

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY
QUESTION NUMBER: 3061 [NW3425E]
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3061. Mr R A Lees (DA) to ask the Minister of Finance:

- (1) Whether a certain official of the SA Revenue Services (Sars) was authorised to participate in an interview with the SA Broadcasting Corporation on 17 October 2018; if so, who authorised the specified person to participate in the specified interview;
- (2) whether the statements made by the person during the interview were authorised by the Commissioner of Sars; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the relevant details;
- (3) whether the statements made by the person during the interview are an accurate reflection of the status of the information technology (IT) systems at Sars; if not, (a) why are they not accurate and (b) what is the real status of Sars' IT systems;
- (4) whether any disciplinary action has been instituted against the specified person due to the statements made during the interview; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details?

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REPLY:

- (1) The certain official was duly authorised by the Acting Commissioner of SARS to participate in the said interview. Aside from the Commissioner, Chief Officers comprise the top rung of SARS leadership. Historically, when the appointed Commissioner is unavailable, a Chief Officer is appointed to act as the Commissioner. A Chief Officer is expected to represent SARS at the highest levels, including at international events and in interviews with the media particularly when the subject matter falls within the Chief Officer's mandate. The authority given by the Acting Commissioner was based on the understanding that a SARS Chief Officer and member of EXCO should be competent and able to fully address any matter of SARS culture, vision, strategy, policy and operations that arises in an interview and particularly when the issues relate to his/her portfolio of accountability.
- (2) Statements made by the SARS official during the interview were not authorised by the Commissioner of SARS in any event there are no means of ensuring that representations by SARS executives are approved by the Commissioner prior to any interview as interviews in their very nature are dynamic and not preemptive. Chief Officers of SARS are expected to be able to handle any matter relating to their area of accountability.

- (3)(a) The statements made by the person during the interview did not describe the state of SARS IT and what is required to enhance the IT systems.

- 3(b) Although SARS IT systems are ageing and require continuous maintenance, they are currently stable, operative and serving our clients well. The SARS technical IT teams have the necessary skills to ensure we modernize our systems and SARS is committed to providing the required resources to enable us to eventually have the ideal technology offering. SARS is on record on the need to refresh its ageing ICT infrastructure and plans in this regard are underway.

- (4) The contents of the interview have impacted on SARS and the issue of disciplinary proceedings is being considered. The most appropriate steps will be taken once a preliminary opinion has been formulated and formal discussions have taken place.