



water affairs

Department:
Water Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**SPEECH BY THE MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL
AFFAIRS MRS EDNA MOLEWA AT THE LAUNCH OF THE
COLESBERG WASTE WATER TREATMENT WORKS, UMSOBOMVU
LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, NORTHERN CAPE
29 JANUARY 2014**

*Programme Director
Premier of the Northern Cape, Ms Sylvia Lucas
MEC's present here amongst us
District and Local Mayors here present
Officials of government representing the three tiers
Members of the media
Ladies and gentlemen*

We are gathered here today for a very special moment. We are here because we have the interests of the people of this area at heart. Our responsibility as government, more particularly as the Department of Water Affairs, is to ensure that water supplies not just for Umsobomvu Local Municipality but for the country as a whole remains top of mind.

We are informed that the area we have come here to service today is primarily urban, and that the rural population here will continue to decline over time. We are therefore obliged to ensure that we are not caught unawares as these movements happen; we must be able to look ahead and ensure that the District and local municipalities are assisted in taking care of the needs as they stand but also be prepared for the next phases of population growth and development.

We are, Premier, also aware that even as this movement is underway, we are also aware that the sizes of the families have reduced. This does not in any way imply that we have fewer services to deliver, but that matter must assist us in the planning of our services. I have been informed as well Premier, that the area's population is also highly indigent in nature, standing at about 66% of the population. The implication therefore is that the municipality is unable on its own to raise the necessary revenue for it to address the water services backlog already in the municipality.

Married to the fact stated above we are also aware that there is little entrepreneurial activity as well, which activity could if it were available, augment and support the municipality through payment of the necessary rates and taxes. The main economic

activity in the Umsobomvu Municipality is agriculture, comprising almost entirely of breeding high quality race horses and merino sheep.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Northern Cape is easily the driest province in the country. This area in particular, regarded as typical Karoo, with very low rainfall and high evaporation averages. The Orange River, which represents the only perennial flow in the area, is also dependent of water releases from the Gariep Dam located in the Upper Orange Water Management Area.

The three towns making up the district receive water supplies differently from one another. Norvalspont relies entirely on water from the Orange River; Colesberg has the good fortune of a well field consisting of eleven boreholes which supplement the surface water supply when needed. Noupootis located approximately seventy five (75) kilometres from the Orange River and is therefore totally dependent on groundwater. Its water requirements are supplied from three well fields comprising of a total of ten boreholes.

We are aware that the Umsobomvu Municipality falls within the Upper Orange Water Management Area (WMA). Water resource management functions in this area are fulfilled by the DWA Free State Regional Office.

It is important to acknowledge that we do not have irrigation boards, water user associations or water boards operational in the Umsobomvu municipal area. In the same breath, it is also important to know that Bloem Water, which is responsible for water supply functions in the southern Free State, can potentially play a role in water services provision in the Umsobomvu Municipality. We might therefore wish to engage one another further and see how we can optimise the use of Bloem water in this regard.

As a country we have a high level of water infrastructure backlog that we are facing. The Northern Cape and in this instance the Umsobomvu Municipality is nit immune thereto. As a result of a combination of ageing infrastructure and a lack of operation and maintenance, there is an urgent need for the refurbishment and construction of new bulk regional water supply infrastructure. Work has been done to look into the cost estimates for this work. In the final analysis, for this area to be optimally services and looking at the current available funding, we have a funding shortfall estimated at around R155 million.

I am quite glad to realise that the service level profile of the Umsobomvu Municipality shows that approximately 27 318 people, representing 96% of the population on formal and informal stands, has been provided with at least a basic water supply. For an area with such natural and social challenges as we are aware, shows an interest in ensuring there is no slacking in the delivery of services to its community. This I realise is not just in terms of water but it is pleasing too to realise that even in terms of sanitation, approximately 90% of the population of Umsobomvu Municipality has access as a basic service. We know that in general, sanitation services in most communities lag any other service by far.

We realise that as is normal all over the country, the sanitation services backlog affecting 2928 people in Umsobomvu Municipality occur mainly on informal stands. The buckets that form part of the backlog will be eradicated as part of the Northern Cape bucket eradication programme (BEP), which is currently in its planning phase. Plans are also in place to address part of the sanitation backlog in Colesberg with the provision of water borne sanitation. This situation will be enabled by the commissioning of the new Colesberg Waste Water Treatment Works, which is now able to handle the additional hydraulic load, which is the reason why we are here today.

This is a very critical year in the history of our country. We are this year celebrating twenty since the birth of our democracy; twenty years since the first democratically elected president of our country, our most revered former President, the late Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela was duly inaugurated. The year 1994 was truly a turning point in our lives. It was a turning point in that beyond it just being an indicator of the new universal access to voting for all the people of our country, it also was the beginning of a process of integration, more especially integration of the delivery of services to a lot more people than originally planned for.

We know that in the old dispensation the areas where the majority of our people were less planned for and therefore less serviced. After the new government came in, it became one of the central issues to be undertaken: to increase access to services to the previously un-serviced and under-serviced communities. This is even more critical in the case of water, the one commodity that has a responsibility towards all sectors of our society, social, industrial, health, agriculture, you name it and water has an impact on it.

We know that in our country access to water is also a Constitutional right, as dictated by our Constitution of 1996. In order for us to ensure that we abide by the needs of our people as well as the dictates of the Constitution we are further guided by our National Water Act of 1998, with all the relevant regulations in our activities, we as the department at national level, our relevant entities as well as sister departments and other levels of government. The people of Colesberg are thus receiving the same attention as anybody else in the country with regards to water services as per the dictates of the relevant pieces of legislation.

Premier Lucas, ladies and gentlemen, we know from the study commissioned by our Water research Commission that we released last year, namely "The State of Non-

Revenue Water in South Africa”, as a country we lose in the region of 37% of our water to a number of factors. This area is not immune to such losses.

I am informed that despite the limited water resource availability in Umsobomvu Municipality, the municipality experiences high water losses in the three urban centres. As such, these losses pose exacerbated challenges around the efficiency and sustainability of this strained water supply. For the water losses from the reticulation networks in Colesberg, Norvalspont and Noupoot to be at an estimation of between 40 and 65% is much too high. This is a definite call for urgent action towards stopping such losses.

I must indicate that as a Department we see this as a great concern that the Umsobomvu Municipality is currently not monitoring and reporting on non-revenue water and water losses. It is a legal requirement that a WSA on a monthly basis monitor and report on steps taken to reduce the quantity of water unaccounted for. We need to remind the Municipality that it is important to keep record of the quantities of water measured and of the calculations made in respect of water balance analysis and determination of water losses. Premier, we are engaging the Municipality in this regard and will continue to do so as a way of assisting it to reach the necessary compliance and adhere to the requirements accordingly.

In order to address not only the technical concerns surrounding the issue of water services and water delivery in the area, we have to be aware that there is a number of projects being undertaken and at different stages of preparation and readiness. In this instance I will mention the Colesberg Waste Water Treatment Works which we are launching today, the Noupoot Bulk Water Supply Scheme, Norvalspont Bulk Water Supply Scheme, Noupoot Water Reticulation, and the Norvalspont Sewer Reticulation. All of these schemes indicate a government that is fully at work to ensure a better life for our people and our country; that as we celebrate this twenty years of democracy “South Africa truly is a much better place than in 1994”.

The Department of Water Affairs is aware that the Northern Cape Region has a small budget for functions under the Rapid Response Unit, the allocations for 2012/13 and 2013/14 being R4.2 million and R2.3 million, respectively. This allocation is primarily used to support key infrastructure programmes such as RBIG, ACIP, NTP and MWIG. The use of this allocation is in respect of mainly technical support particularly for experts such as engineers to complement the technical capacity in the Regional Office, this in order to accelerate project implementation and ensure skills transfer.

In the case of Umsobomvu Municipality engineering expertise under the RRU has been used to monitor and advise on the various infrastructure projects being implemented and even those currently in the planning phase. Engineering capacity has also been availed under the RRU to deal with the crisis situation that ensued in Colesberg following the drowning of the water abstraction platform during November/December 2012.

*The reference above is used mainly to illustrate the co-operation that has existed between our DWA Regional Office and this municipality. This I believe augurs well for the advancement of Inter-Governmental Relations and in more specific terms the much needed and required **“Co-operative Governance”**.*

As I conclude, I wish to reiterate the fact that as a Department, we will not shirk our responsibilities in terms of the mandate that has been given to us as part of this government. We will also continue to support our colleagues at provincial and local level in the interest of ensuring that the work and responsibility that has been given to us is realised, that the people of South Africa and in this instance the Northern Cape and Umsobomvu Municipality are not short-changed in the realisation of access to basic services, with water being central to their lives.

*In truth: **WATER IS LIFE, CONSERVE IT, RESPECT IT, ENJOY IT.***

I thank you.