



MINISTRY
WATER AND SANITATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**BUDGET VOTE STATEMENT, VOTE 41 BY DEPUTY MINISTER OF WATER AND
SANITATION, HON. SELLO SEITLHOLO, AT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY,
PARLIAMENT ON 12 July 2024**

Thank you, very much Honourable house chairperson.

Thank you to Minister Pemmy Majodina and Deputy Minister David Mahlobo for outlining the imperative nature and extent of the budget being debated here today.

Honourable members, the constitutional rights of access to water as commemorated in March, or National Water Month, cannot be overemphasised. However, it is difficult to commemorate this right while millions of South Africans continue to face challenges related to water in some parts of the country.

It is for this reason that this budget places a strong emphasis in addressing the state of our water and sanitation in our country, specifically the infrastructure related to water and sanitation.

The deterioration of water and sanitation infrastructure has real life consequences and affects communities in different ways:

- Human and animal life cannot be sustained without clean drinking water
- Businesses and factories cannot operate without continued supply of water
- Contaminated water can carry infectious and respiratory diseases
- Wastewater pollution undermines the dignity of communities – this in terms of aesthetics, tourism and access to recreation

- Water losses and high rates of non-revenue water deprive local government of service delivery revenue

Honourable members, these challenges will take time to address. It is therefore crucial that in this 7th Administration, under the Government of National Unity we intensify efforts and respond aggressively to these challenges. As previously stated by former Minister Mchunu, the country requires about R90 billion per year for the next decade to close the water infrastructure deficit. This means that, the country's water and sanitation infrastructure require R900 billion over the next decade to be up to standard.

As Minister Majodina has already indicated, the South African National Water Resource Infrastructure Agency Bill is awaiting President's signature. Once accented and the agency established, it will unlock opportunities for the involvement of private companies in water infrastructure projects through a performance-based private-public partnership model. We will then have more projects similar to the Olifants River Water Resource Development Project in Limpopo and the Vaal Gamagara Water Project in the Northern Cape.

Honourable Members, the National Development Plan places emphasis on the importance of strengthening our water resource management and this is being achieved through the establishment of catchment management institutions as required in terms of the National Water Act. The purpose of these institutions is to enable local water resource management to involve local stakeholders and local water users, as well as facilitating social and economic development.

Honourable members, one of the key priority reforms in Operation Vulindlela is the consideration of establishing an Independent Regulator in order to strengthen the role of the department in terms of being the water regulator as per the National Water Act and the Water Services Act. Under the previous administration, the department put in place an advisory body called the Regulator Commission to advise the Minister regarding regulatory matters, as an interim step towards an independent Regulator. While the Regulator Commission has played a very useful advisory role on issues such as the recently revised raw water pricing strategy, during this financial year, the department will finalise proposals for an independent regulator for public consultation.

There have been a number of calls for the department to improve its turnaround time for the processing of water use license applications. Under the previous administration the department implemented a turnaround plan which resulted in an improvement in performance from 35% of applications being processed within 90 days to 70%. In addition, the backlog of more than a thousand applications was largely eradicated, such that there are now no more than 100 applications which have taken longer than 90 days to process. Further improvements towards the target of processing applications within 90 days will be a priority for the department in this financial year. I am sure Mr John Westcott who applied for a license to instal a Hydroelectric power plant on the Grassridge dam will be happy to hear about this 90-day commitment by the department.

As I conclude **Madam Speaker**, it will be remiss of me as part of the sector leader now, not to emphasise the need to accelerate water and sanitation provision more than ever before. As our mantra say, 'water is life, sanitation is dignity', this is a call for us all to redouble our efforts and be in the forefront and leading the charge in giving communities their life and dignity back.

I thank you.