

# 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: Midnight**

Our country has reached a historical milestone with more than 50 percent of the South African population receiving free basic water.

A survey done by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry has shown that 51 percent of all South Africans – or 23 million people - live in areas where local authorities have committed themselves to supplying a basic amount of water free of charge every month.

A further 15 percent of South Africans (seven million), who live in areas where there is no infrastructure for the supply of water as yet, are being addressed by the department's R1,1-billion capital programme.

Another 34 percent or 15 million South Africans live in local government areas where the municipalities have either not yet decided to implement the free basic water policy or are in the process of implementing at a later stage.

Gauteng is providing 80 percent of its population with free basic water while the Western Cape is delivering free basic water to 70 percent of its population.

I am very pleased with the significant progress made in ensuring a better life for all our people. This kind of cooperative governance between all spheres of government is a salutary example of unity in action for change.

In this regard I wish to thank Salga and organised local government at provincial level, individual local authorities, provincial governments, the Department of Provincial and Local Government, Treasury and the Water Boards for their innovative approach at implementing this policy.

The department will now be focussing on assisting those local authorities still having to implement the Government's free basic water policy. Provincial support units have been established to help in this regard.

I need to emphasis that consumers should continue paying for water until their respective local governments have informed them of their arrangements.

In many of the rural areas, the Department is still the water service provider and although water is provided free, there is often inadequate control over the actual usage. This has the effect that some of these households often use more than the free basic amount of 6 000 litres per month.

This poses a great challenge to the management of such schemes, both to the Department as well as municipalities to which these schemes are being transferred.

The department will continue to transfer water schemes to local authorities, assisting them to manage these schemes but also to enable them to provide free basic water.

The pace at which the free basic water policy has taken off is encouraging. I will be working close coordination with Minister Sydney Mufamadi and Minister Trevor Manuel to oversee the continued implementation of the programme and to address anticipated problems. As an example, we will be monitoring the use of the Equitable Share of Revenue and any problems that may arise so that we can expand the coverage of free basic water to all our people.

(These figures correlate with Stats SA figures)

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