**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION NO: 948**

**DATE OF QUESTION: 13 SEPTEMBER 2019**

**DATE OF SUBMISSION: 30 SEPTEMBER 2019**

**Mr J R B Lorimer (DA) to ask the Minister of Justice and Correctional Services:**

1. (a) What number of vacancies currently exist at the Master of the High Court in Johannesburg, (b) which positions are vacant and (c) how long has each position been vacant;
2. whether the Master of the High Court uses a biometric system to clock working hours of the staff; if not, why not; if so, is the system operational;
3. what are the daily working hours of the staff of the Master of the High Court;
4. (a) what number of (i) files did the Master of the High Court lose in each of the past five years and since 1 January 2019 and (ii) dummy files are currently open and (b) why are all files not tracked manually and/or electronically;
5. What number of staff members of the Master of the High Court (a) faced disciplinary action for non-performance in each of the past five years and since 1 January 2019 and (b) have been dismissed as a consequence?

**NW2102E**

**REPLY:**

1) (a) The number of vacant posts which exist in the office of the Master in Johannesburg is 3.

(b) The following positions are vacant: 1 x Librarian post; 1 x Estate Controller post and 1 x Senior Provisioning Administration Officer post.

(c) These positions have been vacant as follows:

Librarian post since 1 April 2019;

Estate Controller since 1 May 2019; and

Senior Provisioning Administration Officer since 1 May 2019. All 3 (three) posts have been advertised and are in the process of being filled.

2. The Master, Johannesburg had a biometric system in place to clock working hours, however the system has not been operational for the past 3 years due to the fact that when it was installed, it was running on the network and the office was advised by the Department’s IT division to remove it from the network system as it was affecting the network speed.

For the system to operate functionally, it is necessary to install a separate CPU. This is however costly and budget constraints do now allow for it in the current financial environment. The office has started the process of procuring a new system which will be able to carry the office capacity and it budget allows, it will be installed in the 2020/2021 financial year.

3. The daily working hours for the office of the Master of the High Court Johannesburg is 07h45 to 16h15. However, the office assists members of the public until 13h00 in order for the office to attend to processing clients who are still waiting to be attended to, and to allow the office to perform other administrative duties such as attending to new correspondence, filing, drawing of posts and the examination of liquidation and distribution accounts. These activities cannot be attended to during the day and during the time officials have to attend to the clients or members of the public.

However, no client is sent away if urgent assistance is needed after 13h00.

4. The Master of the High Court Johannesburg does not keep record of the number of files that have gone lost for the past five years, nor of the dummy files opened. Each section decides how best it can dispose of the matter when a file cannot be located for a period of not less than two weeks and depending on the urgency of the matter. However, ordinarily the office does not encourage the opening of dummy files unnecessarily. The manual system of tracking files in the office has proved to be inadequate and during the period 2010/2011, the office investigated the possibility of introducing an electronic system of tracking the files, but this was costly to implement. The office has once again embarked on keeping proper manual registers.

5. There is no official in the office of the Master of the High Court, Johannesburg which has (a) faced disciplinary action for non-performance in each of the past five years and since 01 January 2019 (b) nor is there anyone who has been dismissed as a consequence thereof.