

MEDIA RELEASE	North West water collapse humanitarian emergency: PSA calls for presidential intervention
DATE	17 March 2026
EMBARGO	None
ENQUIRIES	communication@psa.co.za

The Public Servants Association (PSA) issues an urgent alarm regarding the catastrophic collapse of water and sanitation services across North West, where this crisis has transcended “service interruptions” and now constitutes a full-scale humanitarian, public health, and governance emergency.

The structural failure of these essential services is paralysing operations of clinics, schools, and government institutions. Whilst South Africa officially observes National Water Month, the lived reality for millions of residents is a direct contradiction of constitutional promises. Communities are enduring a daily existence characterised by dry taps, overflowing raw sewage, and collapsing infrastructure. Frontline public servants report operational paralysis. Facilities tasked with providing health and education cannot operate safely without basic requirements for hygiene, infection control, and sanitation.

The scale of this governance failure is staggering. Recent findings by the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) reveal that 14 out of 19 municipalities in North West are failing to meet their constitutional obligations. Data indicate that in Maquassi Hills, 90.6% of households experience severe water interruptions, followed closely by Kgetlengrivier at 88.6%. Even in larger districts such as Ngaka Modiri Molema and Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati, failure rates exceed 67%, reflecting a total structural collapse of municipal water governance. This breakdown is pervasive, affecting major hubs and rural outposts. In the Madibeng Municipality, residents in Brits and Letlhabile remain without water despite significant bulk infrastructure allocations. In Ditsobotla, infrastructure decay in Lichtenburg has led to chronic sewage spillages. The platinum belt, encompassing Rustenburg and Moses Kotane, supply remains erratic and persistent, directly threatening the socio-economic stability of the region.

For public servants, these conditions have become an occupational hazard. Workers in hospitals, police stations, and schools are forced to operate in environments without water for handwashing or sanitation. This creates an unacceptable risk of disease outbreaks and violates the basic right to a safe working environment. The PSA maintains that the state’s failure to maintain water security is a direct violation of section 27 of the *Constitution*, which guarantees access to sufficient water.

The PSA calls for immediate and decisive national action and urges the President, the Minister of Water and Sanitation, and the Minister of CoGTA to intervene directly. The PSA’s demands include a full forensic audit of all provincial water infrastructure grants, the deployment of emergency technical engineering teams, and a transparent recovery plan with measurable timelines.



Water is a fundamental human right. The PSA will not remain silent whilst the dignity of communities and the safety of public servants are compromised by administrative negligence. The PSA demands decisive leadership that prioritises human life and constitutional integrity over bureaucratic delay.

END

