

# Parly dissatisfied with reasons for water project delays

The Portfolio Committee on Water and Sanitation has expressed dissatisfaction with some reasons provided by the department for the delays in the implementation of projects.



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Addressing the committee on Wednesday, 27 February, the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS), led by deputy minister Pamela Tshwete and acting director-general Deborah Mochotlhi, attributed the challenges to “poor planning and failure to properly implement procurement policies”.

The department and one of its entities, Lepelle Northern Water, on Wednesday appeared before the Portfolio Committee on Water and Sanitation to answer questions relating to delays in the implementation of a number of bulk water supply projects.

“At the heart of your problem is poor planning. If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail. You don’t have planners, that’s the crux of what we are dealing with here,” said committee chairperson Mlungisi Johnson.

The committee also heard that the trenches that were left open in the Giyani Bulk Water Supply project have since been closed, following the death of six-year-old Nsuku Baloyi, who fell into one of the open trenches.

Johnson said the aim of the meeting was to be kept abreast and briefed by the department about the water projects across the country, in particular where there have been delays.

## **Cost to taxpayer**

The committee also expressed concern that the delays may cost the taxpayer more money through lengthy litigation processes and the payment of contractors for waiting time.

During the meeting, the department touched on unfinished infrastructure projects that it was working on.

In a statement, department spokesperson Sputnik Ratau said Tshwete had highlighted challenges of service delivery whilst manoeuvring the legislative space that separates roles and responsibilities.

“The DWS is required to provide bulk services, and the reticulation from such bulk services lies in the hands of local government. It is therefore imperative that as we continue to develop such bulk, we engage local government to ensure the necessary provision of requisite reticulation,” said Tshwete.

## **Solutions sought**

In the statement, the department said different solutions are being looked into in order to bring most of these projects to completion.

“These include municipalities availing co-funding in the next financial year, the DWS having constant engagement with relevant stakeholders to resolve community disgruntlements where these occur, as well as adjudication and appointment of new contractors where previous contracts came to an end or contracts were terminated due to non-compliance or non-performance,” Ratau said.

The presentation on the Giyani Water Project was in the main an update following on the previous appearance of the DWS and Lepelle Northern Water at the Portfolio Committee.

“In the end, the committee commended the progress achieved and processes underway. LNW and DWS were encouraged to ensure that even as work continues, the safety of communities around the project should not be compromised as in the case of the young boy who passed away and was found in one of the trenches left open by the previous contractor. The DWS and Lepelle were applauded that all the trenches are now covered,” he said.

Ratau said the committee appreciated the enormity of the task before the department and the sector, especially considering the impact of the delivery of water and sanitation services to the poor.

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