

# PSA welcomes decision to expand SIU

The Public Servants Association (PSA) welcomes the decision by President Cyril Ramaphosa to expand the Special Investigating Unit (SIU) probe into the Department of Water and Sanitation, particularly the controversial "Drop the Block" Project.

This expansion, under Proclamation 287 of 2025, reflects growing concerns regarding maladministration, corruption, and misuse of public funds in the Department and its implementing agencies, including Lepelle Northern Water and Sedibeng Water. The PSA has continuously advocated for transparency and accountability in public service delivery. The extension of this investigation is a necessary step towards restoring public trust and ensuring that resources meant for essential services such as water and sanitation are not squandered. South Africans are experiencing water shortages whilst corrupt persons are unduly enriching themselves with state money. Issues at Lepelle Northern Water forced the President to extend the probe where corrupt relationships between officials and service providers caused the Department to pay approximately R4.1 billion to water projects that were initially budgeted for R90 million.

Questionable deviations from procurement processes without ministerial approval and inflation of prices without due diligence and proper budgeting, was the modus operandi for those involved in corrupt relationships. A

whistle-blower revealed that R31 billion in wrongful expenditure was linked to about 65 senior officials under investigation or facing disciplinary charges. The rot at the Department and its implementing agents, Lepelle Northern Water and Sedibeng Water, has left many communities without drinkable water. The corruption is attributed to weak oversight of municipal and water boards, lack of consequence management, weak internal controls and oversight, political interference and poor leadership transitions, non-compliance with the PFMA, supply-chain management and Treasury regulations. The "Drop the Block" initiative, originally intended to improve water efficiency and sanitation, has instead become a symbol of poor governance and financial mismanagement. With water security being a critical issue in South Africa, any misuse of funds threatens service delivery and the dignity and well-being of communities.

The PSA calls on the SIU to prioritise swift and thorough investigations, whilst the NPA must act decisively on any criminal findings. Government departments and entities must strengthen internal controls and ensure ethical leadership to restore public confidence. The oversight role must be enhanced if the scourge of corruption and criminality is to be eradicated. The lost billions must be recovered and those found to have participated in the corruption must face the full might of the law.

**By Reuben Maleka and Claude Naiker**

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