

## NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

### FOR WRITTEN REPLY

### QUESTION NO 86

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"Mrs D van der Walt (DA) to ask the Minister of Arts and Culture:

- (1) **Whether her department, with reference to the San bone collections at various museums and universities, has a national policy in terms of which museums and universities deal with human remains; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details;**
- (2) **whether she will take steps to ensure that such remains are returned to the relevant descendants; if not, why not; if so, (a) when and (b) what are the relevant details?"**

REPLY:

- (1) No, my department does not have a national policy in terms of which museums and universities deal with human remains. The management of human remains in South Africa mostly finds application in the provisions of the Cultural Institutions Act, 1998 (Act No 119 of 1998) and the National Heritage Resources Act, 1999 (Act No 25 of 1999). The legislation mandate institutions to develop their own policies with regard to the management, collection and alienation of moveable cultural property, and or human remains. Most museums base their collection policies on the International Council of Museums (ICOM) Code of Ethics, which contains particular reference to human remains and material of ritual significance.

However, requests for the reburial of human remains in our institutions are increasing. The DAC therefore realised the need to deal with this matter on a national basis and in a consistent and decisive manner. Human remains will therefore form part of the National Museums Policy. This will provide a national strategy on human remains that will be a starting point in the mediation between the pursuit of academic knowledge and the traditional burial rites of different cultures.

- (2) In drafting the National Museums Policy, DAC will also investigate best practices in the restitution of human remains.