



## water & sanitation

Department:  
Water and Sanitation  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Enquiries: WJ Maluleke  
Telephone: 082 809 9817  
Reference: 6/2/2/6

### NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

### FOR WRITTEN REPLY

### QUESTION NO 3046

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**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 33)**

**3046. Mr M S F de Freitas (DA) to ask the Minister of Water and Sanitation:**

- (1) Whether he and/or his department maintains reservoirs in Gauteng; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, with reference to the (a) past three financial years and (b) since 1 April 2023, what (i) maintenance and upgrades (aa) took place and/or (bb) are planned for reservoirs in Gauteng in each month and (ii) total budget was and/or will be allocated and/or spent in each month in each case;
- (2) whether he and/or his department is responsible for water to the residents of Gauteng; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, with reference to the current water issues taking place, such as the unavailability of water and low water pressure experienced by the residents of Gauteng, (a) what are the (i) plans to resolve this and (ii) timelines or time frames in this regard and (b) who are the persons in his department who are responsible to ensure that the specified issues are resolved within the respective timelines?

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## MINISTER OF WATER AND SANITATION

- (1) (i) Water Services provision is the responsibility of local government in line with the provisions of the Constitution and the Water Services Act. This includes upgrades and maintenance of the reservoirs within each municipal jurisdiction.  
  
(ii) The budget for the refurbishment varies based on their yearly allocations to municipalities in terms of the Division of Revenue Act.
- (2) Municipalities in Gauteng buy most of their treated water from Rand Water, which abstracts raw water from the Integrated Vaal River System (IVRS) and treats it so that it meets drinking water quality standards. Rand Water stores the treated water in bulk storage reservoirs and pumps it into municipalities' reservoirs. From there the water is mostly gravity-fed to households.

To ensure a continuous supply of water to users even in times of drought, the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) sets a limit on the amount of raw water that Rand Water can abstract from the IVRS. Dam storage levels can fall rapidly when there is a drought, and it would therefore be irresponsible to raise the abstraction limit when the dams are full. The amount of water in the IVRS therefore puts a limit on the amount of water that can be supplied to residents in Gauteng.

Demand for water in Gauteng has grown rapidly, largely due to population growth, and partly due to increasing leaks in municipal distribution systems. The planners in DWS anticipated this growth in demand and put in place plans to address it as far back as the 1980's, through the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP), which transfers water from Lesotho into the IVRS. The R40 billion Phase 2 of the LHWP has been delayed by nine years. It is now under construction but is only due to be completed by 2028.

Rand Water's total current supply capacity is 5 200 million litres of treated drinking water per day, and it is already exceeding its abstraction limit from the IVRS. It will only be possible for Rand Water to increase its abstraction of water from the IVRS after LHWP Phase 2 comes online.

Rand Water has a R35 billion capital programme which is timed to result in substantial additional treatment and storage capacity becoming available when LHWP Phase 2 comes online. This includes the recently completed R3.5 billion augmentation of the capacity of its Zuikerbosch Water Treatment Plant by 150 million litres per day. This additional capacity is now contributing to reducing the risk of shortages of water for Rand Water's municipal customers but is also contributing to the over-extraction of water from the IVRS by Rand Water.

In this context, the demand-supply relationship for treated water in Gauteng is very tight and the system is vulnerable to disruptions caused by heavy load shedding, electro-mechanical breakdowns or theft of cables. Usually such breakdowns would not have a noticeable effect on water supply due to the ability to draw on reserve supply capacity, but now there is no reserve supply capacity. Because the water is usually gravity-fed from municipal reservoirs to households, high-lying areas are worst affected by disruptions in supply.

Rand Water's infrastructure is well-maintained, and it only loses 3% of its water due to leaks. Gauteng's municipalities have neglected the maintenance of their water infrastructure for decades, and on average they lose 25% of the water that they buy from Rand Water through leaks.

To reduce the risk of water supply disruptions in future, the municipalities need to improve their billing and revenue collection and allocate increased funding to maintenance and to reducing leaks. There are also investments that they can make in pumps and reservoirs which can improve their ability to withstand the kind of disruptions described above (the City of Joburg is currently implementing several such investments).

The Minister of Water and Sanitation is coordinating regular meetings with Rand Water and the Mayors of the Gauteng municipalities. In addition, officials from Rand Water and the Gauteng municipalities are having daily meetings to ensure improved coordination of responses to disruptions in supply.

Even after LHWP Phase 2 comes on stream, Gauteng's long-term water consumption will need to be carefully managed, because there are limits to which further phases of LHWP or other water transfer projects can continue to provide additional water to Gauteng at an affordable cost. The reality is that South Africa is a water-scarce country with limited sustainable water resources and amongst the top 30 driest countries globally.

DWS will be working with Rand Water and the municipalities in Gauteng to implement a more effective communications strategy regarding the need for people to use water more sparingly. Average per capita water consumption in Gauteng is 253 litres per day compared to the world average of 173 litres per capita per day. If water supply disruptions are to be avoided in Gauteng in future, a culture of careful water use needs to be promoted and awareness raised of the fact that, if some people do not use water sparingly, other people will get none.

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DRAFT REPLY: RECOMMENDED/ ~~NOT RECOMMENDED/ AMENDED~~

*SPhillips*

**DR SEAN PHILLIPS**  
**DIRECTOR-GENERAL**  
**DATE: 2 11 23**

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DRAFT REPLY: APPROVED/ NOT APPROVED/ AMENDED

*[Signature]*  
**MR SENZO MCHUNU, MP**  
**MINISTER OF WATER AND SANITATION**  
**DATE: 07/11/23**