

» Response to public outcry Amendments to research act possible, says Du Pisani

The National Commission on Research, Science and Technology will be "extraordinarily transparent and is not in the business to waste public resources", a national consultative workshop was told.

He was speaking at the opening of a two-day national consultative workshop on the development of the national research, science, technology, and innovation programme (NRSTIP) in Windhoek on Monday. The Prof. André du Pisani, says.

The programme will address challenges and opportunities in the national innovation system by devising appropriate interventions for an enabling framework in policy areas, human resources and institutional framework.

"There is a public outcry about the act and researchers have raised their concerns. There will be follow-up meetings to deal with these concerns and if the act needs to be amended, we will do it," Du Pisani said.

The Research, Science and Technology Act No 23 of 2004 has caused widespread protest amongst the public and non-go-

vernmental organisations (NGOs) over the past few years as there are concerns that the act and the regulations are aimed at controlling and limiting research and enquiries.

The co-ordinator of the Gender Research and Advocacy Project at the Legal Assistance Centre (LAC), Dianne Hubbard, told Nampá the LAC intends to take Government to



Prof André du Pisani, chairperson of the National Commission on Research, Science and Technology (NCRST).
PHOTO: NAMPA

court over the proposed research regulation of the Ministry of Education, which it considers as unconstitutional.

"We have already prepared all the documents. We have also tried over the past two years to resolve the issue with the ministry," she noted.

Hubbard stated that court action is the last option, and the LAC would welcome a decision by the NCRST to amend the act.

This issue, according to Hubbard, needs to be dealt with urgently if the ministry is in the process of finalising the programme.

The Namibia Non-governmental Organisations Forum (Nangof), backed by the Institute for Public Policy Research and the

LAC, issued a joint statement earlier this month containing their concerns about the NCRST.

However, Du Pisani pledged that the commission will be "extraordinarily transparent and is not in the business to waste public resources. We will work strategically."

In terms of Section 1 of the Act, the NCRST must prepare a national programme for research science and technology once every three years. A draft programme has been developed with the broader context of Vision 2030 goals of Namibia become a "prosperous and industrialised Namibia developed by her human resources, enjoying peace, harmony and political stability".

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