

## NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

### FOR WRITTEN REPLY

### QUESTION NO 921

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“Mr P Ntshiqela (Cope) to ask the Minister of Arts and Culture:

- (1) Whether (a) the planned national museum policy has now been fully implemented and (b) funding was meeting the sector’s strategic needs; if not, why not, in each case; if so, what are the relevant details in each case;**
- (2) whether she has found that all items (a) catalogued by and (b) in the museums were safe, intact and in a good and desirable state; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details?”**

**NW1066E**

### **REPLY:**

- (1.a) No, the National Museums Policy has not been implemented as the Department of Arts and Culture is currently in the process of developing the Policy. It is envisaged that the Policy document should be finalised by 2011.
- (1.b) The National Museums Policy will amongst others develop a transparent and objective funding model. It will also outline grading criteria for various types of museums. The grading will influence funding to museums.

- (2) Not all items (a) catalogued by and (b) in the museums are safe, intact and in a good and desirable state. Heritage objects are mostly housed in museums, academic institutions or private collections. Some of these collections are in good condition, catalogued and conserved according to best practice. However, some collections are not properly catalogued or conserved according to best practice, and in some cases, housed in venues with inadequate security.

The Department of Arts and Culture has therefore commissioned the South African Heritage Resources Agency to undertake the National Audit Project. A major aim of this project is to identify and inventorise state owned movable collections and objects, especially focussing on those at risk. Although this project is still ongoing, it does indicate that many of the state national museums keep updated catalogues of the collections in their care and that these collections are stored according to the best archival standards and under relatively safe security. However, lack of resources, such as funds, proper equipment and skilled personnel, has in some cases resulted in poor maintenance of storage areas.

Heritage objects under the control of other government departments, which are used and stored in government buildings around the country, are mostly poorly managed, mainly due to lack of monitoring and resources. In some cases, these items are moved around, placed in storage and sold without regard to their heritage value. There are often no dedicated heritage resources personnel and items are often lost and damaged through lack of knowledge.

A medium to long term outcome of the National Audit Project is to establish the South African Heritage Resources Information System, which will serve not only as a digitised inventory of cultural heritage resources, but also as a management tool to effectively and efficiently monitor heritage objects. This system will also allow SAHRA to more effectively assist other heritage and cultural agencies to manage the heritage resources in their care.