincial call centre and (b) on average, how long does it take for them to answer a call? NW89E

**REPLY:**

1. (a) The company that has been appointed to assist SASSA with the call centre is Altron TMT trading as Bytes People Solutions.

(b) The cost of the tender for a 6 month period is R29 497 500 (VAT inclusive).

1. The communications tender was not advertised but followed a closed bid process. SASSA participated in GCIS RFB 005 2017/2018 and appointed a service provider from the GCIS approved panel of agencies.
2. As indicated above, the tender did not follow an open tender process, but a request for quotations, following a closed bid process, was sent to service providers listed on the GCIS Panel of Agencies on 21 July 2020.
3. Due process was followed in awarding the tender. A request for approval to deviate from a competitive bidding process was submitted to the SASSA Bid Adjudication Committee, where support was obtained. The request was then submitted to National treasury for approval prior to the process being implemented, in accordance with recognised supply chain processes. Approval was granted. The specifications for the service required as well as the bid evaluation process followed approved processes.
4. (a) As indicated under point 1, the company appointed for the call centre is Altron TMT T/A Bytes People Solutions.

(b) The cost of the tender is R29 497 500 (VAT inclusive)

1. The call centre tender was advertised.
2. The tender was advertised on 28 August 2020.
3. Due process was followed in awarding the tender. The tender was advertised, allowing for an open and transparent process. An appointed Bid Evaluation Committee undertook the evaluation of all bids received, the results of which was presented to the Bid Adjudication Committee (BAC). On recommendation of the BAC, the appointment of the recommended company was approved by the Chief Executive Officer, and the award letter signed. The company then accepted the award.
4. (a) (i) The number of call centre agents in the national SASSA call centre is 30. This includes 9 back office call centre agents who are responsible for the management of all enquiries which come in through email as well as the more challenging enquiries; and 21 front office agents who are directly responsible for manning the telephone lines. This capacity is now supplemented by an additional 300 call centre agents provided by the contracted company, Altron Bytes People Solutions.

(ii) The provision of support in the respective regions is not through regional call centres, but rather help desks, which are manned by SASSA staff members. The number of staff per region is indicated below:

 Eastern Cape 4

 Free State 5

 Gauteng 2 with 5 EPWPs

 KwaZulu-Natal 6

 Limpopo 4

 Mpumalanga 1 with 2 part time staff

 Northern Cape 3 and 1 intern

 North West 5

 Western Cape 3 interns

1. The international standard for responding to calls is that 80% of calls will be responded to within 20 seconds. SASSA does not achieve this standard.

Currently, once a call is accepted in the national call centre, the average time to respond is 5 minutes. However, this does not take into account the time it takes for a call to be accepted, which can be much longer than this. It is a concern that only approximately 35% of the calls made to the call centre are answered. It is this challenge that is being addressed with the contracting of the service provider, to ensure that all calls made to the 0800 60 10 11 number are responded to.

**National Assembly Written Reply: 86 of 2021**

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**Approved by the Minister of Social Development**

**Date……………………….**