

BUDGET SPEECH - 15 MAY 2001**“WATER FOR PEOPLE FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS” - LI BING 250 BC**

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Madam Speaker, Honourable Members

1. Ensuring Water Security

Amanzi Ayimpilo - Water is Life - It is indispensable to survival and there can be no livelihood, no growth, no economic development in its absence. In this drought prone, water scarce country, it is our responsibility to ensure water security for all time.

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It is a matter of history that the great ancient civilisations developed around water: along the Nile, Tigris – Euphrates, Ganges and Yangtze.

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It is important to note the lessons from this early history. Development did not just occur but happened by the inventiveness of human beings, the discipline of their social organisations, and the efforts of generations of ordinary people.

On a recent visit to China I saw an irrigation system at a place called Du Jiang Yang developed around 250 BC. Its creator Li Bing stated at the time that the project needed to serve the people for thousands of years. The system functions to this day, expanded to supply millions of farmers with the water that enables them to contribute to China's self-sufficiency in food.

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In modern times, the effective management of water resources is still the key to satisfying human needs and ensuring economic growth.

The core business of my Department is to protect, conserve, develop, utilise and manage our precious water resources. 1994, the year of our first democratic election, ushered in a new stage for water resource development. We were also set an additional task - ensuring that millions of our formerly ignored citizens receive clean water and adequate sanitation.

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2. The Community Water Service Programme

Our water service programme is an area where government can be proud of a record of delivery that has seen 6,5 million people provided with clean water since 1994 at an outlay of over 4 billion Rand. Almost one million persons were reached in the last financial year.

While there are still approximately seven million people in rural areas whom we must reach, we are getting there!

Let us put some human faces on what this means. Clean water has recently come to the village of Malope with a population of 2,500 some 30 kilometres from the newly re-named Flag Boshielo dam in Northern Province. When the President opened a village tap and served water to two elderly women, they raised their cups in happiness and cried: “Bye Bye Cholera”.

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In my budget debate last year, I focussed on Malope and the other 55 scattered villages of what we now call the Flag Boshielo Scheme, and I pledged that what the Honourable Mma Lydia Ngwenya MP had called a “white elephant” - because of a lack of reticulation from the expensive reservoirs into the villages - would be turned into an “African elephant of delivery” – “Indlovu yase-Afrika yokuphakela”.

Six of the villages now have taps within 200 meters of every household. Another 20 villages will be reached by July and the last of the 56 villages - a total population of 67,000 - by March next year.

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We cannot achieve miracles overnight and the nearby village of Phokoane is an example. Phokoane cannot easily be provided with water except from the Nebo direction. Evaluation is underway and I hope that next year we will manage to supply Phokoane and other villages in that area.

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This is an example of the challenges we face - challenges of geography, distance, scarce resources - which mean that some inevitably receive their due later than others.

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3. Water Service Allocation

This year, for the first time since 1997, we have over a billion rand for this programme. The increase of R240 million over last year's budget is possible because of additional allocations from the government's poverty and infrastructure budgets as well as substantial contributions from donors, including a contribution of R613 million over three years from the European Union and its member states.

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We can now accelerate this programme. A billion Rand enables us to reach over a million people with clean water and over a hundred thousand households with sanitation. This is a critical contribution to Government's Integrated Rural Development Strategy - and is planned and implemented in close collaboration with provincial and local authorities.

The programme has employed over four hundred thousand people in temporary construction jobs since its inception, including 73 thousand last year.

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At this rate of progress, within seven years we should be celebrating the fact that virtually all our people will at last have access to clean drinking water. Around 2008 a shameful legacy of the past will have been wiped out and government's pledge to provide all with clean water will be achieved.

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4. Free Basic Water for the Poor

But we cannot afford to be complacent. Last year I reported that even where clean water had been provided we found that the rural poor, like the woman I met at the village of Lutsheko, could not afford to pay.

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We have addressed this problem. In an historic step, government instituted a policy that a basic amount of 6 000 litres of clean water per month be provided to poor households free.

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Because implementation is the responsibility of local government wide-ranging consultations have been conducted to produce a user-friendly implementation strategy and guidelines. Across the country, local councillors and officials are being briefed and trained at provincial workshops. Although not all municipalities will be in a position to begin implementing the policy from 1st July this year – the commencement of their budgetary cycle - they should at the very least have a specific implementation plan ready by that date. I would like to congratulate the twenty one municipalities that have already announced their programme.

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The provision of free water will only be possible if there is effective cost recovery from those using more than the basic amount. It must be clearly understood that consumers must continue paying for their water until their local authorities inform them of the date for implementation.

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5. The Cholera Outbreak

The cholera outbreak in KwaZulu-Natal brought many lessons. The combination of floods and humidity possibly activated dormant and endemic cholera bacteria and the outbreak struck where people were using unsafe sources of water. We must realise that the provision of safe water is but one requirement to deal with the threat. Two other elements must be added: adequate sanitation and an active programme of health and hygiene education amongst the people.

Deleted: Again I say that we cannot afford to be complacent. We will continue to learn from the vagaries of life and of nature and our very progress will provide new problems and challenges. Last year I observed that in my short term as Minister we had experienced both fire and floods. Perhaps this was tempting fate for, as in biblical times, pestilence often follows.

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It is through these three key requirements that we will succeed in eradicating cholera and other water-borne diseases.

We applaud the dedicated work of the Departments of Health in aiding those stricken. Their achievement in managing over 90 000 victims thus far and keeping the fatality rate to under half a percent has been internationally commended. My department gave much support. Our teams helped distribute bleach for household water treatment, delivered safe water by tankers as well as established temporary water containers in the affected areas. We participated in the health education programme and by way of crisis measure, we reallocated R35 million for the provision of water and sanitation services of KwaZulu-Natal. We fast-tracked water projects in the affected areas, repaired disused boreholes and protected springs. We provided 101 thousand people with safe water, and 52

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thousand people with over 6000 ventilated improved pit latrines. Various efforts, including that of the [National Defence Force](#), and local governments, were coordinated by the National Disaster Management Centre.

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My department will spend R100-million annually for the next three years to speed up water and sanitation provision in the cholera-prone communities. During this year, 59 water and sanitation projects will be implemented in vulnerable areas. [Efforts will be intensified, because the current winter lull could see a resurgence next summer.](#)

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6. Prioritising a Sanitation Programme

The cholera outbreak highlighted the need to speed up the sanitation programme. It is estimated that over three million households or approximately 18 million people are without adequate sanitation. But let us get the picture clear - [over 80 percent of rural people have some form of rudimentary do-it-yourself toilets.](#) [What is required is an innovative strategy that helps households improve their home-built toilets so that these are more adequate, environmentally friendly and hygienic.](#) Simultaneously we [will](#) mount a massive programme to provide [adequate](#) toilets for those most vulnerable to cholera, [and we will spread the message of personal hygiene far and wide!](#)

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During the last financial year [we](#) spent R75 million on sanitation. Hygiene education [reached](#) 150 000 people, and 13 770 toilets [were built](#).

We must [admit, however,](#) that previous efforts have not been [good enough,](#) [which](#) is why I raised the issue at Cabinet and instituted a review. My department has been working at an inter-departmental level with [the](#) Health, Local

Government, Housing and Education departments and I will shortly be presenting a National Sanitation Policy to Cabinet. The Minister of Education and I will institute a joint programme to ensure that the schools have adequate water and sanitation. The learners, armed with personal hygiene knowledge, will become - as many are today - sanitation ambassadors in their communities. I want to pledge - just as I did with the free water issue last year - that I will be giving top priority to getting an effective programme underway. Improved sanitation will also help counter river pollution which my department's monitoring of local government has recently highlighted. I will keep my spotlight on local government to ensure they discharge their responsibilities adequately.

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I want to refer to the contribution of the private sector by highlighting a remarkable innovation developed in our country - the roundabout playpump. This harnesses the energy of children at play to pump-up water for the community's use. Local companies have contributed funds for 23 playpumps in the cholera vulnerable areas. I want to repeat my challenge to corporate South Africa to provide R1,5-million for a further 37 playpumps to match the 100 funded by the Kaiser Family Foundation and World Bank.

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We are also encouraged by the way the farming community through AgriSouth Africa has helped in our fight against cholera.

7. The challenge of Sustainability and local government's role

We are often questioned about the sustainability of our water services programme. An audit of the sustainability of schemes operated and maintained by the Department has shown that 86 percent of the projects built since 1994 are functioning well. Schemes inherited from the previous dispensation, however, show only 63 percent functionality. We have invited Professor David Hemson to undertake an independent check on the Department’s findings. But sustainability can only be achieved through effective local government involvement. We are moving to a position in which local councils will ultimately take responsibility for all basic services. I am committed to working with my colleagues the Ministers of Provincial and Local Government and of Finance to transfer water service schemes operated by my Department to local governments or their nominated providers and to consolidate municipal infrastructure funding into a single programme. Our concern will be to ensure that the pace of delivery and the sustainability of our schemes are improved.

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¶ In addition, we have invited Professor David Hemson of the University of Natal, to undertake an independent check on the Department’s findings. He will choose a number of projects and schemes and will report on their status.¶

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8. Our Country’s Water Resources

As I said last year, it is one thing to deliver clean water, but unless we take care of our water resources, we may find one day that there is just not enough to go around and many a tap could run dry.

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The threat of such a water crisis is real for many water-stressed countries. In the 1980s, it was said that by 2030, South Africa’s water consumption would exceed supply. I am confident that because of the steps taken by government since 1994 South Africa will not run out of water!

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Every year, South African rivers receive 50 billion cubic metres of water with a further six billion cubic metres available from underground aquifers. This

translates into 1,400 kiloliters per person per annum making us almost a water-stressed country. Of this 56 billion cubic metres, 21 billion is utilised. Of this volume 52 percent is used for agriculture and irrigation, eight percent for forestry, 11 percent for industry, 10 percent for domestic use, with 19 percent allocated to ensure a sustainable environment.

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Management of these water resources is a strategic task concerning the very prosperity of our country and security of our people. We dare not be complacent.

We must have in place an effective strategy to ensure that our water needs are met for generations to come.

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Fortunately, we have the framework to achieve this, in the shape of our National Water Act. This farsighted legislation, put in place by my predecessor, my colleague Kader Asmal, is internationally acclaimed. The challenge for me is to make it work.

An important step will be the publication, during the course of this financial year, of a draft National Water Resource Strategy for public comment.

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As we use a greater proportion of the available water, it becomes increasingly important to manage that use. To do so, we are in the process of registering water use. This registration will for the first time provide the knowledge base we need to manage our scarce water more effectively. The process will also see management charges levied on commercial users of water from 1st April 2002.

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Information from registration will be critical for the implementation of the National Water Strategy which will give us the basis for the management of our

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water resources. This will guide the preparation of the Catchment Management Strategies by which water resources will be regionally managed.

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The proposal received from local stakeholders this year to establish a catchment management agency in the Inkomati Water Management Area marked a historic moment in the implementation of the National Water Act. Further proposals are expected, and the system will eventually be extended to all 19 Water Management Areas.

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Approximately R400 million of the R709 million water resources budget will be allocated to these activities. I will deal with issues of water pollution control, support to emerging farmers and other matters of concurrent competence, including the role of Water Boards, when I present this budget in the National Council of Provinces.

9. To Dam or not to Dam

In the past, water resource management has often been seen in terms of infrastructure development. The construction of dams and reservoirs has played a vital role in the storage and utilisation of water. We can be proud of the achievements of the past hundred years which have developed a remarkable nation-wide system whereby we are able to transfer water from one river basin to another by means of an impressive network of dams, tunnels, canals and pumping stations. R310 Million of the water resource budget is allocated to the construction of such schemes. Two dams, Injaka near Bushbuckridge and Maguga in Swaziland will be completed in 2002 and the Mohale in Lesotho in 2003. These last two dams are being built with our neighbours for our mutual benefit.

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Building dams today has become somewhat controversial and questions have been asked as to whether they are always necessary. Internationally, there are certainly examples of projects which have had disastrous environmental consequences and where there has been a reckless lack of regard for displaced populations. This has been highlighted by the publication of the report of the World Commission on Dams, chaired by Professor Kader Asmal.

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As our society continues to grow and develop, we will have to give careful thought to how we provide the water we need. In South Africa we know that without dams to store water from one year to the next, as well as to meet our needs in all too frequent years of drought, we would face disaster. For example more than 85% of economic and social activity would not be sustained in Gauteng, this country's economic heartland.

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The challenge of meeting the growth needs of the Cape Peninsula and Cape Town's perennial water shortage is another example. My department has completed the planning studies and environmental impact assessment needed to make a final decision on the construction of Skuifraam Dam. I have indicated that implementation should proceed as long as I am convinced that the necessary water conservation and demand management measures have been taken by the City of Cape Town and that funding can be raised without prejudicing our community water programme. I also instructed my department to review the proposed Skuifraam Dam against the World Commission on Dams Guidelines. The result was satisfactory for us. This demonstrates that current government policy and legal procedures for water resource development projects are generally adequate and there can be no question of replacing these with the WCD's guidelines as has been proposed in some quarters.

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In this context, I should mention my recent visit to China where I had an opportunity to see the colossal Three Gorges Dam under construction, as well as the huge area affected by the project. The project highlights the challenge so often faced by water managers. China has to manage the Yangtse floods which drowned over 300,000 people in the last century and constantly imperils the lives of up to 100 million. China must balance this against the need to resettle 1,2 million people as a consequence of construction. The reduction in pollution through the generation of hydroelectricity, as well as provision for water transfers to the dry north east of China, and improved navigation to the developing west of the country, had to be considered. Our challenges are indeed tiny by comparison, and I must state my admiration for the determination and care with which the Chinese Government is promoting this vast undertaking.

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I believe in consultation and dialogue and have convened a workshop of the South African Committee

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I would also like to mention a related issue of considerable concern to many communities. Two weeks ago Cabinet discussed the issue of renaming of rivers and dams. We have identified 26 names amongst them Kafferskuil and Bushmans River which are derogatory and these will be changed. I have drawn this to the attention of the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, who is responsible for all geographic name changes. ¶

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10. Forestry

Forestry will continue to occupy the time and resources of my Department.

Last year, of a total budget of R402m for forestry, the largest portion, R299 million, was still allocated to the commercial forestry programme which ran at a loss of R216 million. Unfortunately there have been delays in the restructuring process and I will therefore ask for the R75 million set aside for the transfer to be rolled over in addition to the R336 million already allocated for this year.

Restructuring has been helped by the move from the old so-called evergreen contracts towards more modern and commercial contracts for the supply of timber. Only two of the original 29 contracts remain and the new contracts enable

us not only to promote sustainability and encourage new entrants to the industry, but also to increase revenue from R46m in 1995 to R83m last year.

The policy framework we have put in place has also seen substantial foreign investment in the sector, notably the entry of the Portuguese Sonae Group and the US Global Environment Fund which is investing an estimated US\$50 million and commented very positively on the policy environment we have created.

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There has been good progress with the resettlement of forest dwellers in the Dukuduku Forest. After lengthy negotiations, the community has agreed to be resettled on two farms we purchased for the purpose. The provincial housing department has provided R5,7 million for housing. The first houses should be completed within six months' time.

A further R3,5-million to rehabilitate the forest will employ 200 of the resettled people over the next three years. After patient consultation in a volatile situation, in which we will remain vigilant, the battle to save Dukuduku has almost been won.

There continues to be great potential for forestry to be part of rural development and enterprise strategies. Agreements between large companies and communities in KwaZulu-Natal have assisted hundreds of emerging timber farmers on communal land. Similar approaches are possible in other areas, particularly the Eastern Cape.

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Other potential forestry businesses will exploit the tourism attractions of indigenous forests through our community forestry service. I welcome Minister Valli Moosa's efforts to rationalise the approach to nature conservation. I was

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delighted to announce the transfer of a large tract of forest into the St. Lucia Wetlands Park and Western Cape forests into the Cape Peninsula National Park.

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Our flagship Working for Water Programme continues to provide employment to an average 20 000 people annually, to clear invading alien plants with major benefits of biodiversity and sustainable land use as well as increased water availability.

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There has been some concern about this programme being a threat to all forms of exotic plants. I wish to make it clear that we are not about ruthlessly uprooting jacarandas from city streets and suburban gardens and eucalyptus from picnic spots. In controlled conditions such aliens are not invasive. We must note however that every single house that burned down in the fires on the Table Mountain Chain last year was surrounded by invading alien plants. We need to find the right balance between human interventions to create a more pleasant environment and the potentially damaging broader impacts of such interventions.

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The Santam/Cape Argus Ukuvuka: Operation Firestop project has developed into a remarkable role model, showing the capacity to work not only as a public/private partnership, but also across all three tiers of Government. I would like to salute the management and workers of this programme, and in particular, to single out the work to prevent fires in vulnerable communities.

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Just as water can pose a great threat to life so can burning vegetation as we witness through veld and forest fires and the tragic loss of life and property in informal settlements. We saw this last year in the terrible fires along the Table Mountain chain and we see it all the time in vulnerable settlements.¶

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In the process 1,500 people have been employed in removing dangerous vegetation, shoring-up mountain slopes and in fire fighting teams.

11. Greening our Country

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I strongly advocate the planting of our own beautiful indigenous plants and trees. I have given my fullest support to the urban greening programme of such organisations as Trees and Food for Africa, and we must ensure that our townships and bleak rural settlements become just as green as the affluent suburbs. Our commitment to Arbor Week and Water Week and the planting of trees “to heal the nation” is bearing fruit and have become popular events in our national calendar.

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On a personal note, I grew up in a city and suburb which was and still is beautified by oaks and jacarandas and other aliens and I will continue to advocate their protection and retention in such controlled environments. The fact that Johannesburg has over six million trees makes it an urban forest that is a part of this country’s unique heritage. Pretoria should ever remain the “Jacaranda City”. These are potential tourist drawcards unrivalled anywhere in the world.¶

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12. Acknowledgements

Let this country be inhabited by a Water Wise population with evergreen fingers. We will ensure that Water, Sanitation and Forests feature high on the agenda of next year’s Earth Summit in Johannesburg.

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I turn in appreciation to those who give their best efforts to make it happen – my Director-General, Mike Muller, the staff of my Ministry and Department, and all other dedicated role players such as the Working for Water and Ukuvuka teams, the donors and private sector supporters, and the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee so ably chaired by the Honourable Buyelwa Sonjica.

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Pula Nala Kgotso! From rain comes the greenery that creates peace. ¶
Let our country be blessed by abundant rainfall.¶
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13. Thanks and acknowledgements¶

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Pula Nala Kgotso! From rain comes the greenery that creates peace.

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Siyabonga gaku!¶
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