

MEDIA RELEASE



Viva Water Pure and Clean Viva Forests Rich and Green
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MEDIA STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF WATER AFFAIRS AND FORESTRY, MR RONNIE KASRILS

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Embargo: None

Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry Ronnie Kasrils has written to Cape Town Metropolitan Municipality expressing his concern about recent events surrounding water cut-offs in Tafelsig. He raised a number of specific issues:

“Firstly, we must ensure that the right of access to a basic water supply is always respected.

“Secondly, where action is taken against consumers for non-payment, it is important that fair procedures are followed. Guidelines for these are set out in the Water Services Act 1997 and the relevant regulations.

“Finally, while we recognise the need for local government to be able to take measures against the “won’t pay”, we need to be assured that the way the cut-offs are carried out does not deny the “can’t pay” their right of access to a basic minimum supply of water. This should be provided free of charge anyway.”

Minister Kasrils has asked Cape Town’s acting Mayor to respond on these points. In particular, given the difficulties which the Municipality had experienced in communicating with consumers in the area, he was concerned to know whether arrangements had been made to ensure that affected households could access a basic supply of water, through standpipes if necessary.

He added that in appropriate circumstances, municipalities are able to cut off consumers’ water supply completely. This position was recently upheld by the

Supreme Court in a case of a Durban woman who took Durban Metro Municipality to court after being cut off for repeatedly exceeding her free basic water allowance and refusing to pay her water bill.

The judge found that the Durban authorities had taken the proper steps to ensure that the consumer had access to the basic supply required by law but that she had contravened the reasonable conditions enforced by the municipality.

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