



**SPEECH BY DEPUTY MINISTER OF WATER AND SANITATION,
PAMELA TSHWETE, DURING THE DEBATE AT THE
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY:**

**THE WATER CRISIS IN THE WESTERN CAPE, THE CITY OF
CAPE TOWN IN PARTICULAR, AND IN OTHER PROVINCES,
AND THE IMPACT IT HAS ON THE COUNTRY AS A RESULT
OF DROUGHT, GLOBAL WARMING AND OTHER
CONTRIBUTING FACTORS.**

08 MARCH 2018

Speaker of the National Assembly

Ministers and Deputy Ministers

Honourable Members of the National Assembly

Honoured Guests

We are gathered here today about a very crucial issue that is of concern to all of us. We all know that South Africa is a water scarce country and one of 40 driest countries in the world. It is also important to know that married to the dryness, the country as a whole has not recovered from the 2014 drought.

During this truly difficult time of drought, it is good and common practice to stretch available water resources through the practical application of restrictions to ensure that water supply systems do



not fail. This is the principle from which we operate as the Department of Water and Sanitation.

This requires that all; and I do stress: **ALL** of us play our part and comply with the restrictions which are applied from time to time.

What is true is that the provinces of KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Free State, North West and the Northern Cape bore the burden of the drought at its greatest height. The devastation that led to huge losses of livestock and crops over a period must always remain in our thoughts.

What we saw in the early parts of the drought is that the reaction to the drought in KwaZulu-Natal, Free State, Limpopo and North West was more serious than what is experienced in the Western Cape and Particularly Cape Town.

The marked appreciation of the situation saw a much quicker response to the warnings and adherence to restrictions imposed at the time. The most affected municipalities in the affected provinces understood and appreciated the need for joint efforts towards enabling positive responses to the drought.



A perfect example to remember is that of a two-day programme that included Department of Water and Sanitation principals meeting with the Premier of KwaZulu-Natal, MEC's in the Disaster Management Committee, District Mayors of the affected Municipalities and Executive Mayor of the City of eThekweni. This was followed by a situational assessment site visit to the UGu and UMvoti Dams then, showing absolute political will.

This visit followed numerous meetings held by the Department of Water and Sanitation and the KwaZulu-Natal provincial government on fast-tracking relief efforts and unlocking interventions meant to bring short, medium and long-term solutions to the water shortages experienced at the time.

We cannot ignore the important decision to put up the Richards Bay Desalination Plant, utilising the expertise of Umgeni Water to research and find the best technology, facilitate and procure the technology in the shortest possible time without flouting the rules.

Engagements with the Strategic Water Partnership Network (SWPN) and members of the public on behavioural changes were necessary to ensure water supply and savings through behavioural change.

The then dire drought situation in the Free State prompted the FS Provincial Government to call on all people of the province to be actively involved in efforts to save water and fight against the



devastating effects of global warming and climate change. There was a threat to the livelihood of the people of the Free State.

The province immediately implemented short, medium and long term measures to address and mitigate the potential impact of the drought then; with measures including but not limited to:

- implementing drought operating rules at all dams;
- diversifying the water mix to include ground water utilisation, rainwater harvesting, re-use of return flows and packaged desalination plants;
- reducing operational risks through proper infrastructure operation and maintenance with associated skills development;
- and acquiring and deploying water tanks to affected communities.

The Free State government at the time also warned all its citizens that the water restrictions that were being implemented needed to be adhered to for the situation not to worsen.

We do remember also that in 2016 with the Integrated Vaal River System which was very low, political leadership was shown by the province of Gauteng to encourage all sorts of water saving efforts. The most critical, was the reduction of supplies by Rand Water to municipalities to force water savings, with direction from



Department of Water and Sanitation and the Gauteng Provincial Government through the COGTA MEC.

There is this untrue narrative about the City of Cape Town not receiving assistance from National Government. This is inaccurate.

The Department of Water and Sanitation, through its Western Cape office, serves not just the City of Cape Town but the whole province. The drought is not just localized but provincial; exactly the same as what happened in other provinces.

Attention has also been given to the province through the work of the Inter-Ministerial Task Team on Drought. The Department of Water and Sanitation has also availed one of its top managers to be part of the City of Cape Town's advisory committee that keeps the City up to date on all matters of the drought on a weekly basis.

It is important to highlight that COGTA through a letter dated 22 August 2017 allocated the following amounts for drought relief in the Western Cape:

- R20,8 million to the City of Cape Town;
- R10,9 million to the Bitou Local Municipality;
- R3,1 million to the Theewaterskloof Local Municipality;



- And on the 25 September 2017 a further R40 million was allocated to the Department of Agriculture for animal feed

The total sum allocated to the Western Cape therefore totalled R74,8 million. It is very important that we get to know how much of this has been utilised and on what? We also need to understand how these allocations impacted on the poor and vulnerable people in Khayelitsha, ImizamoYethu and other places where service delivery is needed.

What we have observed was that at the beginning of this unfortunate situation, the response of consumers in the Western Cape was quite concerning. After the 12 December 2017 restrictions and interventions were announced, with additional interventions published in the Government Gazette on Friday 12 January 2018 with regard to limiting the use of water in the Breede-Gouritz and Berg-Olifants Water Management Areas.

This notice included the following among other things:

- Limiting groundwater abstractions for domestic and industrial use by 45% and for agricultural use by 60%.
Bringing the restrictions on groundwater use in line with the restrictions applied to surface water use.



- It was necessary to also limit water for irrigation use from the system dams once the users have depleted their seasonal bulk volumes.

Whilst the City of Cape Town is threatening its people with **Day Zero** and receiving the lion's share of attention due to its centrality with regards the economy of the Western Cape, we must remember that the current drought has been real in all of South Africa and the SADC Regions for the last four years at least.

To support of the situation in the Western Cape and Cape Town in particular:

- The Department of Water and Sanitation Signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with the City of Cape Town
- Borehole positions were established within Department of Water and Sanitation premises in the Theewaterskloof Dam basin
- The Department assigned additional staff to compliment the maintenance team
- Encourage implementation of best efforts to manage the Cape Town Systems Dams through the application of restrictions which were recently increased (domestic and



industrial use increased from 40% to 45% and agricultural use increased from 50% to 60%)

- Following meetings with the Mayor of the City of Cape Town, a directive was issued to Umgeni Water (11/12/2017) to procure a 10 Million Litres per Day plant as an emergency intervention for City of Cape Town. The procurement process has been concluded. Despite the City of Cape Town wanting the project to be delayed in order to find an alternate site for the plant, we continue with preparation for implementation.

The deeper we dig into the apparent water crisis in Western Cape and Cape Town in particular, the more unjustifiable Day Zero becomes. The further the date shifts. I'm made to believe leader of the opposition has now announced that Day Zero is no longer in 2018

- On 18 May 2017 approval was granted to TCTA to build the Berg Rivier Voelvlei Dam Augmentation Scheme (BRVAS)
- In addition to all this, the Department of Water and Sanitation has emergency systems in place should the dam levels reach 13% or lower.
- The joint Compliance Monitoring and Enforcement efforts conducted by the Department of Water and Sanitation and the municipalities has also influenced the reduction in water use (particularly the unauthorised use)



- Department of Water and Sanitation is also fast-tracking the approval of water use licences and has recently granted licences to City of Cape Town for the groundwater programme involving:
 - Steenbras: three phases up to 57 million Cubic Metres per annum,
 - Cape Flats: three phases up to 75 million Cubic Metres per annum,
 - Oranjezicht Springs: up to 1.78 million Cubic Metres per annum.

This work will continue because we have the interests of all South Africans, notwithstanding where they live or work.

Singu rhulumente okhathalayo, ngoba kaloku amanzi ayimpilo!

Yaye xa amanzi engekho ngomama abasokolayo.

As I conclude, let's separate politics from water. We need to remember that a great deal of consideration needs to be attached to the following:

South Africa's main source remains surface water. The reality therefore is that South Africa needs to go for an unconventional approach towards water access. More groundwater development



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needs to be undertaken, water reuse must be enhanced, brackish and sea-water desalinated, and most definitely upscale rainwater harvesting.

We need to be more efficient in water use; including reducing the non-revenue water by attending to water losses and leaks from the system. Pollution remains a worry considering the limited water resources that we have.

One of the most important adaptation strategies that need to be prioritized and strengthened is the water conservation and demand management. Without this, climate change will continue to negatively impact on us.

Enkosi!