



## water & sanitation

Department:  
Water and Sanitation  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

### MEDIA STATEMENT

#### DWS contextualizes its intent on the War on Leaks programme

09 July 2018

**Pretoria:** The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) is concerned about the situation that surrounds the War on Leaks (WoL) programme that started in 2015.

This programme was set in motion as a means of addressing the water losses country-wide which result from failing and ageing infrastructure. This matter came to a head after the Water Research Commission mandated Stellenbosch University to undertake research into water losses in the country. The study showed that the country loses up to 37% of potable water to losses due to failing infrastructure, ageing infrastructure, illegal connections, etcetera.

As a response to this dilemma, the then President put it to the DWS to find a solution to this challenge that could not be left unattended. The idea that was born out of that directive led to the DWS looking into recruiting out of school youths to take up training as Water Agents, Artisans and Plumbers.

Thus far Phase 1 trainees who were enrolled onto the programme in 2015 have successfully completed the following training:

- New Venture Creation (*Water Agents and Artisans*)
- Water Conservation and Water Demand Management (*Water Agents and Artisans*)
- Water Agent Skills Program (*for Water Agents*)
- Institutional Training (Artisans)

Notwithstanding the above, not all Phase 1 trainees were placed within the projected timelines. Currently there is 7%, i.e. 106 in number, which is still outstanding.

This matter is due to competing similar programmes within government and a lack of qualified mentors within some of the targeted municipalities. This situation has impacted on the capacity of municipalities to absorb the trainees for workplace training. Furthermore, some of the contracts of the trainees are being considered for extension each on its own merit as their circumstances are not similar.

It is important to indicate that this project started as an intervention to the problem that was raised and as such it did not have a particular budget as it started after the budget had been allocated. The DWS had to on an on-going basis, find the necessary funds to ensure that the programme went ahead.

The current DWS Minister, Mr Gugile Nkwinti, has found that the programme is important and can assist in stemming the tide of water losses. As such, he has suggested that it fall within the realm of the National Water Resources Infrastructure Branch, which is now named Infrastructure Build, Operate and Maintenance. This will allow for funding to be availed as part of the branch's responsibility of maintaining infrastructure for the good of the country.

The funding for the payment of the colleges has been made available; this will ensure that the Phase 1 trainees, especially Artisans and Plumbers, register for the trade tests and complete their training.



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As the DWS we are optimistic that a significant number of trainees from the first intake will be able to complete their training and in time. This effort is meant to bring comfort not just to the trainees but to those municipalities that would need to utilise the skills developed through the programme.

**END**

**Issued by the Department of Water & Sanitation**

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