



**EASTERN CAPE PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE**  
**Democratic Alliance Member of the Provincial Legislature**  
The Hon. Retief Odendaal, MPL.



**Provincial Legislature**  
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**DATE: 30<sup>th</sup> January 2020**

**HON THOKO DIDIZA, MP**

**MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, LAND REFORM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

**And**

**DR NKOSAZANA DLAMINI ZUMA, MP**

**MINISTER OF COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS (COGTA)**

Dear Hon Minister

**RE: STATE OF DISASTER: EASTERN CAPE DROUGHT**

I refer to the aforementioned matter.

Kindly note that I address this letter to you as a member of the Eastern Cape Standing Committee on Rural Development and Agrarian Reform.

As your department is no doubt aware, the Eastern Cape is currently amidst one of the most debilitating droughts in recent history. The Western side of the province has been decimated by this ongoing drought and various towns and districts have experienced severe water shortages over the last few months.

According to the Department of Water and Sanitation our average dam levels in the province was just 49.2% as at 27<sup>th</sup> of January 2020. If one compare the aforesaid dam levels with that of the drought stricken Northern Cape where the average dam levels are now standing at 76.4%, it becomes clear that the Eastern Cape is still firmly in the grip of this extended drought.

The aforesaid dam levels are also distorting the real picture as many dams have dried up or have dropped below the intake levels. In Nelson Mandela Bay the average dam levels are currently standing at below 30%.

Many farmers, both emerging and commercial, have struggled to keep their farming concerns operational and many have experienced huge livestock losses. It is almost impossible to accurately describe on paper the effects that this devastating drought has had on our farming communities in the province. For the moment, I think it suffices to say that just last week a prominent farmer in the Cradock community committed suicide at one of his empty farm dams.

Against this backdrop I wish to state that I am deeply disappointed in the way that the Eastern Cape provincial government, but more specifically, the Eastern Cape Department of Rural Development and Agrarian Reform (DRDAR) has handled the effects of this drought.

The Honourable Premier Mabuyane declared this province a state of disaster on the 29<sup>th</sup> of October 2019. The province subsequently made R74 million of its own funding available in the Midterm Budget for drought relief to farmers in the form of fodder and feed.

Unfortunately, there was no proper plan in place to deal with the effects of the drought and even the allocation and distribution of drought aid to farmers were marred by chaos and uncertainty.

Last week I wrote to the Premier and the Honourable MEC Meth to sensitize them to the fact that the state of disaster in the province will come to an end this week if same is not extended forthwith.

In this regard please refer to Section 41 (5) of the Disaster Management Act 2002 that reads:

- “(5) A provincial state of disaster that has been declared in terms of subsection (1)
  - (a) lapses three months after it has been declared;
  - (b) may be terminated by the Premier by notice in the provincial gazette before it lapses in terms of paragraph (a); and
  - (c) may be extended by the Premier by notice in the provincial gazette for one month at a time before it lapses in terms of paragraph (a) or the existing extension is due to expire.” that of disaster in the province will come to an end this week if same is not extended forthwith.

It is thus clear that the Premier needed to extend the state of disaster by a month if he didn't want the initial declaration to lapse.

My fear with regards to the aforesaid is twofold. Firstly, the fact that we will not be able to follow emergency procurement procedures with any drought related matters without a State of Disaster in place. Secondly, the fact that we may forfeit at worst or delay at best, any disaster funding which National Government will allocate to the province. The province has made representations to National Government and has requested disaster funding to the tune of R643 million in order to assist ailing municipalities with water infrastructure and for the distribution of feed and fodder to farmers.

The fact that the province is allowing the state of disaster to lapse highlights the fact that our provincial government does not comprehend the seriousness of this disaster.

Against this backdrop I call upon you to intervene and herewith extend an invitation to you to visit our province in order to have a first-hand experience of how this drought has decimated our region. If that impossible, I request that you at the very least engage with your counterpart in the province to discuss the current state of the drought so that you can provide her with advice.

I trust you will receive my correspondence favourably.

**Sincerely,**



**Retief Odendaal, MPL**

**FREEDOM. FAIRNESS. OPPORTUNITY. DIVERSITY.**