

FORENSIC EVIDENCE

DNA testing gets bite with new board

DNA testing for criminal cases has been around since the late 1980s, but only this year has it found legal standing in the South African criminal justice system.

The Criminal Law (Forensic Procedures) Amendment Act 37 of 2013 – known as the DNA Act – was passed into law on January 27, and the police ministry says the DNA board has “hit the ground running” under the direction of Justice Yvonne Mokgoro.

“(The board) has agreed to, as a matter of urgency, conduct a field trip to the South African Police Service national forensics science laboratory within the next four weeks, among other tasks,” said police ministry spokesperson Musa Zondi.

An individual’s DNA, or deoxyribonucleic acid, is believed to be as unique as his or her fingerprints.

One of the board’s main tasks is to provide oversight of the collection, retention, storage, destruction, and disposal of forensic DNA samples.

It will also retain and remove forensic DNA profiles, conduct familial searches, investigate any breach in the taking, transporting, analysis, storing, use and communication of forensic DNA samples and forensic DNA profiles, and maintain security and quality management systems.

Deputy chairperson of the National Forensic Oversight and Ethics board Vanessa Lynch said on her website (dnaproject.co.za) her part-time appointment would run for the next five years.

“I am so excited about this appointment because key to the successful implementation of the DNA Act is the establishment of this oversight board, which will provide ethical oversight over the national DNA database and handle complaints relating to the taking, retention and use of DNA samples and forensic DNA profiles,” said Lynch.

“Comprising of 10 members, half of which have been chosen from outside the government sector, this oversight board’s core functions will include monitoring the implementation of the provisions of the DNA Act and making proposals to the minister for any improvements regarding the overall operations of the database.” – *Citizen reporter*



I am so excited about this appointment because key to the successful implementation of the DNA Act is the establishment of this oversight board

Vanessa Lynch
Deputy chairperson of the