



COGHSTA

Department of Cooperative Governance
Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs

NORTHERN CAPE

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MEDIA PRESS STATEMENT

By

MEC BENTLEY VASS

14 December 2023

Address by the MEC for Cooperative Governance Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs, Mr. Bentley Vass on the Northern Cape quality of water

The Head of Department; Mr. Lenkoe

Chief Directors;

Citizens of the Northern Cape;

Members of the Media;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Good afternoon,

I am privileged and honored to be speaking to you on a matter that is impacting on a basic daily need, the water in our province.

A few of our municipalities have been confronted with infrastructure challenges, three that we have been zooming into are, Sol Plaatje and Magareng Municipalities, both in the Frances Baard District and Kai !Garib Municipality in the ZF Mgcawu District.

Sol Plaatje recently had a Water Recovery Programme that largely depended on Nightly Interruptions. The municipality has been critical in reaching satisfactory water storage levels at the reservoirs, and were able to bolster

production at the Riverton Waterworks, whilst implementing the most stringent of measures in its quest to providing safe water for human consumption.

The Municipality has one source of water supply for Kimberley Town consisting of the Riverton Water Treatment Works, 900mm and 600mm diameter pipe for distribution and stage at Newton Reservoir. The infrastructure has aged and experienced frequent leakages

The Municipality has received a Budget Facility for Infrastructure (BFI) which focuses on addressing bulk water infrastructure challenges.

Budget Facility for Infrastructure (BFI) will focus on projects that will be implemented in three phases over a period of 7-8 years

- Currently, the municipality managed to replace the filter media (sand) of the three filter banks.
- Clarifiers were cleaned to reduce the sludge carryover to the filters which were clogging and had to be frequently backwashed.
- The change in water flocculent (chemical) has also improved the quality of water produced.
- Furthermore, the siphons for pumping filtered water were modified to allow more water pumped.
- Repairs and maintenance of the malfunction mechanical and electrical components at the water treatment works

Additionally, the Department of Water and Sanitation has also funded the upgrading of the Water Treatment Works through its Regional Bulk Infrastructure Grant (RBIG).

In Kai !Garib Local Municipality, significant improvements in the quality of the water have been made with the support received from DWS through the refurbishment project of the existing Water Treatment Facility in Kakamas which was aimed at improving the efficiency of the plant and the water quality produced thereof. These improvements have been identified as follows:

1. Both the chemical dosing and filtration systems have been optimized;
2. The aesthetic parameter results of the water shows improvement;
3. There is still sediment in the reservoirs and bulk pipelines which needs to be cleaned as soon as possible to prevent sediment load build-up which would alter the turbidity of the water supplied to communities

4. The microbiological test results also show improvements.
5. There is very little interruption in water supply, except in instances when there is load shedding.

With regards to infrastructure upgrades, the Augrabies and Vredesvallei Water Treatment Works are currently upgraded and short interruptions occurs from time to time. Other interruptions are the cause of normal maintenance i.e. burst pipes, mechanical failures and leaks within the network. In Kakamas, there is an RBIG project currently under Feasibility Study phase for the construction of a New Water Treatment Plant which is aimed at augmenting the capacity of the existing plant to increase the amount of water available for the communities of Kakamas.

In Dawid Kruiper we have the following areas affected by the delivery of bulk water as a result of pending power outages.

- Makwetha Valley (Pabalello)
- Louisvale Road
- Kalksloot and Klippunt.

Water is supplied daily by water trucks to the above areas. With this, the public is once again requested to consume the available water sparingly.

The Census 2022 Report released this year indicates that the Northern Cape has increased its access to piped water in the dwelling to 54.5% from the 45.8% census of 2011. This is progress but we acknowledge that more still needs to be done.

Minster for Water and Sanitation, Senzo Mchunu released the Full Blue and No Drop Reports, and The Green Drop Report on 05 December 2023.

Water was nationalised by the National Water Act, making the minister obliged to do at least three things,

Firstly, to inform the public about the quality of water in the rivers (Green Drop).

Secondly, to report on the water quality in the taps (Blue Drop), which means oversight of municipalities.

And thirdly, to act as a regulator for all players in the overall supply chain of water from the river to the bulk treatment plant, into the municipal networks, back into the municipal wastewater treatment plants to be finally discharged as effluent into the source of all drinking water — the river.

The report released by Minister Mchunu, indicates that the Northern Cape has the highest percentage of drinking water systems with poor or critical performance (87%). This has deteriorated from 48% in 2014.

In the province, we have the National Department of Water and Sanitation which works closely with municipalities by regulating the municipalities in terms of Blue, Green and No Drop requirements. The department integrates risk analysis as part of the audit process of the Blue Drop Assessment with the aim of quantifying, prioritising, and managing the risks to ensure targeted regulation of high-risk water service institutions. This is done by means of a Water Safety Plan (WaSP) which is a tool each municipality must have to identify, control, manage and mitigate risks.

The DWS also offers financial support to municipalities through its grant funding, namely, Regional Bulk Infrastructure Grants (RBIG) and Water Services Infrastructure Grants (WSIG). It must also be noted that DWS as part of its support function, is in the process of developing 5-year Water and Sanitation Reliability plans for each municipality. The purpose of this document is to provide a comprehensive implementation plan to achieve reliable water services for the Water Services Authority (WSA) within a period

The National and Provincial government also renders technical support through Municipal Infrastructure Support Agency (MISA), project management and implementation; and regulatory support to ensure compliance with regulatory prescripts.

As the Department of Cooperative Governance, our role is to provide an oversight function to municipalities to ensure adherence to all applicable legislation. Currently, in our Province, the performance of our municipalities on water service provision is hindered by lack of skilled personnel; Northern Cape being a remote province struggles to both attract and retain skills. Lack of Financial Management in terms of Poor billing and revenue collection, High Indigency Rate and Non cost reflective tariffs. Lack of water quality results capturing on Integrated Regulatory Information System (IRIS) by our municipalities has been identified to be one of the major shortcomings which affects their ability to obtain a Blue Drop Status.

We hereby encourage our communities to pay for the services rendered to them so that our municipality are able better operate and maintain the infrastructure to ensure the delivery of reliable and sustainable water services. We equally plea with our communities to safeguard and take ownership of the infrastructure that has been built to service their needs; and to also use water sparingly, illegal connections and water leaks must be immediately reported to prevent water losses.

COGHSTA will ensure that municipalities as required by the legislation inform/alert communities on the status of the water quality on a monthly basis. We will ensure that in

instances where the water quality is not of drinking standard, boiler notices are issued to communities until that the water is deemed safe.

For now, we want to plead with our communities to take precaution of the water that comes from their taps, should there be instances where they deem the quality of water to be unsafe, the municipality must be alerted so that they can investigate the complaint. We urge you that in such instances, exercise the boiler notice until you are given assurance that the water is safe to drink.

With this being said, we call upon all our stakeholders to work together in achieving efficient, reliable and sustainable water services that complies with the regulatory prescripts.

As Cooperative Governance our role is to provide oversight of implementation to municipalities, provide support and monitor the implementation of legislation. What seems to be a major challenge at this point in time is the lack of communication to our communities.

COGHSTA together with municipalities will embark on a digital awareness campaign, to alert communities on the status of our water quality and guide them on what to do to make water consumption safe.

For now, we want to plead with our citizens to boil water they are using for consumption. If you know or suspect your water is unsafe, don't use that water to drink, wash dishes, brush your teeth, wash and prepare food.

Colleagues, I must make mention of the cabinet decision on the members of the Vaal-Orange Catchment Management Agency. For the first time we have one of our own as a member of the management agency, Mr. Desmond Fransman (Reverend Dez as most of us know him), not only is he a member but he is the Chairperson.

The purpose of Catchment Management Agencies is to enhance decentralised decision-making and to involve stakeholders in managing water resources, in an integrated manner, at a local level.

We have no doubt that Reverend Dez, will serve with dignity and integrity.

With this said, we call on the cooperation of all stakeholders who are to take part in this process.

We reaffirm our position as the Northern Cape Provincial Government, that working with all role-players, our top priority is to ensure that all residents irrespective of their

geographical location in the province, are able to access clean, safe and reliable water consistently. We acknowledge the current challenges we are facing in some of the municipalities, especially the three I have mentioned at the start of this briefing, and the interventions we have put in place to mitigate these challenges.

This brings me to the end of my statement to you, I hope we find each other well within what I have presented to you.

I thank you