

A big boost

ANYONE with a smidgen of knowledge of crime investigation and prosecution will be aware of the crucial role that DNA plays. Skin cells, hair, blood and saliva are just some of the biological sources of DNA that crime scene investigators rely on.

It is almost impossible for perpetrators not to leave some of their cells behind at a crime scene – small amounts of biological evidence, such as a few cells, contain enough DNA to obtain a person's forensic DNA profile.

Which is why the Criminal Law (Forensic Procedures) Amendment Act No 37 of 2013, which President Jacob Zuma signed into law on January 31, is such a groundbreaking development.

The act allows for DNA samples to be collected from anyone convicted of, as well as suspects arrested for, Schedule 8 offences, before they are released from prison. The DNA profiles obtained in this way and from samples collected at crime scenes will be entered into the national forensic DNA database, allowing for comparisons to be made and culprits to be identified.

The act is the brainchild of the DNA Project, an advocacy initiative founded by attorney Vanessa Lynch following the unsolved murder of her father in 2004. This act will go a long way in helping solve countless cases and is a big boost against crime.