



INTERNET ARTICLE

DWS Deputy Ministers reinforce commitment for equitable water supply and dignified sanitation

17 May 2023

The two Deputy Ministers for the Department of Water and Sanitation, David Mahlobo and Judith Tshabalala have reinforced government's commitment of ensuring equitable water supply and dignified sanitation for all, as mandated by the constitution of the country.

The Deputy Ministers were speaking in support of Minister Senzo Mchunu's tabling of a R40.291 billion budget for the 2023/2024 financial year in the National Assembly in Cape Town on 16 May 2023.

While engaging the National Assembly, Deputy Minister Mahlobo highlighted matters which have been on the Department's achilles' heel in the previous years and alluded to interventions which have yielded positive results.

"South Africa's water resources are limited and scarce. The situation is worsened by the occurrence of droughts and the increasing demand associated with population growth and a developing economy. As a country, we are approaching the full utilisation of our available water resources. We therefore require a strategic change in the use and conservation of our water resources," said Deputy Minister Mahlobo.

He added that the Department is in the process of implementing several measures to ensure the increased use of groundwater in a sustainable and reliable manner. Adding that the management of borehole-based water service schemes by municipalities should be improved.

"The Department has developed generic standard operating procedures for municipalities to follow, covering groundwater planning and exploration, drilling, borehole testing, monitoring, operation, and maintenance. Compliance with these standard operating procedures will be included in the revised norms and standards for water services to be issued under the Water Services Act. We have also requested National Treasury to include compliance to the standard operating procedures in the grant frameworks," he said.

Meanwhile, Deputy Minister Tshabalala raised concerns of the negative impact of infrastructure vandalism, water pollution and illegal water connections, which often hinder work being done to accelerate the delivery of water and sanitation related services.

"We are taking action to ensure water users comply with the National Water Act, by means of registering and obtaining necessary authorizations while enforcing penalties against illegal users, and ensuring payment of water services, including the capacitation of local municipalities in the provision of reliable water services, as well as ensuring the enforcement

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of regulations, compliance and enforcement in line with the Municipal Systems Act, National Water Act and the Water Services Act,” said Deputy Minister Tshabalala.

The Deputy Minister also stated that the Department has fastened its hand on polluters through the consistent implementation of regulatory actions.

She further noted the impact which the current power challenges has on water supply, saying that the Department has taken significant steps to ensure fair and equitable opportunities in water use for electricity generation.

“We made public request for applications from independent power producers. We aim to grant water use licenses for hydropower generation in a transparent and unbiased manner, allowing all potential investors an equal chance to contribute to our energy needs,” she said.

“Additionally, to lower costs and maintain vital infrastructure during load shedding, we sought expressions of interest from independent power producers to establish renewable electricity generation capacity and establish long-term off-take agreements.

These actions will not only benefit our department but also ensure uninterrupted water supply to Eskom during severe periods of load shedding, this is as we continue to work together to harness the power of water and renewable energy, fostering sustainable development and securing our energy future,” she added.

Both the Deputy Ministers, David Mahlobo and Judith Tshabalala, along with Minister Senzo Mchunu have committed to ensure that the allocated budget for the Department is utilised in accordance with the prescripts of the Public Finance Management Act.

Lebogang Maseko

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