MINISTER

QUESTION NO. 526 FOR WRITTEN REPLY: NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

A draft reply to **Ms J Edwards (DA)** 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. 526 {NW583E}

INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 9 of 2017

DATE OF PUBLICATION: 10 March 2017

Ms J Edwards (DA) to ask the Minister of Environmental Affairs:

(1)   What are the full relevant reasons for the high cost increase of (a) computer services, (b) consultants, (c) travel and (d) venue hire from R100 million in the 2016-17 financial year to R184 million in her Department's budget for the 2017-18 financial year;

(2)   whether (a) she or (b) her Department considered any other more cost-effective options in each case; if so, what are the relevant details; and

 (3)   why does her Department rely heavily on the services of consultants, rather than employing permanent experts?

526. THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS REPLIES:

1.   (a), (b), (c) and (d)
      High Cost Increase

		2016/17 R'000	2017/18 R'000	Reason for Increased allocation
A	Computer Services	29 447	67 010	The allocation for computer services were corrected over the Medium Term Expenditure Framework as the allocation for the 2016/17 financial year was too low (R29.447m). 2015/16 financial year audited figure was at R75.549m. Therefore the increased allocation is expected to cover the cost for data lines, servers for the main offices in Pretoria and Cape Town and Regional Offices for the Expanded Public Works Projects projects, as well as enforcement at the OR Thambo.
B	Consultants	215 311	207 521	The services under consultants include Communication, Research and Project Management consultants in the specialised fields of Oceans and Research, Biodiversity and Conservation, Climate Change and Air Quality, Strategic Infrastructure Projects, Internal Auditors. National Treasury implemented reduction in compensation of employee's allocations, resulting in not filling posts that are becoming vacant. The additional allocation received with regards to the Waste Tyre projects

		2016/17 R'000	2017/18 R'000	Reason for Increased allocation
				was also allocated under this line.
C	Travel	155 145	154 700	The travel allocation were cut from 2016/17 due to the implementation of cost containment measures. Travel include domestic travel to cover inspections in compliance, enforcement, and 750 Expanded Public Works Projects. They also include foreign travel to attend environmental, heritage, climate change, biodiversity and protected areas forums and platforms.
D	Venue	33 575	44 965	Venues and facilities allocation was corrected to cover the cost for venues to host the World Oceans Day, World Wetlands Day, Environmental month, Waste Khoro, Waste Phakisa Labs, National Parks Congress, as well as Oceans Economy Labs.

2. (a) and (b)

Cost-effective options

Cost containment measures were considered in line with National Treasury cost containment instruction received.

3. Why rely on the services of Consultants

The expertise and capacity does not exist in-house to undertake some of the complex work done in the Department. The Department attempted to attract and retain these type of expertise in the past, but failed due to lower salaries paid to civil servants. Such services under consultants include Research and Project Management consultants in the specialised fields of Oceans and Research, Biodiversity and Conservation, Climate Change and Air Quality, Strategic Infrastructure Projects, as well as Internal Auditors. National Treasury implemented reduction in

compensation of employee's allocations, resulting in not filling posts becoming vacant. The additional allocation received with regards to the Waste Tyre projects were also allocated under this line.

---ooOoo---