

Cape Town's water woes continue

Water experts say climate change has come faster than was expected and that droughts are becoming more prolific. According to an **SABC News** report, UCT Water Researcher Kevin Winter last week said this has given planners little room to come up with pro-active measures to mitigate the impact of climate change. He was commenting on the water crisis in the Cape Town Metro. **There is major concern that the city will run dry as not enough rain has fallen.** Winter said the interval between one drought and the next is becoming shorter. The average level of the six major dams providing water to the city is effectively 17%. The Western Cape Premier's spokesperson Michael Mpofu said the city is conducting emergency maintenance worth R3.5m.

Stating with water provision issues in the Western Cape: Premier Helen Zille is planning to slap Minister of Water and Sanitation Nomvula Mokonyane with a bill for R3.5m for water infrastructure maintenance that she believes the national department should have done. According to a report on the **allAfrica** site, Zille plans to divert some of the R95m disaster relief money Cabinet allocated to the province, to pay for essential maintenance of the canals leading to Voelvlei Dam. The dam, near Gouda in the Western Cape, is not in the path of a river – so during winter, water is diverted through a network of canals and a weir to the dam to fill it. This network has not been properly maintained. Zille's spokesperson Michael Mpofu said the procurement phase for the maintenance job was already underway in the province. He added that **'haphazard' work was done in 2016 by the national department, but this just led to the loss of 7.5m cubic litres of water.** Zille said she would send the bill to the national Department of Water and Sanitation to pay back the money to the province. Mokonyane's spokesperson Sputnik Ratau said he was surprised by Zille's claims that the department was not maintaining systems in the Western Cape. He said the department recently did maintenance work near Voelvlei and is planning to start a massive maintenance project in January. 'It is therefore deemed an unnecessary attempt at political point scoring,' he added.

The provincial government said it would be visiting the Leeu River diversion weir this week. According to a **Cape Argus** report, maintenance work is currently being carried out there to increase the water supply to the Cape Town supply system. The Department of Agriculture, Economic Development and Tourism said that national department was responsible for maintenance and infrastructure of the Leeu River diversion weir. It has committed to funding the removal of sand from the weir, which would increase the water supply of the Voelvlei Dam. But national spokesperson Sputnik Ratau, said: **'The department wishes to dismiss the incorrect reports that it has been stalling to make funds available for the maintenance of water canals in the Western Cape.** The cleaning of canals fall within the responsibility ambit of provincial departments of agriculture. Against this background, it is expected that the Department of Agriculture in the Western Cape should take the lead in removing the sediment deposits in the canal at Leeu River.'