



environmental affairs

Department:
Environmental Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Ref:02/1/5/2

MINISTER

QUESTION NO. 217 FOR WRITTEN REPLY: NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

A draft reply to **Mr N Singh (IFP)** to the above-mentioned question is enclosed for your consideration.

**MS NOSIPHO NGCABA
DIRECTOR-GENERAL**

DATE:

DRAFT REPLY APPROVED/AMENDED

**DR B E E MOLEWA, MP
MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS**

DATE:

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

(For written reply)

QUESTION NO. 217 {NW230E}

INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO.2 of 2018

DATE OF PUBLICATION: 16 February 2018

Mr N Singh (IFP) to ask the Minister of Environmental Affairs:

Whether she has found that the seismic surveying of the South African coastline by the oil and gas industry should (a) require environmental authorisation and (b) be a listed activity under the National Environmental Management Act, Act 107 of 1998, given the clear and negative impact that such seismic surveying has on marine life; if not, why not; if so, what are the further relevant details? NW230E

217. THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS REPLIES:

- (a) Yes. An environmental authorisation should be required for seismic activities utilising sonic signal methodologies as these methodologies could impact negatively on marine species, including whales.
- (b) Seismic surveying that forms part of an application for an exploration or production right for oil or gas in terms of the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act, 2002, is currently listed under section 24(2) of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998) and therefore requires an environmental authorisation.

However, seismic surveying using sonic signal methodologies as part of **reconnaissance** activities under the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act, 2002, is currently **not listed** as an activity that requires an environmental authorisation under the National Environmental Management Act, 1998.

With regard to the question as to whether an EIA was conducted for offshore drilling which may be commencing soon, the Petroleum Association of South Africa was contacted and it was determined that there is currently an EIA underway for offshore petroleum drilling proposed by ENI and Sasol. The EIA is at the scoping phase and it is being undertaken by the consulting company ERM. At the time of the application for the exploration right (that is, in September 2012), the environmental requirements were still regulated under the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act (MPRDA). Consequently, the Environmental Management Programme (EMPr) to undertake the 2D seismic survey programme (work programme applied for) as required by section 79(4) of the MPRDA was compiled and submitted for approval. The said EMPr was supported by two specialist studies assessing the impacts of the proposed seismic surveys on marine fauna and on fisheries. Accordingly, an EIA was carried out prior to the granting of the right under the MPRDA dispensation and not under NEMA.

Currently reconnaissance, which includes seismic activities is not covered under the EIA regulations and a process between PASA, DEA and DMR to list this activity is underway, as seismic activities could negatively impact on marine species.

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