



## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

### **Thembisa West High Triumphs in 2025 South African Youth Water Prize Gauteng Provincial Competition**

12 May 2025

The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS), through its Water and Sanitation Education Programme (WSEP), proudly hosted the 2025 South African Youth Water Prize (SAYWP) Gauteng Provincial Competition on 09 May 2025 at the scenic Johannesburg Botanical Gardens in Emmarentia.

The SAYWP is a prestigious national initiative implemented in partnership with the Stockholm International Water Institute. It aims to empower young South Africans to become future leaders in water resource management by engaging them in science and technology-driven innovation projects. The competition challenges Grade 9 to 11 learners studying Mathematics and Physical Science to identify real-life water, sanitation, or environmental issues in their communities and to develop innovative awareness campaigns or technical solutions in response.

Thembisa West High School represented by Mr Siyabonga Khuzwayo under mentorship of Mr Kiew Mthombeni emerged as the Gauteng Provincial Champion, earning the honour of representing the province at the upcoming National Adjudications hosted by the Department of Water and Sanitation on the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> May 2025. Bryanston High School, located in the Johannesburg Municipality, secured second place, while Afrikaans Hoër Meisieskool from Tshwane Municipality claimed third place.

The adjudication panel consisted of distinguished intellectuals from various institutions, including scientists and engineers from the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS), Mr. Gxagxama and Ms. Mbiza, as well as Professor Msomi and Dr. Mabuwa from UNISA, Dr. Bopape from TUT, young professionals from Rand Water, and representatives from the Water Wise initiative.

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The dynamic programme director, Ms. Senoane from the South African Youth Water Action (SABYA), inspired and motivated the learners, urging them to take ownership of their futures with confidence and determination.

Our partner, the Gauteng Department of Education, encouraged educators to continue supporting learners in both their academic work and extracurricular initiatives such as the DWS Water Sector Education Programme (WSEP) and the Eskom Expo for Young Scientists. These programmes provide learners with opportunities to compete for bursaries and gain further academic exposure.

The adjudicators, who dedicated their time and effort throughout the week to evaluate research papers and presentations, expressed their admiration for the exceptional quality of work presented. They commended the learners for their hard work, creativity, and commitment, and encouraged them to continue identifying water and sanitation challenges and to propose innovative awareness solutions that address current and future issues.

In closing, the adjudicators pledged their continued support to the participating schools through mentoring and training initiatives aimed at further developing and enhancing learners' projects.

In addition to the top three accolades, special recognition awards were presented to schools that demonstrated exceptional creativity and effort:

- Outstanding Innovation Award: Thembisa West High School
- Outstanding Awareness Campaign: Protea Glen Secondary School
- Best Research Paper: Buhlebemfundo High School

The SAYWP forms part of the Department's broader Water and Sanitation Education Programme (WSEP), which aims to promote awareness and encourage behavioural change on critical water-related issues. These include water-use efficiency, water quality monitoring, conservation, hygiene and health education, and the impact of invasive alien species. A key objective of the programme is to help address the national skills shortage in the water sector by inspiring learners to pursue careers in water and sanitation-related fields.

Ms. Shoki Malepe, the Gauteng WSEP Coordinator from the Department of Water and Sanitation, encouraged learners to continue participating in the department's innovation and awareness programmes. She further emphasized the importance of preserving, conserving,



and reusing our precious water resources, reminding learners that "water is life and sanitation is dignity."

The Department commends all participating schools for their dedication, innovation, and commitment to sustainable water solutions, and congratulates Thembisa West High on their well-deserved victory.

**Maria Lebeso**

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