

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY
QUESTION NUMBER 274

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Dr D T George (DA) to ask the Minister of Finance:

- (1) When was the Reputation Management Department of the SA Revenue Services (SARS) established;
- (2) whether it has managed any cases since its inception; if not, why not; if so, (a) how many, (b) what are the details of each case, including the outcome and (c) how is the department structured, including number of staff and their salaries;
- (3) whether his department has access to funds to manage specific reputation-management cases; if so, what are the relevant details?

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REPLY:

- (1) As part of the organisational restructuring undertaken by SARS in 2007, a number of existing divisions and business units were combined under a single division responsible broadly for stakeholder relations and communications. This division was named Reputation Management.

The following existing business units were incorporated into this division:

- External Communications and Marketing (including media relations)
- Internal Communications
- Government Relations
- International Relations
- Corporate Relations and Corporate Social Investment

In addition, a single new business unit was introduced at that time called Reputation Profile and Branding to oversee the corporate identity and branding of the organisation.

(2) (a) As noted above, the Reputation Management division encompasses a number of different business units involved in a range of activities from stakeholder engagement, communications, media relations and marketing. The key activities, outcomes and achievements of these divisions are reported annually in the SARS Annual Report. Broadly, the business units are responsible for the following activities:

(b) External Communications and Marketing: Responsible for the development and implementation of all external communication strategies including direct and indirect marketing, pamphlets, posters and other communication material. This unit also manages media relations. Among the key issues which have been dealt with are the marketing and communications for Tax Season and promotion of eFiling. The media unit has handled a range of media queries including on service challenges such as refund delays and problems experienced with the call centre and other service channels.

Internal Communications: Responsible for the development and implementation of internal communications strategies including divisional communications. It is also responsible for the SARS intranet. Among the issues to be dealt with were the wage negotiations and industrial action during 2009.

Government Relations: Responsible for managing SARS' relations with government including government departments, a variety of cabinet committees and other government structures. It also liaises with government as an employer. Among the issues to be dealt with were ensuring compliance with changes to the PAYE process in 2008 and 2009.

International Relations: Responsible for bilateral and multilateral relations with regional and international governments and international tax, customs and trade organisations including the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the World Customs Organisation (WCO) and African Tax Administration Forum (ATAF) among many others. Among the key issues to be dealt with was the establishment of the ATAF in 2009.

Corporate Relations and Corporate Social Investment: Responsible for engagement and relations between SARS and a variety of business and labour organisations including professional bodies such as those representing the accounting and legal profession and other financial sector organisations. The CSI function manages the volunteer community involvement of SARS staff. During 2009 it also facilitated the donation of confiscated clothing to needy organisations in conjunction with the Department of Social Welfare and Department of Trade and Industry.

Reputation Profile and Branding: Responsible for corporate identity and brand development and promotion within the organisation. Among the issues to be handled was ensuring alignment between process changes and the SARS brand positioning as a fair, efficient, effective and trustworthy organisation.

- (c) The Reputation Management Division forms part of Strategic Services. It is headed by a Group Executive to whom the heads of each of the business units described above report. The total staff complement for the division is 49 with a salary cost (total cost to company) of R20 767 106 for the financial year 2009/10.

The following is a breakdown of staff for each section:

- Office of the Group Executive: 2
- External Communications and Marketing: 14
- Internal Communications: 9
- Government Relations: 7
- International Relations: 14
- Corporate Relations and Corporate Social Investment: 2
- Reputation Profile and Branding: 1

- (3) No. The reputation management function is funded from the total budget allocation for the division which is intended to cover all costs including personnel costs, marketing and communication costs, media relations costs, printing and production costs, travel and other divisional expenses.