

Inroads made in tackling Bay water crisis

The Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality is still losing just more than a quarter of all its treated water to leaks but the losses are down from three months ago and rescue measures are starting to take good effect.



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That is the message from municipal spokesman Mthubanzi Mniki who provided *The Herald* with a water management scorecard compiled in terms of International Water Association criteria.

The scorecard shows the metro lost 22,700,680-megalitres (ML) of water through leaks from July to March. This loss volume was 29.1% of the 77,898,210ML of water treated by the metro, 2.5% down from the 31.6% for January.

As a first step towards fixing the leaks, the metro had detailed 13 different problem points, from burst pipes and underground leaks to stolen pipes and leaking taps, meters and fire hydrants. At the same time, it was working to reduce its leak intervention turnaround time, which presently stood at 15 to 20 days, and it had introduced a range of measures aimed at improving efficiency, Mniki said.

These measures included the employment of two superintendents and one more senior superintendent in the water management department since the new metro team took over in August.

Mayoral committee infrastructure and engineering head Annette Lovemore said yesterday the municipality had also taken

on seven more plumbers, swelling their ranks to 28.

"We are hoping to add another six plumbers this financial year and then 10 [in the] next financial year and to have the plumber shortage completely sorted in three years' time," she said. "Until we've achieved this we're making use of external capacity."

Lovemore said the metro was aware the water loss volume was still way too high. "It's costing us half-a-billion rand ... that's higher than our entire capital budget," she said. "So it has been important to publicly admit the size of the problem."

It had taken Cape Town's DA-led metro team a decade to bring down their water loss volume from 40% to 12%, she noted.

Mthubanzi said metro teams were also working overtime to fix leaks and address complaint logs generally, and intensifying their assistance in poor communities where residents could not afford to fix household leaks. High-consumption schools had been served notices and demand management devices would be installed at some schools to stop water abuse.

The metro's water distribution director, Joseph Tsatsire, said another measure taken was the installation of 58 pressure devices. "These devices reduce pressure in the water reticulation system when it's not needed, especially during the night."

The metro was making available non-potable water from a Coega Kop borehole, and the commissioning of another groundwater scheme at Coega Kop to supply potable water was being finalised, Tsatsire said.

Source: Herald

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