

## NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

### FOR WRITTEN REPLY

#### QUESTION NO 111

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**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO 2)**

**111. Mr M M Swathe (DA) to ask the Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry:**

- (1) What is her department's position on the state of the country's water and sanitation infrastructure, with specific reference to its water sanitation plants;
- (2) whether the state of the current infrastructure is satisfactory; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details;
- (3) whether she will make a statement on the matter?

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**REPLY:**

- (1) As trustee of our country's water resources, the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry has developed and put in place various policies and processes to manage and protect our water resources. However, despite these measures the Department is aware of non-compliance and poor performance.

This concern is not only limited to the condition of the country's waste water infrastructure, but also includes its effective functioning, its management and compliance. The impact on sustainable and effective customer services, as well as the environment is a serious concern and matter.

- (2) As stated the Department is concerned about and definitely not satisfied with the present situation. Some waste water treatment plants are in a good state and functioning very well, but many are not.

In an open letter from the Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, Minister L B Hendricks dated 15 February 2008, the Minister states: "I am very concerned about the pollution no matter who is doing it, and it is the responsibility of my Department to ensure that our rivers and dams are protected and clean. Where possible we work with companies and municipalities to stop the pollution and clean up the rivers; if the pollution is as a result of inadequate or old Waste Water Treatment plants we support the municipality to ensure that the construction and refurbishment of these plants takes place."

The impact on the environment and consumers is a serious concern. The Umsunduzi River, parts of the Vaal River, Jukskei River and the Hartbeespoort Dam are all examples of unacceptable situations.

- (3) Yes, in terms of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, the responsibility to manage these works lies with Water Service Authorities (municipalities), and not with the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry.

However, despite this situation, the Department has initiated and is taking various actions in this regard. Policies, legislation, regulations and licensing protocol have been put in place. Extended monitoring systems are under development. Various guidelines and support systems have been and are being developed. Furthermore, institutional capacity building initiatives are underway, direct operational support provided to some institutions and a bulk infrastructure fund has been established.

Although this fund for Regional Bulk Infrastructure is R1,4 billion, it is relatively small and can only fund a portion of the need.

The Department, within its specific mandate, is committed to address these matters with urgency in partnership with the Water Sector.