

Cops' fingerprint boost

BY GAYE DAVIS

The cabinet has given the green light to proposed changes to the law to allow the police to access databases holding the fingerprints of millions of citizens and foreigners, in a move to improve their ability to track down suspects and boost conviction rates.

The draft Criminal Law (Forensic Procedures) Amendment Bill is expected to come before parliament early next year, Justice Ministry spokesperson Zolile Nqayi said yesterday.

In addition to expanding police access to fingerprints, the draft bill will also increase their powers to take and store fingerprints and other "biometric materials" - and to establish a DNA database as a crime-fighting tool.

The SAPS has access only to fingerprints stored in its own database. The Criminal Procedure Act does not make it compulsory that fingerprints be taken, even when someone is convicted of an offence.

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