

# Further delay expected in implementing DNA Act

**KOWTHAR SOLOMONS**

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The police are preparing to issue a tender for the forensic training of police officers, which was supposed to begin in April, then was moved to September and is now expected to start later because the logistics are yet to be finalised.

The act, signed into law on January 25, makes it mandatory for police to take DNA samples from those accused or convicted of serious crime to be used as part of a National Forensic DNA Database.

It has been hailed as a game-changer in the fight against crime and while its implementation is being delayed, serial offenders are able to go undetected.

David Barritt, spokesman for Police Minister Nathi Mthethwa,

said the minister had to follow due process. "The minister fully supports the implementation of the act and his staff is monitoring SAPS' progress. In order to comply with police procurement policies and the requirements of the Department of Health, SAPS is preparing a tender for DNA staff training."

Barritt said the tender would have strict conditions with only practitioners registered with the Health Professionals Council of

South Africa. "It is of vital importance that police officers are trained to get DNA samples in accordance with strict procedures to make sure that any DNA evidence introduced in court cannot easily be challenged," he said.

Because of the logistics, training might start after the September deadline, according to Barritt.

Detective and serial killer expert Piet Byleveld said the act would make it easier to catch criminals as

it would save time and money in accessing DNA samples. "My only concern is whether the police will be trained properly," he said.

Vanessa Lynch, founder of DNA Project, which spearheaded the campaign, said she could not understand the delay. "South Africa has one of the highest crime rates in the world. With the DNA database in place, we will deal a serious blow to crime."

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