

# Nelson Mandela Bay may get water relief

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In a bold initiative directed at relieving ongoing water shortages, discussions have begun around establishing the region's first large-scale, commercial desalination plant.



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Although expensive to operate due to high energy requirements, a desalination plant would remove the salt and other mineral contents from sea water and play a critical role in preparing sea water for human consumption.

This would provide a new source of water for the Nelson Mandela Bay region where water stocks are at dire levels.

The opportunity to establish the plant in drought-stricken Port Elizabeth has come about through the national government's "Adopt-a-Municipality" programme.

It will involve three major stakeholders in the Bay region - the local authority, beer producer SABMiller and Marina Sea Salt, which desalinates sea water to produce its products.

This is according to Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality mayoral committee member for infrastructure and engineering Annette Lovemore, who said a meeting involving the three roleplayers had already taken place. "This is an exciting idea that, if implemented, would have a win-win outcome for all stakeholders," she said.

"The Adopt-a-Municipality programme is driven by the national Department of Cooperative Governance and SABMiller's agreement, through which the company has played various significant roles in the socioeconomic upliftment in the metro, is about to be renewed.

"The desalination concept is part of the new agreement," Lovemore said.

Outlining some of the synergies arising out of such a collaborative agreement, Lovemore said SABMiller used large quantities of high quality water to produce its beers, that it was looking for cleaner sources of water and Marina Sea Salt produced water, which was desalinated to a certain degree, as a by-product of its salt production.

"The Nooitgedacht water scheme which is still to come online, will give the metro about 50-megalitres of water a day.

"The salt production operation produces about 30-megalitres of water a day," she said.

"The idea would be to put more water through the salt operations.

"This water, which has already been purified to a certain extent, would then be further filtered through a desalination plant towards making it fit for human consumption," Lovemore said.

The cost of desalination was very high as the process consumed a lot of electricity, she said.

AB InBev Africa and SAB spokeswoman Robyn Chalmers said: "While the project is promising, it is too early to give any further details at this point.

"It is part of the work that SAB has been doing for some time now to identify ways to try to support the Nelson Mandela Bay municipality in its endeavours."

Stressing that the project was still at preliminary discussion stage, Lovemore said the Coega Development Corporation (CDC) was also looking into desalination as it was a water requirement for gas-related initiatives within the Coega Industrial Development Zone.

"If we had to go it alone as a municipality, estimates are that it would cost around R1.5bn to harvest desalinated water," she said.

*Source: Herald*

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