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## Speak out against water wastage

THE water scarcity problem facing South Africa hampers the ability of the government to fulfil citizens' fundamental right of access to adequate, clean and safe water – and negatively affects the enjoyment of other interrelated rights in the Bill of Rights.

However, nothing impedes the right of access to water more than the lack of appreciation and value for our ever-depleting water resources.

Access to water is one of the inalienable rights which severely affects the public. This is especially so during this time of the catastrophic Covid-19 health crisis.

On the strength that it is through access to water that other rights are enjoyed, it should be held as a sacrosanct right by both the government and the public.

It is in this context that the Department of Water and Sanitation will use March to observe Water Month. The department annually celebrates National Water Week (NWW) which is commemorated throughout the month. This year the NWW takes place from March 15-22, against the back-

drop of World Water Day on March 22.

Under this year's theme, "Valuing Water", various activities have been planned.

These include awareness campaigns to educate the general public and stakeholders about the importance of water conservation, that will be carried out across the country. Building on the previous years' themes, the theme for this year is aimed at understanding how people value water economically, socially, culturally and the role it plays in their lives.

Through these activities, the department seeks to highlight the role of the public to safeguard and protect the country's limited water resources. Also, to support the goal: access to adequate and safe water for all.

Individual members of the community should view the impact of water wastage and pollution not only as a result of what others have done, but also the result of them being passive about what is happening around them.

By doing nothing to help stop the irresponsible use of water and pollut-

ing this precious resource, we are all equally guilty.

We need to frown upon those taking the easy way out by excusing themselves from acting positively because they are not the ones who waste or pollute water resources in the first place.

Communities that do not enjoy the right to proper water supply stand little or no chance of being protected from diseases such as Covid-19.

As a country that has to contend with an enormous challenge of lack of water, coupled with the mushrooming of densely populated informal settlements, there is an urgent need to move with speed to transform the plight of the people for the better.

It is for this reason that the department, in partnership with citizens and various civil society organisations throughout the country, celebrates Water Month by calling upon everyone to value water resources by conserving and protecting them.

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A VIEW of Midmar Dam. It is World Water Day this month, a time to especially value water.