



IWMSA workshop addresses the topic “The Waste Act – One Year On”

MEDIA RELEASE

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It is a year and a half since the introduction of the Waste Act; the Institute of Waste Management of Southern Africa (IWMSA) recently hosted a workshop to debate the issue of “The Waste Act – One Year on”.

“Waste generation continues to expand uninhibited in South Africa and the waste management facilities, both new and existing, are battling to keep up despite significant investment from government in this area,” said Obed Baloyi, Director of Waste Policy and Information Management for the Department of Environmental Affairs and Project Director for the National Waste Management Strategy.

This is one of the issues currently being addressed by the National Waste Management Strategy (NWMS) which is in its final phase. The strategy addresses a wide set of targets and objectives to be achieved by both government and industries. It will be the tool by which the objectives of the Waste Act will be achieved over the next five years.

Suzan Oelofse, Chairperson of the Central Branch of the IWMSA elaborates, “The National Environmental Management: Waste Act, 2008 (Act No 59 of 2008) came into effect on 1 July 2009 and all previously fragmented legal requirements pertaining to waste management are now consolidated into this law. Within two years from the enactment of the Waste Act, a National Waste Management Strategy (NWMS) must be established to guide the implementation of the Act. The NWMS may include targets for waste reduction (Section 6(2)), whilst Section 7 of the Act states that the Minister must set national norms and standards for the classification of waste;

planning for and the provision of waste management services; and storage, treatment and disposal of waste, including the planning and operation of waste treatment and disposal facilities.”

What the boom in waste generation highlights is the requirement for effective waste minimisation strategies to address the overflow. It also demonstrates the economic potential of the sector; that there is great scope for increased job creation and GDP in the sector.

“In this regard,” Oelofse explains that, “other national norms and standards to be set in terms of the Act (Section 8) are for minimisation, re-use, recycling and recovery of waste, including the separation of waste at the point of generation; extended producer responsibility; the regionalisation of waste management services and the remediation of contaminated land and soil quality,”

Baloyi outlined what has been achieved to date in terms of new strategies, plans and policies and the lessons that have been learned through this process, both the successes and the challenges. Baloyi also discussed the way forward and the future plans of DEA regarding the Waste Act. The Department’s primary focus has been on policy development up until this point as no comprehensive and acceptable Waste Management Policy existed previously. The issue of waste collection backlogs dating back to 2005 also had to be addressed. Going forward regulations will need to be finalised and then enforced.

Successful implementation of the Act will undoubtedly see significant changes in the way waste is managed in South Africa. Municipalities, as responsible authorities, will have to get their house in order, address waste service backlog and implement waste reduction strategies as a matter of priority but even more so, the culture of consumerism needs to be changed. The successful implementation of this Act relies heavily on the involvement and positive contributions of every South African citizen.

The Department is positive about the future of the Waste Act thanks to the implementation of a national framework, a broader approach to planning, commitment from the private sector and leadership on a national level.

For more information on the IWMSA or National Waste Act visit www.iwmsa.co.za

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