



water affairs

Department:
Water Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY MRS BEE MOLEWA, MINISTER OF WATER AND
ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS, AT THE RAND WATER ACADEMY BURSARY
PROJECT & GRADUATE DEVELOPMENT LAUNCH
THABA YA BATSWANA, JOHANNESBURG
28 FEBRUARY 2014.**

Programme Director

Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Nzimande

Premier of Gauteng Province Ms Nomvula Mokonyane

Acting Director-General and Senior Managers of the Department of Water Affairs

Chairperson and Board Members of Rand Water

The CEO and Executives of Rand Water

Members of the media present here

Ladies and gentlemen

Today marks an important day in the history of the work of the Water Sector in South Africa, with this bursary project and graduate development programme launch. We are here based on the fact that there is a need for extending a hand to our under and unemployed graduates. We know that this country needs all the technical expertise as we ensure that the country continues on the developmental trajectory necessary and required to ensure a better life for all.

We have been looking forward to a time when the process of placing our graduates within the sector in the various local government departments and municipalities gets fully under way. As a Department we believe that as the sector leader, it is our responsibility to ensure that our entities deliver according to the mandate given to this government by the electorate, thus the need to encourage the colleagues where sufficient effort is being put in.

*Today's launch of this project, the **RAND WATER ACADEMY BURSARY PROJECT & GRADUATE DEVELOPMENT**, owes its success to the strength of the partnership between the Department of Water Affairs, National Treasury, the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs and Rand Water.*

For those of you, who may not know, let me give some background about how we eventually arrived where we are today. One of Rand Water's objectives during the 2011/12 financial year articulated the establishment of the Rand Water Academy that would assist the organisation and the Water Sector broadly to deliver on a number of our strategic thrusts. Among these were included creating capacity and capable professional human resources, in order to deliver specific water-related training to alleviate the critical skills gaps that exist in the water sector in our country.

We had of course in the past, as a sector, established various in-house programmes that have successfully produced professional science and engineering professionals of a very high standard. Yet, with the establishment of the Rand Water Academy we saw an opportunity to increase the level and depth of those programmes, and in so doing create skills development opportunities for the organisation and the country.

Ladies and gentlemen, I wish to further indicate how this event is not happening in a vacuum or as a stand alone. I now wish to relate what we as a Department are involved in and what kind of impact this has on the sector.

Our DWA Learning Academy had its first intake in April 2007. The progress to date is summarized as I will now indicate.

Academic Development Component

*To date Memoranda of Understanding have been signed with twenty (20) **Institutions of Higher Learning**, viz. University of Cape Town, Cape Town Peninsula University of Technology; University of Stellenbosch; University of the Western Cape; Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University; Walter Sisulu University; University of KwaZulu-Natal; Durban University of Technology; University of the Free State; Central University of Technology; University of Pretoria; Tshwane University of Technology; Vaal University of Technology, University of Zululand, University of Johannesburg, Rhodes University, University of Witwatersrand, University of Limpopo, University of Venda and University of the North West.*

*Within this period, a total of 589 **bursaries** have been granted since 2007 to learners at these identified Institutions of Higher Learning. In 2014, 75 new bursaries were allocated to other newly identified deserving students. Bursaries are allocated to students studying engineering and water related sciences. Of these bursars, 473 have joined the Learning Academy's Professional Development Component.*

Since 2008 the Water Learning Academy also committed itself to support the South African Water Youth Prize, Aqua Enduro, and Public Speaking regional competition winners with bursaries to study within water related scientific or engineering disciplines. In addition in 2014, we started to allocate bursaries to identified ladies in the "adopt a river volunteer programme", which programme falls under the office of the Deputy Minister.

By December 2012, 150 Learner Interns had successfully completed their experiential training with the Learning Academy. A new group of forty (40) Engineering and Surveying Learner Interns joined the Learning Academy in January 2014 and is currently busy with their specific structured in service training programmes.

Professional Development Component

In total, 473 Graduate Trainees joined the programme by February 2014 and all have been placed successfully in the various Directorates/regions in the Department.

By January 2014, two-hundred and six (206) Graduate Trainees have been offered permanent or candidate OSD posts within the Department after completing their respective rotational training and development programmes and upon professional registration, where applicable.

In addition, one-hundred and sixty (160) of the Graduate Trainees have obtained various levels of professional status as professional engineers, professional engineering technicians, surveyors, professional scientists, and science technicians.

The Department of Water Affairs on continuous engagement on the matter was immediately supportive of Rand Water's intention to establish the Academy. The Academy's ideal is also in alignment with the Second National Water Resources Strategy, in which it is acknowledged that the shortage of appropriate skills and capabilities in the right places was a critical challenge for the water sector. This challenge includes insufficient numbers of engineers, scientists and artisans. Together with the Department of Water Affairs, Rand Water engaged deeply on the kinds of work needed to drive skills development in the water sector in the country. As discussions continued, what was uppermost in our minds was the high level of unemployment in our country; particularly graduate unemployment which leads to poverty and a range of socio-economic problems, leading to disillusionment.

The Rand Water Academy trains qualified unemployed graduates in South Africa to generate a pipeline of skills for local Water Service Authorities in the following disciplines: Water Quality Generalists, Process Controllers, Engineers and Apprentices/Artisans. This training seeks to address the plight of Skills Shortage and lack of technical capacity faced nationally, particularly at local government level, high unemployment rates and low numbers of engineering, science and technical graduates exiting in key institutions in the country at large.

Rand Water heeded the call for State Owned Entities (SOEs) to assist municipalities with capacity and infrastructure-support related projects. This is not only an

opportunity for our graduates to equip themselves with hands-on practical skills, but also to add the necessary network with those who have extensive experience in this field of service. I appeal to the young graduates in this programme to take full advantage of these opportunities that have been created for them!

*This course has a 36 month / 3 year lifespan of which 18 months are spent with Rand Water and the next 18 months with an identified municipality. The ultimate target is for municipalities to absorb the graduates permanently- hence solving the challenge of skills shortages at that critical level of service delivery. Furthermore there is a requirement that all graduates be professionally registered with the respective **Professional Bodies** upon completion of the training.*

The placement of graduates is part of a broader strategy of various government departments that seeks to create a seamless transition of our graduates from institutions of learning to workplaces. It has been said that the disconnection between classroom education and workplace learning has created artificial boundaries leading to masses of young graduates being unable to enter the world of work. If this were to be left unattended, it would worsen graduate unemployment, thus this crucial initiative to ensure that graduates receive workplace training.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am also pleased to announce that through COGTA the offices of rural local governments across the country have warmly embraced the need for skilled graduates' placement in the municipalities. Rand Water and the Department of Water Affairs are hard at work towards making these relationships concrete.

I have no doubt that we will succeed in our endeavours. We will also engage with some private sector companies to partner with us on this initiative.

I am glad that this launch today also happens within the year when we commemorate and celebrate twenty years of our democracy. I believe that this in itself serves to increase the reason for us as a sector particularly, to look at what we have achieved so far, commendable as it may be, and be encouraged to take up the cudgels even more and ensure that all that we get involved in continues to raise the flag of this beautiful country of ours that we call home.

Indeed what we need to endeavour towards is for our graduates to not just be kept busy but to actually begin to appreciate what the impact and implications of their input is to the betterment of our country, our people, our regions, yes, our beautiful continent: AFRICA, and ultimately a better world. Those graduates that we are acknowledging today must understand that these efforts are for their development and the ultimate benefit of us all.

Let me now express my sincere appreciation to Rand Water for their excellent support to the sector. I appreciate the work done by the Academy under the guidance of the Chief Executive, the Chairperson and the Board.

In conclusion, to the graduates who have secured placement, please do not disappoint us. This is an opportunity for you to become better people and as I said earlier, make this a better country.

Ladies and gentlemen, working together we can achieve more!

I thank you.