

**Launch of the WC/WDM Municipal Pilot Programme**  
**Speech by Mrs LB Hendricks, Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry**  
**Mangaung Local Municipality, Botshabelo, Bloemfontein, Free State**  
**4 December 2007**

Premier of the Free State  
MEC of the Free State Local Government and Housing  
Executive Mayor of the Mangaung Local Municipality  
Councillors  
Distinguished guests  
Ladies and gentlemen

**1. Introduction**

Thank you for joining me at the launch of the National Water Conservation and Water Demand Management (WC/WDM) Pilot Programme. This launch is taking place during the 16 days of activism against women and child abuse, an important campaign for South Africa where we are saying that the violence against women and children in our country is not acceptable - and must stop. During these 16 Days there have been marches, rallies, discussion groups, choirs and other ways of creating awareness of the problems of violence against women and abuse of children. Ladies and Gentlemen: Real men don't abuse.

As part of these 16 days of activism we commemorated World AIDS Day on Saturday 1 December. Far too many people in our country have died as a result of AIDS, and this day has special significance for us as this disease has an impact on all South Africans. The government is asking the citizens of this country to be aware of HIV and AIDS; be aware of how HIV is spread, be aware of your status, and show compassion for those living with HIV and AIDS.

As Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, I am particularly aware that clean water and decent sanitation is a necessity for all our citizens, but particularly those who have HIV and AIDS.

Premier, water is life, and along with sanitation, forms such an important part of our existence. By having access to these basic services they improve our lives and even contributes to economic growth and job creation. I am therefore very pleased to hear that the programme to replace buckets in the formal established areas in this municipality will be completed by December and that the remaining buckets in this community should be removed by March next year. As the buckets in Mangaung are being replaced with flush toilets it is important for us to understand the real challenges that we face around water scarcity in our country, so that we understand the need to save and conserve our water.

Water is also a necessity for economic growth: to generate electricity our power stations need vast quantities of water, as do our petrol refineries, mines, factories, and other industries. The government, through the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (Asgi-SA), is targeting six percent annual growth by 2010 as a means to accelerate job creation and poverty eradication; and we will need water.

Water is life, water contributes to growth and development; yet there is still so much water being wasted in our country. When we walk in the streets and we see water flowing from burst pipes, or when we have leaking taps and pipes in our workplaces or homes – water is being wasted. All this water being lost costs money – it is expensive to build and manage dams; construct pipelines, reservoirs and other infrastructure, as well as treat water and take it to households. Water is not free and the water being wasted costs us money. We have done studies that show how much water is being lost and as much as 29% of the water for domestic use is lost or not accounted for.

While many other countries are in a similar position to us with regard to the water lost or not accounted for, it is far too high for us as we are living in a water scarce country and do not have unlimited financial resources. We need to ensure that measures are taken to address the water that is being wasted but also that we make people aware of the need to change their behaviour so that they use less water.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in the past we were only really concerned about water during periods of drought, otherwise we were unconcerned about the water being wasted, yet in a country that receives half the world average of rainfall we always need to be concerned about water.

As our economy and population grows so we will need more water. To accommodate this increase in demand we will need to build new dams and other infrastructure but we will also need to ensure that we conserve water.

Water is life, and we need to change our behaviour to save water.

## **2. National WC/WDM Flagship Programme**

Programme Director, Plato the famous Greek intellectual, who lived over 2500 years ago, captured it best when he said: "I savour every drop, for when there is naught, I am nothing, and my life ceases to exist". This message should form the basis upon which all of us should be moving as we create and entrench a culture of water conservation in our country.

The programme that we are launching here today is part of that message and is a call to action for all water users – government, all types of businesses, and communities. This Programme is founded on four pillars which are Social Interventions, Technical interventions, Economic interventions, and Institutional and legislative interventions.

- The Social interventions include our National Waterwise Campaign where we use Radio, TV adverts, and Newspaper, as well as community training to make people more aware of the scarcity of water in our country and how they can contribute to saving water.
- The Technical intervention is to work with the water users to repair leaks, replace the old plumbing that uses too much water, and installing devices that can save water.
- The Economic intervention looks at how we can give water users an incentive to use less water. The price of water is one way of making this intervention – for example the more water that you use the more you pay per kilolitre; another way is to give the big water users a financial incentive to use water more efficiently and stop wasting water by repairing leaks or by implementing water saving technology.
- The last intervention is through institutions and legislation, particularly municipal bylaws. This intervention would also see us introducing regulations, guidelines and standards for items such as toilets, taps, showers, washing machines and dishwashers to be more water efficient.

Programme Director, through these interventions we hope to create a culture of Water Conservation and Water Demand Management in South Africa.

## **3. Pilot Programme**

For several years we have been running the Waterwise Campaign and through this programme we will be expanding it so that more people are reached and become aware of the need to save water. We are also running a pilot programme with eight municipalities from different provinces to demonstrate to the rest of the country what can be achieved to save water and how best to do it. This pilot programme will look at how to implement these four interventions in their municipality, and we have allocated R49 million towards these water conservation pilot projects. I was informed that representatives from all eight municipalities were invited to today's launch event.

The first step of the pilot is to support the municipalities with developing business plans for Water Conservation and Water Demand Management, and then to assist with the implementation of these plans. The plans would include all four of the interventions that I have spoken about.

We are watching these pilot municipalities closely as their successes will enable us to support similar projects across the country and expand our efforts of water conservation.

Even though we are launching this programme today some of the pilot municipalities have already developed the business plans and started to implement the water conservation measures. I am informed

that progress has been made in saving water and curbing leaks resulting in financial benefits for the municipalities – and I congratulate you on these excellent first steps. For the Emfuleni municipality these measures look likely to save them approximately R40 million per year, and much more if the programme is expanded.

These results are heart-warming as not only will there be significant water savings but they will also contribute to an improvement in overall water service delivery. Earlier this year I announced that in March 2008 (during National Water Week) I will be holding Ministerial Awards to recognise those that have significantly contributed towards Water Conservation and Water Demand Management.

#### **4. Benefits of Pilot Programme**

Programme Director, this pilot programme has also contributed towards the achievement of the Government's objectives of creation of jobs. Importantly the majority of the jobs created were for previously unemployed youth and women. The jobs have been to repair leaking infrastructure and educating our communities on ways to save water.

Thus far close to 300 jobs have already been created and the expansion of this programme to other municipalities would see significantly more jobs being created.

The successes of this intervention in creating jobs has shown that if this initiative is taken forward by other Municipalities, a significant number of jobs can be created and people trained while in the process of saving water. The jobs have involved:

- Education and awareness to conduct a door to door township and rural awareness on the need to conserve water;
- Basic plumbing work;
- Leak detection and repair; and
- Water loss inspections.

Another benefit of the pilot programme has been the training that has been provided for the people employed in the programme as well as the training given to consumers, water institutions and planners.

#### **5. Industry and Youth**

Premier, for this programme to be successful we need communities and businesses to partner with us and support the efforts to be Waterwise. Already some of the big users of water such as Eskom are on board. Eskom is an important partner for us as there is common ground between our water conservation programme and the Eskom energy efficiency campaign where some of the tips to save energy will also result in water savings. I therefore encourage the municipalities to also participate in the Eskom programme.

Ladies and Gentlemen, our Water Conservation programme also aims to bring business and industry on board so that they not only save water in their day to day operations but also for them look at manufacturing products or equipment that can help us save water. We have many young people that are already developing innovative products to save us water or solve some of the challenges that we face in the water sector and we need to utilise these talented individuals. Each year we run the South African youth water prize which awards bursaries to the best students and give them the opportunity to compete against students from the rest of the world. Already South African students have won this international competition twice. I would like to see our industry picking up on some of these innovations and working with these bright young students to turn their winning ideas into products that would benefit our country.

Programme Director, some of the entertainment to be provided later today is from the students involved in another of our programmes - Baswa le Meetse. We are encouraging these young learners to be more aware about water and understand the need to conserve water - they are also our ambassadors to take these messages to their homes and communities. The Baswa le Meetse learners always show such enthusiasm and passion in their performances, and I am looking forward to their entertainment item.

## **6. Conclusion**

To conclude, the government is working very hard to create a better life for the people of South Africa, we are eradicating buckets, providing access to water and sanitation, expanding access to social grants, improving health services and education, and creating economic opportunities, amongst many other things. But we also need your involvement and support to create a better life for all – partner with us by not abusing, be aware of HIV and AIDS and take the necessary precautions, and conserve water by being Waterwise. Remember water is life, use it sparingly.

Finally, I want to thank our sponsors and organizers of this launch, the Water Use Efficiency team, officials from my Department, and a special thank you to Mangaung Local Municipality for their active involvement in the organisation and hosting of this event.

I am pleased to now officially launch the Water Conservation and Water Demand Management Pilot Programme.

I thank you.