**DATE: 20 JUNE 2019**

**The Hon Minister Lindiwe Sisulu MP**

**Minister of Human Settlements, Water & Sanitation**

And

**Ms Deborah Mochotlhi**

**Acting Director General Department of Water and Sanitation**

Dear Minister Sisulu and Ms Mochotlhi

**RE: UNTREATED WASTE WATER FROM THE INXUBA YETHEMBA MUNICIPALITY BEING DISCHARGED INTO THE GREAT FISH RIVER**

The aforementioned matter has reference.

Please note that upon a routine oversight inspection at the Waste Water Treatment Plant in Cradock (Inxuba Yethemba Municipality) last week, which is managed by the Chris Hani District Municipality. I found the following:

1. The Waste Water Treatment Plant has completely shut down. There is not a single municipal employee at the plant and the only people present on site, were two security guards;

2. Waste Water continues to flow into the non-functional plant, but is then channelled, untreated, into the Great Fish River;

3. The problems at the plant are mechanical in nature, as most of the pumps and all the brush aerators are dysfunctional;

4. As a result of the Waste Water Treatment Plant and pump stations being non-operational, raw sewage is also being discharged at different places along the sewer lines, most notably out of manholes.

Following these discoveries, I have referred the matter to the Green Scorpions for urgent investigation. I attach hereto a letter written to the Green Scorpions, for your reference.

I have subsequently learned that your department has, over the last couple of months, issued several directives to the Chris Hani District Municipality with regards to, amongst others:

1. pollution from un-fixed sewer blockages
2. failed sewer pump stations
3. non-compliance at the Cradock Waste Water Treatment Works.

Notwithstanding the aforesaid directives these matters remain unaddressed by the municipality. This, no doubt, is as a direct consequence of the severe financial difficulties experienced by this municipality over the last couple of years.

Your department has furthermore also publicly acknowledged that they are aware that all operations at the Waste Water Treatment Plant has come to a standstill. Unfortunately, despite this, to date we have seen no tangible intervention from the department.

Given the significance of the Great Fish River and the vital role it plays in the irrigation of hundreds of thousands of hectares of agricultural land, the aforesaid discharge of raw, untreated sewage into this river is both a looming ecological and economic disaster.

Even more disturbing is the fact that a number of settlements lower down the river have no choice but to draw water for human consumption directly from the Fish, given the severe drought that has crippled our region.

Whilst I do not have access to the data obtained from the routine water samples taken by your department from the Fish River, I am concerned that, given the extent of the current sewage discharge by the Cradock Waste Water Treatment Works into the river, the water from this river would not be fit for human consumption.

I am calling upon your department to urgently intervene by *inter alia*:

1. Immediately launching an application with the courts to seek the necessary declaratory order to compel the municipality to rectify the situation;
2. Publicly release all data from the water samples taken from the Great Fish;
3. Provide the necessary assistance and / or information to all local authorities and / or farming communities who draw water from the Great Fish for human consumption and irrigation.

Given the fact that access to clean water is a basic human right, I shall have no choice but to refer this matter to the Human Rights Commission within a week, should your department fail to intervene forthwith.

Should you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

**I remain, yours faithful**



…………………………………………

**RETIEF ODENDAAL MPL**

**DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE MEMBER OF THE EC PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE**

**DA Constituency Leader: Inxuba Yethemba Municipality**