

# BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT AND OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT

## OCTOBER 2018

APPLICATION FOR POSTPONEMENT OF  
CERTAIN REQUIREMENTS OF THE  
NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL  
MANAGEMENT: AIR QUALITY ACT 39 OF  
2004 (NEM: AQA) - MINIMUM EMISSION  
STANDARDS, FOR NATIONAL PETROLEUM  
REFINERS OF SOUTH AFRICA  
(PROPRIETARY) LIMITED (NATREF),  
SASOLBURG



### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to provide stakeholders with the following:

- Information on the background to Natref's application for postponement from certain of the requirements of the List of activities which result in atmospheric emissions which have or may have a significant detrimental effect on the environment, including health, social conditions, economic conditions, ecological conditions or cultural heritage published under Government Notice No, 248, Gazette No. 33064 dated 31 March 2010, in terms of section 21(1)(b) of NEM:AQA, and in particular Part 3 of the schedule, the Minimum Emissions Standards (the MES).
- An outline of the legal framework governing air quality management in South Africa and specifically the MES pertinent to this BID and related applications.
- Information on the public participation and application process that will be followed.
- Information regarding opportunities to provide comments relating to this application.

### BACKGROUND



Natref is South Africa's only inland crude oil refinery which refines various grades of crude oil. Natref is located in Sasolburg in the Metsimaholo Local Municipality which forms part of the Fezile Dabi District Municipality in the Free State Province.

Natref's approach to air quality management is well aligned with the risk-based philosophy adopted by the ambient air quality standards.

Natref has prepared dispersion model scenarios to understand its impact on ambient air quality in the region in which it operates and its capacity to improve these outcomes with emission reduction technologies. This is contextualised against the backdrop of other sources of ambient air pollution, to identify the most effective actions to achieve ambient air quality improvements. This approach helps to inform Natref's air quality management priorities, by identifying the key actions to improve ambient air quality effectively.

Natref remains committed to meeting its commitments agreed to in the Vaal Triangle Priority Area Air Quality Management Plan.

To this end Natref is progressing its air quality improvement roadmaps by implementing applicable projects in the priority area. Natref provides regular updates to its local licensing authority as well as the national authority in this regard. These commitments include a reduction in emission of Particulate Matter, Volatile Organic Compounds and Sulphur Dioxide.

## LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

### AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT

The term “ambient air quality” refers to the state of the air in our surrounding environment. Good air quality is important not only for humans, but for other organisms and the environment in general. Poor air quality is a result of many factors, including emissions from various sources, both natural (such as veld fires) and human-induced (industrial and domestic emissions).

The role of the regulatory authorities is to ensure that ambient air quality meets standards set to protect human health and the environment. To achieve this, the Department of Environmental Affairs has promulgated two related but distinct standards. The first are referred to as point source emission standards (also called Minimum Emission Standards (MES)), which place limits on the concentration of emissions from certain industrial activities. The second are ambient air quality standards which seek to set total emissions from all contributors (i.e. industry, citizens and natural causes) to a level that protects human health and the environment.



NEM:AQA provides for various specific air quality management measures. These include the declaration of priority areas such as the Vaal Triangle Airshed Priority Area and the Highveld Priority Area; ambient air quality standards and point source emission standards as regulated in the MES. The MES prescribes the limits for point source emissions from existing plants which became effective from 1 April 2015 (the so-called ‘existing plant standards’), as well as more stringent limits that must be met by 1 April 2020 (the so-called ‘new plant standards’) (termed “Compliance Timeframes”). Part 2 of the MES allows for applications for postponements to the prescribed compliance timeframes. Postponement applications must be made to the National Air Quality Officer at the Department of Environmental Affairs.

As part of an application for postponement, Natref is required to submit an Atmospheric Impact Report (AIR) and detailed justification and reasons for the postponement request. The MES also require that Natref make these documents available for public comment as prescribed in Chapter 6 of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations GN R326 (2017) promulgated under the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998) (NEMA).

### NATREF’S APPLICATION

Natref operates various processes that require an Atmospheric Emission Licence (AEL), some comply with the MES and some have previously been granted postponement by the National Air Quality Officer (NAQO), with the concurrence of its licensing officer. Natref is however challenged to meet the 2020 new plant standard (outside of the Turnaround and Inspection shutdown period) applicable to the availability requirements of the Sulphur Recovery Unit, under sub-category 2.3 of the MES. Natref therefore intends to seek postponement with regards to the availability requirements of the Sulphur Recovery Unit in terms of Sub-category 2.3 of the MES.



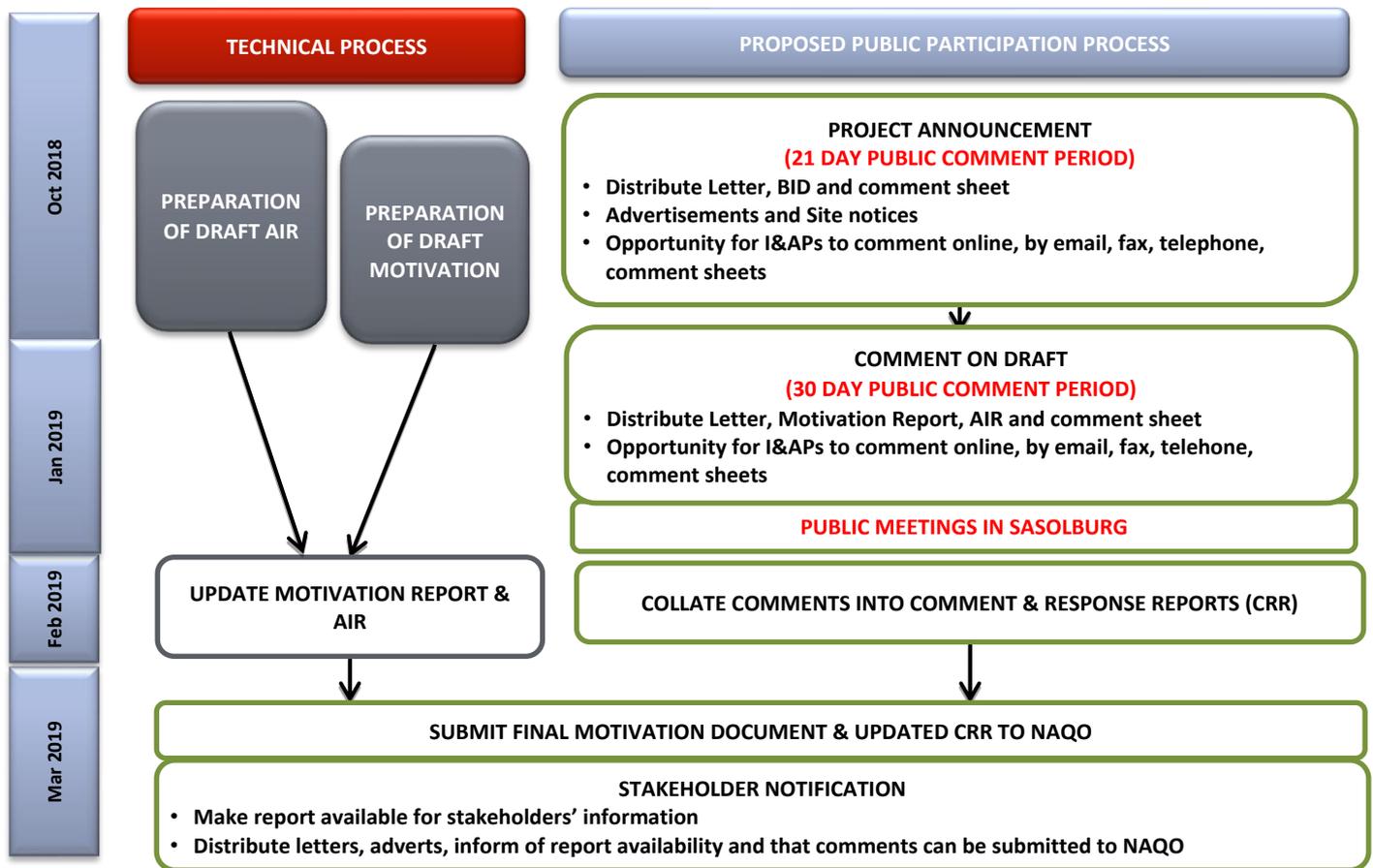
## APPLICATION PROCESS

Natref has appointed a team of independent specialists to assist with the application. SRK Consulting (South Africa) (Pty) Ltd (SRK) has been appointed to undertake the public participation process and to assist Natref in compiling the Motivation Report. Airshed Planning Professionals (Pty) Ltd (Airshed) has been appointed to prepare the Atmospheric Impact Report (AIR). Natref has also appointed Exponent to peer review the air dispersion modelling approach.

The AIR, will detail Natref’s impact on ambient air quality in the areas affected by its operations in Sasolburg. The Motivation Report will be informed by the AIR as required in terms of Part 2 of the MES. It will further detail the reasons and justification for the postponement application and outline the steps to be taken by Natref to achieve compliance.

Natref is committed to affording I&AP’s the opportunity to provide their comments during the public participation process. This process has been informed by the requirements for consultation in terms of the 2017 Amended EIA Regulations. Responses to comments received during the stakeholder engagement process will be submitted together with the Motivation Report to the authority for consideration during decision making.

The proposed technical and public participation activities, as well as the broad timeframes for roll out of these processes are shown in the flow chart below.



## INVITATION TO COMMENT

Should you wish to register as an interested and affected party for this process please do so online at the following link:  
<https://arcg.is/1fyTmf>



Alternatively, please complete the enclosed registration and comment form and submit it to SRK, at the adjacent contact details, by the **9 November 2018**.

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