



## **environmental affairs**

Department:  
Environmental Affairs  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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### **NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES**

**(For written reply)**

**QUESTION NO. 354 {CW544E}**

**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO.31 of 2019**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION: 29 November 2019**

**Ms H S Boshoff (Mpumalanga: DA) to ask the Minister of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries:**

(1) Whether her department is in consultation with the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs to ensure that (a) the management of e-waste that was found at landfill sites is properly managed and/or (b) local municipalities have proper and improved collection, disposal and recycling plans in place; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, (i) what plans and (ii) what are the further relevant details;

(2) whether her department has informed the (a) public, (b) informal and uncertified e-waste recycling plants and (c) local municipalities of the serious health hazards as a result of the dangers of informal processing; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details;

(3) (a) how many informal recycling and uncertified e-waste recycling plants exist and (b) what plans are in place to keep track of such plants;

(4) (a) what is the potential value and/or risks of toxicity regarding e-waste, (b) how much e-waste in tonnage was generated in each year from 2016 to date, (c) how many kilogrammes of mobile phones

have been generated in the (i) 2016/17, (ii) 2017/18 and (iii) 2018/19 financial years and (d) what measures have been (i) taken and/or (ii) put in place with reference to Parliament's e-waste policy;

(5) whether she has been in consultation with the Minister of Employment and Labour to discuss possible 'green job creation' at waste disposal plants through the Expanded Public Works Programme or any other programmes; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details?

**354. THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES REPLIES:**

(1) Consultation does take place between various government departments in terms of the management of waste. E-waste has value and this is why it is not seen dumped on the streets and very little ends up at landfill sites. The waste pickers and reclaimers reclaim any e-waste that does end up at landfills and this e-waste is sold to waste collectors for recycling.

(b) (i) Most Municipalities at this stage are not fully geared for separation at source and hence some e-waste ends up in the municipal bins and finds its way onto landfill sites. However, Municipalities are making provision for this in their Integrated Waste Management Plans. Additionally, the Minister has published a notice requiring the electronic and electrical equipment sectors to prepare an Industry waste management plan (IndWMP) outlining how e-waste will be managed. These plans have been submitted to the Department for consideration.

(ii) Further, the Department has other legislative tools such as extended producer responsibility, norms and standards and regulations that can also be used to regulate the management of e-waste.

2. The Department works together with provincial and local government to raise awareness on waste management through various platforms including waste management forums. These consultations include awareness on applicable waste legislation, including the prohibition of disposal of e-waste to landfill sites – this is to ensure that this toxic waste is not disposed of but rather recycled so that the valuable materials can be recovered, whilst reducing the negative impact thereof on human health and the environment.

3. (a) The recycling of e-waste of more than 500kg per day is an activity which requires a waste management licence. All licensed facilities are recorded on an electronic system called the South African Waste Information Centre (SAWIC) and is accessible to the public. (b) Any facility or individual that conducts this activity without a waste management licence is unlawful and should be reported to the Environmental Management Inspectors (EMI's or "green scorpions") for enforcement action.

4. (a) E-waste is classified as hazardous waste due to the fact that it contains toxic components and materials that, if not managed appropriately, may be detrimental to the environment, human health and safety.

(b) Waste of Electric and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) quantities in tonnes:

2016	2017	2018	2019	Grand Total
179463,48	201377,58	303538,41	680374,38	1518660,15

(c) The Department does not collect information specifically on mobile phones, however these would be captured under the following category of e-waste:

WEEE: Office, information and Communication Equipment quantities in tonnes:

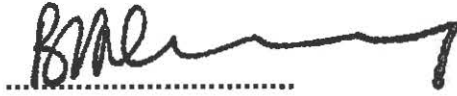
2016	2017	2018	2019
364,01	254,12	958,67	222,64

(d) The Department is not clear of what is being referred to as "Parliament's e-waste policy". As indicated above, the Department has many legislative instruments to deal with e-waste.

5. Yes, the Department reports quarterly and participates in sub-groups where commitments on waste management are reported to the Presidential jobs summit task team level, convened and

coordinated by NEDLAC. Green jobs creation initiative such as the EPWP programme is used to support waste management in municipalities, including the management of buy-back centres and waste disposal facilities.

Regards



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**MS BD CREECY, MP**

**MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES**

DATE:.....5/12/2019.....

## **BACKGROUND**

E-waste is discarded electronic and electrical equipment that have reached the end of their “useful life” and can no longer be used for their originally intended purposes. E-waste is the fastest growing waste stream in South Africa growing at three times the rate of growth of any other waste form as a result of the increased demand for electronic and electrical equipment (EEE). This has led to a rapid growth in e-waste and an increase in the environmental and health risks posed by e-waste which can contain over 1000 different substances, many of which are toxic.

Most households either mix their e-waste with the general household waste, donate the e-waste to civil society associations, NGOs, family or workers; store in anticipation of future use or drop off at dedicated e-waste collection points. There is strong evidence that household practices regarding management of e-waste is influenced by a lack of understanding of e-waste and its potential impact on the environment as well as the lack of knowledge about where to dispose of the e-waste and lack of access to dedicated e-waste drop off centres. Though some recycling facilities do exist, the department through the implementation of IndWMPs seeks to address the lack of adequate recycling infrastructure and financial resources to effectively manage e-waste in South Africa.

The Waste Act regulates all wastes including e-waste. The National Waste Management Strategy of 2012 identified specific waste streams that are required to be managed through sector plans – industry waste management plans. E-waste and lighting industry waste management plans were drafted by the industry and submitted to the department for consideration and approval for implementation. The intention is that once these sector plans are approved they will ensure that all e-wastes generated in the country are managed in an environmentally sound manner. It is for this reason that the department has not developed a specific waste management policy for e-waste. In the absence of an industry management plan the department may consider developing an e-waste management policy considering that this is a problematic waste stream that is growing at a significant rate.

E-waste is currently managed by formal and informal waste recyclers. The waste is collected from drop-off points and other central locations by SMMEs and informal waste recyclers who then sell it to the bigger more formalised recyclers for further dismantling and processing. E-waste is destined to end up in one or more of the following:

- If it has reuse value then it goes to refurbishers or repair shops who fix and resell the item; e-waste recyclers or scrap metal dealers.

- If it has no value or is problematic to handle then it goes to landfill (hazardous or general); is stockpiled by the generator; is exported to recyclers or is illegally dumped.

The Department issues waste licenses for the e-waste recyclers who handles/processes more than 500 kg per day of hazardous waste and also regulates the storage of waste through Norms and Standards for Storage of Waste. E-waste is classified as hazardous waste due to the fact that it contains toxic components and materials that, if not managed appropriately, may be detrimental to the environment, human health and safety. The lack of any formal collection of e-waste, particularly at household level, means that such waste is either illegally dumped, is stockpiled at source or is sent to landfill for disposal together with other municipal waste, thereby posing potential harm to the environment and health.