

Bill promoting transformation in environmental sector before parliament

The National Council of Provinces is considering the National Environmental Management Laws Amendment Bill, which promotes transformation in the environmental sector.



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“The National Environmental Management Laws Amendment Bill, which is currently considered by the National Council of Provinces, has now incorporated the transformation principle of recognising and promoting the full participation of black Professionals in the environmental sector,” Deputy Minister of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries, Makhotsa Sotyane said.

Addressing the inaugural meeting of the Environmental Assessment Practitioners Association of South Africa (EAPASA) on Tuesday, the Deputy Minister said the association has an important role to ensure that there are enough black Environmental Assessment Practitioners registered in the sector.

This year marks three years since the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries appointed EAPASA as the sole registration authority in terms of Section 24H of the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA).

The appointment was aimed at advancing the practice and quality of environmental assessment in South Africa by the professionalisation and transformation of the environmental sector.

The professional registration of Environmental Assessment Practitioners – or EAPs - ensures that environmental assessment processes are administered and managed by suitably experienced, qualified and credible individuals.

Sotyusaid a Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) study highlighted that EAPASA cannot be financially sustainable as a standalone entity and the fees alone that is levied for applications for registration will not be enough to sustain the entity financially in the long term.

“As part of government’s initiative to be more cost effective and ensuring that public entities are viable we are currently investigating the possibility for the environmental practitioner profession to be governed as part of the functions of an existing registration body.

“A concrete plan and the timeframes have not been finalised yet. However, it is not the intention to re-invent the wheel,” Sotyusaid.

She said all interested and effected parties will be consulted and their views will be considered before the finalisation of any plan.

“In order to ensure a suitable future for registrations, we encourage all EAPs to register with the relevant registration body whilst we as the Department go through the extension period for the Section 24H Registration Authority Regulations amendment process.

“It will be insincere of me not to reflect on one of the biggest challenges we have had to confront in our journey towards a professional sector. The Department has had to extend mandatory registration period by 24 months from February 2020, to allow for government to create the much needed clarity and ready itself to comply with the law,” the Deputy Minister said.

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