



**Parliamentary Caucus**  
**Budget Vote Debate**  
**Water and Sanitation Vote 41**  
**Comrade Sello Dithebe, ANC MP**  
**12 July 2024**

**The ANC-led Government of National Unity building and expanding water infrastructure today in pursuit of the 2030 National Development Plan Vision.**

Honourable Chairperson, our country has made significant strides in universalizing access to safe, clean drinking water for the majority of South Africans, who were denied such a basic need just thirty years ago.

Over the past thirty years of governance, the ANC-led government has built and expanded water infrastructure, even in the most remote areas of our country. As the African National Congress, we are the first to accept and acknowledge the significant work needed to ensure universal access to reliable, safe, and clean drinking water for all our people, ensuring we leave no one behind.

Our ANC-led government crafted and approved the 2030 National Development Plan as a vision to expand further access to safe, clean drinking water for all South Africans, acknowledging the work still needed. As the African National Congress, we fully support the budget vote of the Department of Water and Sanitation and its entities because we believe that it will contribute towards the realisation of the 2030 National Development Plan Vision.

- **The democratic government upholds the constitutional imperative of providing safe, clean drinking water.**

One of the important decisions of the 1st parliamentary administration was to adopt the progressive constitution, which made it a constitutional right to have access to

safe, clean drinking water and obliged the democratic government to make strides in realising the right to water. Section 27, Subsection (1)(b) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa states that "everyone has the right to access sufficient food and water" and that the "state must take reasonable legislative and other measures" within available resources to progressively realise these rights.

Honourable Members, we must instil a culture of accountability in those entrusted with delivering quality basic services to our citizens. We must never tolerate poor performance, as it violates our people's constitutional rights to access safe, clean drinking water and decent sanitation, regardless of their social standing in society.

We must commend the leadership of the Department of Water and Sanitation for the steps it has taken to enforce accountability by those entrusted to deliver safe, clean drinking water to communities across the country. Between 2018 and 2023, the Department of Water and Sanitation opened criminal charges against thirty (13) local municipalities for their failure to submit plans to fix their water problems.

As the Portfolio Committee on Water and Sanitation, we must not only support the department in initiating criminal charges against municipalities but also extend these charges to individual employees found guilty of dereliction of duty through departmental investigations and reports for failing to ensure the is consistent water supply to communities. We must work to prevent cholera outbreaks in other parts of the country due to the dereliction of duties.

- **Developing and expanding water infrastructure to ensure everyone has access to safe, clean drinking water**

Honourable Chairperson, in keeping with the 2030 National Development Plan vision, our ANC-led government continues to develop and expand water infrastructure to ensure we are not leaving anyone behind in our quest to ensure universal access to safe, clean drinking water. It is encouraging that our President of the Republic, His excellency Cyril Ramaphosa, has prioritised the expansion of our country's water infrastructure. Earlier this year, President Ramaphosa detailed the Department of Water and Sanitation's major bulk water projects across the country, some of which are nearing completion and will enhance the water supply for millions of residents in villages, towns, and large cities.

In support of the presidential announcement on bulk water projects, the Minister of Finance, the honourable Enoch Godongwana, also announced that the current national government budget has "also prioritised infrastructure provision" and that the ANC-led government has made "plans to invest more than R943 billion in public infrastructure." The Minister of Finance anticipates that every department will allocate funds to support the refurbishment and maintenance of existing assets, as well as the construction of new infrastructure.

- **Improve the water infrastructure project implementation and increasing maintenance**

Honourable Chairperson, as our ANC-led government continues to build and expand water infrastructure, it is crucial that we improve the implementation of these projects and increase the frequency of maintenance for this vital infrastructure. A year ago, the department of water and sanitation recruited and appointed more than 850 scientists and technicians to build internal capacity to guarantee that it would be effective in implementing water infrastructure projects while also increasing maintenance on the existing infrastructure.

The department and water authorities have acknowledged that it has not adequately budgeted for the maintenance of existing water infrastructure. Therefore, we urge the department and local water service authorities to allocate sufficient funds for repairs and maintenance in the upcoming financial year (2025/26), even if it necessitates ringfencing this budget.

- **Acting decisively against the construction mafia that denies South Africans the right to access safe, clean drinking water.**

The government faces challenges in its progressive programme to universalize access to safe, clean drinking water, including the failure to maintain existing infrastructure and the emergence of a construction mafia. The construction mafia poses a serious risk to the transformation agenda championed by the ANC democratic government, as it not only obstructs the government from implementing important water infrastructure projects but also results in the department shifting funds towards infrastructure security.

We are calling upon the security cluster of the government to take decisive action against the construction mafia that seeks to deny our people's right to access safe and clean drinking water. The police service and law enforcement agencies have to leverage the recent budgetary allocation to the peace and security cluster, which aims to strengthen our law enforcement agencies and combat crimes like those perpetrated by the construction mafia.

- **Highlight Key projects to be undertaken in the financial year**

Despite the actions of the construction mafia, our government persists in implementing significant water infrastructure projects throughout the nation. The department is implementing several projects in this financial year alone, some of which President Ramaphosa announced in his State of the Nation Address.

The African National Congress in this august house welcomes the commitment by the Department of Water and Sanitation to complete at least seven strategic projects. These projects include the uMkhomazi Bulk Water Supply Scheme and the Maphumulo Bulk Water Supply Scheme, both in KwaZulu Natal, and the Olifants River Water Resources Development Project under the Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality in Limpopo, which are to guarantee water supply not only for domestic use but also for economic usage.

As the African National Congress, we are confident that the departmental plans and budget contribute towards the 2030 National Development Plan vision of universalizing access to safe, clean drinking water. I wish to reiterate that the ANC in this august house supports the budget vote as presented by our Minister, the honourable Pemmy Majodina.

I thank you.