



Let us all join forces in conserving water

By **Khulekani Ngcobo**

The right to water and sanitation is a fundamental human right that is provided for in the Bill of Rights.

Chapter 2 of the Constitution of SA provides that: "Everyone has the right to have access to sufficient food and water." In order to give effect to this right, Parliament has enacted the Water Services Act 108 of 1997. The purpose of this Act is to provide for the right to basic water supply and basic sanitation services.

The water scarcity problem facing our country 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. There is a duty on all spheres of government to ensure that water services are provided in a manner that is equitable and sustainable. This is especially so during this time of the Covid-19 health crisis.

Water shortages have a great impact on human health, socio-economic development, and the environment.

It is for this reason that the department of water and sanitation will use March to observe Water Month. The department annually celebrates National Water Week, which is commemorated throughout the month. This year the National Water Week takes place from March 20 to 26, against the backdrop of World Water Day on March 22.

The National Water Week campaign is aimed at educating

the public about their responsibility in water conservation initiatives, raising awareness around the need to protect and conserve the country's water resources.

Each year, the UN Water sets a theme for World Water Day which responds to a current or future challenge. The theme for year 2022 is "Groundwater – making the invisible, visible", and the theme seeks to remind policy and decision-makers, inside and outside the water community, that SA is a water-scarce country.

It is without a doubt that surface water, the traditional source for bulk supply, is becoming more limited and even unavailable in many catchments and the infrastructure and the costs of construction and maintenance are prohibitive.

This year, the focus is groundwater, an invisible resource

with an impact visible everywhere. Groundwater feeds springs, rivers, lakes and wetlands, and seeps into oceans. Groundwater is recharged from rain and snow fall infiltrating the ground. Groundwater can be extracted to the surface by pumps and wells.

Hence, chapter 2 of the National Water Act prescribes that strategies should be developed to facilitate proper management of water resources. The National Groundwater Strategy aims to improve the recognition of the strategic value, use and protection of groundwater in SA.

By doing nothing to help stop the irresponsible use of water and polluting this precious resource, we are all equally guilty.

Conserving water should be an everyday practice for businesses and citizens. In addition to changing your own actions, you can get involved with others in your community to protect the drinking water sources.

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