

## Gauteng government's response to the SAHRC report

17 August 2021

The MEC for Human Settlements, Urban Planning and CoGTA Lebogang Maile notes the report by the SA Human Rights Commission: "Final Report of the Gauteng Provincial Inquiry into the Sewage Problem of the Vaal River", publicly released today, Wednesday 17 February 2021.

In September 2018, the SAHRC undertook an inspection-in-loco to test the veracity of complaints it had received from the public regarding the raw sewage polluting in the Vaal and Rietspruit Rivers. It was alleged that the sewage was emanating from the municipality's Rietspruit Waste Water Care and Management Works situated in Vanderbijlpark, the Leewkuil Waste Water Care and Management Works situated in Vereeniging and other areas within the Emfuleni Local Municipality.

MEC Maile will study the report, including its findings and recommendations, in order to formulate a detailed and comprehensive response for consideration by Gauteng's Executive Council (Exco).

According to MEC Maile, "SAHRC plays an important role in our constitutional democracy, in promoting respect for, observance of, protection of human rights, and restoration of dignity to our people. Therefore, its findings and recommendations we take them seriously as Gauteng Government".

A week ago, MEC Maile publicly announced some of the groundbreaking interventions by Gauteng Government on Emfuleni Municipality, as a result of Section 139(1)(b) and 5(a) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act No.108 of 1996. Currently, the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) is providing Emfuleni with eight sewer unblocking trucks, with a total cost of R14m, and a further R8m will be spent by DWS on civil, electrical and mechanical related services in the municipality. An additional R50m will be spent on unblocking sewer bulk lines.

Furthermore, R53m has been set aside for waste collection, which will restore the weekly collection across the municipality. The Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (GDARD) is currently procuring trucks on behalf of Emfuleni for purposes of waste management and collection as part of improving service delivery and addressing the waste backlog. Through DWS old and ailing sewage and sanitation infrastructure will be upgraded and replaced with new infrastructure.

Lastly, R40m has been set aside for 2020/21 for the implementation plan to address electricity distribution losses, looking at things like vending data cleansing, integration of solar and vending systems, meter audits, faulty and old smart meter replacement, installation of meters in unmetered areas, repair of damaged meter boxes and illegal connection removal operations.

The report's timing is hugely welcomed, as the reconfigured Team of Administrators are making serious strides in turning around the municipality.

“The findings and recommendations of the Report will be the biggest test on whether we are making any progress or not. Therefore, our success and failures will be measured based on this Report. But we are quite certain that we are moving in the right direction”, said MEC Maile.

Gauteng Government continues to work tirelessly in order to improve the conditions of the residents of Emfuleni and restore dignity.

“Gauteng government remains committed to fixing Emfuleni Municipality, including making sure that all residents receive faster, improved and quality service delivery”, concluded MEC Maile.

In the coming weeks, the Gauteng Government will provide a detailed response to SAHRC’s report, including an action plan of the findings and recommendations.

Contact:

Castro Ngobese

Spokesperson: MEC for Human Settlements, Urban Planning and CoGTA

Mobile: 0609977790

Email: [castro.ngobese@gauteng.gov.za](mailto:castro.ngobese@gauteng.gov.za)