**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO.973**

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**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER 9 – 2021**

**973. Mr A C Roos (DA) to ask the Minister of Home Affairs:**

(1) Given the continued closure of determination and retention of citizenship services in his department, what number of (a) determination applications and (b) retention of citizenship applications were processed before the lockdown to curb the spread of COVID-19 was declared in the 2019-20 financial year;

(2) What number of staff who receive determination and retention of citizenship applications (a) have been working in front offices of his department as at 11 March 2021 and (b) are currently not sick but have been at home due to COVID 19 restrictions as at 11 March 2021;

(3) Given that the number of determination and retention of citizenship requests are a fraction of other types of civic services, on what medical, scientific and/or COVID-risk evidence are these services remaining closed;

(4) Whether determination and retention of citizenship services will only be opened after the lockdown to curb the spread of COVID-19 is over; if not, on what date will determination and retention of citizenship services be opened; if so, what are the relevant details?

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**REPLY:**

(1)(a) 35 795

(b) 1875

(2)(a) 120

(b) 0

(3) This is as a result of the observation by the Department of a high number of staff being affected in the wake of the second wave of the COVID-19 variant, followed by front offices being temporarily closed due to decontamination and sanitising thereof. This then necessitated and made it imperative for the Department to reduce some of its operational services as part of an attempt to reduce the number of clients who visit our offices who may further exacerbate the spread of Covid-19 among clients and staff.

The Department thereby made a determination to prioritise key services and to offer critical and mandatory enabling documents such as registration of births, death and identity documents. This strategy would not perpetuate high client volumes with the enduring queues, hence the COVID-19 administrative protocols applied as a containment measure to limit the further spread of the virus.

(4) The Department will from time to time conduct a review and consult with relevant structures including the National Coronavirus Command Council (NCCC). When the situation improves, a determination will then be made to resume pending services including determination and retention applications, in a phased approach and will then be pronounced, as a result.

**END**