

DEPUTY MINISTER OF WATER AND SANITATION

Honourable Judith N-Tshabalala

16 May 2023

BUDGET VOTE 41

Honourable Chairperson,

Honourable Minister Senzo Mchunu,

Honourable Deputy Minister David Mahlobo,

Honourable Members of the House, PC of water and sanitation

Ladies and gentlemen

Viewers at home

Ndimatsheloni, Avuxeni, sanibonani, dumelang, molweni, goiemore, good morning.

The Month of May is very significant to our democratic dispensation, as it was on the 10th of May, our country's first democratically elected President Nelson Mandela was sworn in, as a fulfilment of the provision of the Freedom Charter that the '*People Shall Govern*'. The Freedom Charter is the lodestar of our democratic society and it contains the wishes and aspirations of our people, with a declaration that '*that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people*'.

The wishes and aspirations of are encapsulated in the provision of our democratic Constitution and notably, the Bill of Right and in it I would like to make reference to Sections 24 and 27, which provides that 'every individual has the fundamental right to access sufficient water and live in an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being'.

Honourable Chairperson, the previous undemocratic regime of apartheid did not care about this fundamental right or any of the rights provided for in the Constitution, and to the detriment

of the majority of black South Africans, only cared to provide access to water and sanitation to the formerly white areas.

Since 1994, our democratic state took the responsibility to progressively realise the right to water and sanitation and enacted national legislation and policies to ensure the implementation of the guarantee right of access to water and sanitation, whilst promoting equality and fostering the well-being of all South Africans.

Transformation of water use allocations

One important legislation is the National Water Act (NWA) which establishes a comprehensive framework for sustainable water management, equitable allocation and water pollution control. NWA promotes access to clean water, protects our ecosystems and fosters efficient water use. National Water Act is our guide in building a future where water scarcity is overcome, especially in light of climate change and its negative impact on our water resources.

We are taking action to ensure water users comply with the National Water Act, registering and obtaining necessary authorizations while enforcing penalties against illegal users, and ensuring payment of water services by user, and this will include the capacitation of local municipalities in the provision of reliable water services, as well as ensuring the enforcement of regulations, compliance and enforcement in line with the Municipal Systems Act, National Water Act and the Water Services Act.

We will also be progressively implementing compulsory licensing which will improve water use control, allowing for more efficient allocations and freeing up water for new users. We are looking at the amendments to the Water Services Act that will assist us to better regulate water services and to enforce compliance with the norms and standards.

In this financial year, we will be submitting the proposed Amendment Bill to the National Water Act which will further facilitate the transformation of water use allocations, fostering sustainable and inclusive water management.

Improving the consistency of regulatory actions

From April 2022 to date, the Department has issued 280 notices and directives under sections 19, 20, 53, and 118 of the National Water Act to users. These actions have been aimed at compelling polluters to take remedial action and curb pollution of water resources. The Department has also pursued criminal action against polluters by instituting charges against

twelve water users found to have caused pollution of water resources. We have also finalised and handed over six case dockets to the NPA to take a decision to prosecute.

Four plea sentencing agreements were reached in this period, in terms of which two municipalities pleaded guilty on all charges and the court-imposed fines for causing pollution of water resources. The Department initiated two court interdict applications against water users found to have caused pollution of our water resources, and one court order was granted against a municipality for causing pollution during the same period.

We have constitutional obligation to support and regulate municipalities and we manage the Regional Bulk Infrastructure Grant (RBIG) and Water Services Infrastructure Grant (WSIG), allocating 10.1 billion rand and 4.6 billion rand respectively to fund over 130 projects and 400 projects across the country. Through the Office of Minister Mchunu, the Department has been actively engaging with municipalities to address the deteriorating water and sanitation situation, agreeing on improvement plans and mobilizing water boards for assistance. Major projects are underway in various provinces, including Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Gauteng, and Kwa-Zulu Natal, aimed at improving water infrastructure and addressing shortages.

While the Minister's interventions are crucial, the underlying issues of poor governance and weak management need to be addressed within the municipalities. As indicated, the proposed amendments to the Water Services Act are being developed to tackle these root causes and prevent future deterioration once ongoing projects are completed.

Honourable Members, in our ongoing efforts to ensure effective regulation and enforcement across the country, it is crucial that we strive for consistency in our actions. While significant progress has been made, we recognize the need to further improve our regulatory practices. To address this, we are introducing standardized regulatory enforcement protocols to be implemented by all regional offices during this financial year.

Until now, our focus has predominantly been on regulating, monitoring compliance, and enforcing the National Water Act. However, we acknowledge the importance of expanding our scope to include the regulation of water and sanitation services. Consequently, we will be embarking on a consultation process to update and enhance the norms and standards for water and sanitation services, in accordance with the Water Services Act.

To enhance transparency and accountability, we will also publish a National Regulatory Dashboard that showcases the extent of compliance with national norms and standards for

water services. This dashboard will provide valuable insights into the performance of all Water Service Authorities, drawing from existing monitoring information.

By introducing standardized protocols, expanding our regulatory focus, and establishing a comprehensive regulatory dashboard, we are taking significant steps towards ensuring consistent and effective regulation of water and sanitation services nationwide. Together, let us strive for excellence in our regulatory efforts, fostering sustainable practices and enhancing the well-being of all our citizens.

Hydropower

We have taken significant steps to ensure fair and equitable opportunities in water use for electricity generation. By issuing a request for applications from independent power producers, we aimed 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. 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. Let us work together to harness the power of water and renewable energy, fostering sustainable development and securing our energy future.

Load shedding has a direct negative impact on both electricity and water provision, disrupting the reliable supply of both essential services.

Establishment of catchment management agencies

The National Water Act establishes catchment management agencies to involve local stakeholders in water resources management at the catchment level. These agencies ensure sustainable and equitable use, conservation, and control of water resources for the benefit of all citizens. In the last financial year, plans for catchment management agencies were reviewed, and the country was divided into six water management areas. Currently, catchment management agencies are operational in the Inkomati-Usuthu and Breede-Gouritz areas. The remaining agencies will be established by the end of the current financial year.

Water, is a fundamental necessity of life, stands at the core of our agenda for a developmental state.

We must educate our communities about the importance of water conservation, including the utilization of rainwater, and work together to safeguard this invaluable resource. The ANC

prioritizes clean water and safe sanitation, striving to provide access for all since 1994. We have made progress in expanding water infrastructure and eradicating bucket systems and pit latrines. Our developmental state has improved lives through essential services like water, sanitation, electricity, roads, and housing, benefiting millions in a short time.

In Conclusion, in his SONA 2023 President Cyril Matamela Ramaphosa said that Department of Water and Sanitation is leading infrastructure investments to ensure reliable water supply, with projects such as the Lesotho Highlands and Umzimvubu Water Projects and that these initiatives aim to enhance water security for regions such as the Free State, Gauteng, Mpumalanga, North West and the Northern Cape. Additionally, he spoke to the increased capacity of the Clanwilliam Dam, Hazelmere Dam and Tzaneen Dam to improve water supply to the West Coast, eThekweni and the eastern part of Limpopo, as well as streamlining water use license application and in so doing ensuring that 'We leave no one behind.

Ndolivhuwa! Aaa