

# Parliamentary water wastage claims refuted

**Lisa Isaacs**

THE Department of Public Works has refuted allegations that it is wasting water in the parliamentary precinct.

This follows reports that there is a water pipe outside Parliament that has been flowing throughout summer, with locals calling for the water to be used for recycling.

Public Works spokesperson Thami Mchunu said the department, as the custodian of state properties, including the parliamentary precinct, has investigated the water seeping from an outlet.

“Preliminary findings have revealed that the outlet is linked to various sump areas from which non-potable, underground seepage water is being pumped.”

The water is being facilitated via a pump and piping system, and is designed in a way that the water reaches the stormwater channels outside the precinct, he added.

“We would like to state the facts and also clearly state that the Department of Public Works is not being negligent and is not wasting water in the parliamentary precinct.”

He said the underground water was also tested and found to be unfit for human consumption.

“Currently, there is no infrastructure in place where this water can be rerouted to the buildings on the Parliament precinct, so that it may be used as grey water in toilets and other places.”

The department is looking into proposals of how best to take advantage of the water, including treating it and putting in infrastructure that would lead to the water being used. Currently, blocking the water is out of the question because it would cause flooding.

“It is, however, important to note that the water issue is not linked to lack of maintenance or any negligence.”

Meanwhile, in the face of Cape Town’s critical water situation, WWF SA will send out a weekly update to assist residents and businesses in the Western Cape to prepare for Day Zero.

WWF SA Freshwater Programme senior manager Christine Colvin said once the taps were switched off, it was not clear how long it would be until they are switched back on again for different neighbourhoods.

“The amount in the dams will take months to recover. It is likely that if we have the same amount of winter rainfall as last year, we will not see an increase in the dams until August.

“It could be that the re-establishment of basic water services will only happen deep into the winter months.

“We should be prepared to live with very little water for at least three months and possibly up to six months after Day Zero, but it all depends on when rain falls in the water source areas that feed the dams.”