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EASTERN CAPE PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE
Member of the Provincial Legislature

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23 July 2026

To: Councillor Babalwa Lobishe
Executive Mayor
Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality
Gqeberha

AND

Adv Lonwabo Ngoqo
The Acting City Manager
Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality
Gqeberha

Dear Executive Mayor and Acting City Manager,

RE: UNFOLDING WATER CRISIS | NELSON MANDELA BAY

I refer to the aforementioned matter as well as to my various correspondence in this regard since earlier this year.

I want to place it on record that the City seemingly has no control over the unfolding water crisis in Nelson Mandela Bay. On any given day, it is estimated that up to 100 000 people can sit without water at a time when all of our dams are overflowing. We believe that this is as a result of maintenance related infrastructure failures, brought on by a lack of maintenance and apparent skills within the municipality to address these issues.

We have, on numerous occasions, also alluded to the fact that there are just too many vacancies within the Water Services Department in Nelson Mandela Bay. It is our understanding that the Department currently has a vacancy rate of approximately 64% in respect of engineers, artisans and plumbers. There is just absolutely no way that the

municipality will be able to address these maintenance and infrastructure failures without the necessary technical capacity.

The major concerns that we have at this stage is the Municipality's inability to treat raw water at maximum capacity at most of our water treatment plants; the fact that a number of borehole projects, constructed at considerable cost over the past few years, remain offline; and the condition of the water reticulation network, which reportedly has in excess of 7 000 leaks.

Non-revenue water for the 2024/25 financial year constituted more than 60% which we believe is the highest of any metropolitan municipality in the country. Apart from the fact that the water leaks are not being attended to, the City has also started a practice whereby straight connections are done to households when there are no meters available. We believe that the City has not got a handle on the number of straight connections which is exacerbating the situation.

We believe that the following interventions should be able to get our water supply in Nelson Mandela Bay back on track:

1. The appointment of an Executive Director that heads up the Water Services department. The department has been without a head for the better part of three years.
2. The filling of all vacant positions for plumbers, artisans and engineers within the department.
3. The immediate intervention to bring all offline borehole projects back online to augment the supply from our water treatment plants.
4. The fast tracking and possible emergency procurement of maintenance and refurbishment works where maintenance issues are affecting the operational capacity of water treatment plants such as Nooitgedacht and Kabah.
5. The immediate fast tracking of leak repairs across the City.
6. The immediate planning to reintroduce projects that would seek to integrate the entire water reticulation system in Nelson Mandela Bay. For example, it is not possible to send water from Nooitgedacht to the Southern suburbs which are totally reliant on water from the Kromme line (Impofu and Churchill Dam).

7. The tabling before Council of the updated Water Services Master Plan which dictates how council must fund maintenance and refurbishment operations of its water reticulation over the short, medium and long-term period.
8. A review of the footprints of the reservoir zones. For example, the Emerald Hill Zone is far too extensive, particularly given the reduced storage capacity of the reservoir as a result of maintenance failures.

It is our final submission that none of the aforesaid can be done given the internal capacity issues that the city has within its Water Service department. We have repeatedly reached out to DWS to ensure that they support the City that is clearly failing in its duty as a water services provider.

We will, yet again, call upon the Department of Water and Sanitation to urgently second a suitable individual/s to support the Municipality in addressing this unfolding water crisis in Nelson Mandela Bay.

Sincerely,



RETIEF ODENDAAL, MPL
Shadow MEC for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
Constituency Head: Southern and Western Suburbs NMB

CC: Hon. Zolile Williams, MEC of COGTA

Hon. Pemmy Majodina, Minister of Water and Sanitation

Sean Phillips, DG of Water and Sanitation

South African Human Rights Commission