



TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

Birth certificates renamed to cut down confusion

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Unabridged birth certificates have been renamed abridged birth certificates, but travellers to SA will not receive advisories on the documentation they require until 2017, says Department of Home Affairs director-general Mkuseli Apleni.

Renaming birth certificates to avoid confusion was possibly the easiest way to achieve a recommendation from Cabinet to ease entry into SA, Apleni said at a meeting on Wednesday with the Department of Tourism and organisations representing the tourism and aviation sectors.

The meeting followed widespread concern about recent regulatory changes by the department.

Critics maintain that the new rules, along with shortages of immigration officials, have hit and will continue to hit, tourist numbers.

A “short-term phase” of implementing the Cabinet’s recommendations to soften the effect of the new rules for travellers concluded at the beginning of November, Apleni said.

Most of these recommendations had been implemented or were in the process of being implemented, but issuing travel advisories this close to SA’s peak

tourist season could cause confusion, he added.

Apleni said South African children’s passports that included their parents’ details could be issued from 2017.

VISA-FREE COUNTRIES

An ongoing concern in the industry is confusion over the wording of regulations for visa-free countries, where parents “may” be asked to present documentation to prove they are not trafficking children.

Work is under way to reword the regulations.

Deputy director-general for international tourism growth Anemé Malan said it was critical

to improve communication to travellers. “We must be very clear that you must be able to prove your relationship with the child,” she said.

Despite concessions on long-term visas, many travellers were not making use of them, she added.

Tourism Business Council of SA CEO Mmatšatši Ramawela said the association supported security measures for children and general issues of security, but needed clarity on whether the measures the council proposed to reduce congestion at OR Tambo International Airport were going to be adopted.

Home Affairs Minister Malusi

Gigaba is expected to make announcements on his department’s plans for the festive season on Thursday including on mitigating measures at OR Tambo, where only 50% of immigration counters are staffed.

The airport did not have a senior immigration manager, said Apleni. Several proposals had been put to the Treasury about funding for additional staff.

Treasury spokeswoman Yolisa Tyantsi said on Wednesday that the requests had been received and that the Department of Home Affairs would receive a response.

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