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Ref : 16/1/R
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Date: 29 September 2025
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Hon. Marina van Zyl, MP
DA Spokesperson: Cogta
P.O. Box 15
Cape Town 8000

Dear Hon. van Zyl,

RESPONSE TO RAW SEWERAGE POLLUTION OF THE ORANGE RIVER – NURSERY PUMP STATION

Thank you for your letter dated 23 September 2025 regarding the sewerage discharge at the Nursery Pump Station affecting the Orange River.

The Joe Gqabi District Municipality acknowledges the severity of this matter and provides the following response to your concerns:

CAUSE OF THE INCIDENT

The discharge resulted from vandalism of electrical infrastructure at the Nursery Pump Station, which caused the pumps to burn out. It is important to note that these pumps were only two years old and had been properly maintained. Despite the facility being secured with devil's fork fencing and razor wire, perpetrators gained access and stripped electrical works, rendering the pumping system inoperative.

IMMEDIATE REMEDIAL MEASURES

The Municipality has taken the following immediate steps:

1. New replacement pumps have been purchased.
2. The contents of the 8-meter deep sump chamber are currently being neutralized through chemical treatment to enable safe pump-out.
3. Once neutralization is complete, the contaminated material will be pumped out using mobile pumping equipment.
4. New pumps will be installed immediately thereafter.
5. The entire remediation process is scheduled for completion by 5 October 2025.



LONG-TERM PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

The Municipality recognizes that vandalism of critical infrastructure represents a significant and recurring cost burden that directly impacts service delivery. Our long-term strategy focuses on:

1. Enhanced security measures at the Nursery Pump Station and other vulnerable facilities.
2. Reduction of vandalism incidents through increased community awareness and partnerships.
3. Collaboration with law enforcement agencies to improve response times and investigation outcomes.

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE

The Municipality respectfully requests your assistance in addressing this broader crisis:

1. Public Awareness Campaign: We appeal for your support in raising public awareness about the devastating impact of infrastructure vandalism on service delivery, water quality, and public health. Community understanding and vigilance are critical to preventing such incidents.
2. SAPS Responsiveness: We seek your intervention to strengthen SAPS responsiveness in investigating vandalism cases and securing convictions. The current criminal justice response to infrastructure vandalism is inadequate and emboldens perpetrators.
3. Legislative Support: Your advocacy for stronger deterrents and penalties for vandalism of critical municipal infrastructure would be invaluable.

The Municipality is committed to complying with Section 151(1)(j) of the National Water Act, 36 of 1998, and Section 28 of the National Environmental Management Act, 107 of 1998. However, we require a collaborative approach involving political leadership, law enforcement, and community stakeholders to address the root cause of this incident – criminal vandalism of essential services infrastructure.

We welcome the opportunity to brief you further on this matter and explore partnership opportunities to combat infrastructure vandalism in our district.

Yours faithfully,

MP Nonjola
MUNICIPAL MANAGER