

Water woes continue for Aberdeen

ABERDEEN — Since November, residents in Aberdeen have been experiencing problems with the water supply.

Those in the highest areas of town have been without water for long periods of the days, as have those in the upper part of Thembalesizwe. According to one resident, most days they have had no water from about 10:00 until often 21:00 at night.

During Christmas week, there was no water at all from 06:00 on the Monday morning until the end of the week.

In areas where there is water coming out of the taps, the pressure is very low, and many people have been complaining that the pressure is too low to fill washing machines or use showers. A water truck has been taking supplies to Thembalesizwe for residents in the township to collect drinking water.

The acting communications officer for the Dr Beyers Naude Local Municipality reported on Facebook on Wednesday 26 December that there was a problem with a borehole pump, and that the service provider, from Cradock, was on the way to Aberdeen on Wednesday morning to assist with the pump.

On Thursday 27 December, residents were told by the ward councillor Rudy Jacobs that it is, in fact, two pumps that are out of commission, one near the hospital and one at the electricity substation in Parliament Street. This information was relayed to him by the acting Director of Engineering. The motors in both boreholes have burnt out, possibly because the water level has dropped too low.

That same day, the service provider from Cradock went to Port Elizabeth to collect two new borehole pumps. Installation of these started at 06:00 on the next morning, and by 10:00 the one in Parliament Street was up and running. The other pump, near the hospital, was working for a short period later that day.

However, this relief was short lived. The next week, the top areas of town were once again without water, and workmen were seen at the borehole near the hospital. Local



Local contractor Daniel Williams and his assistant Boy Jaar trying to retrieve the tools.

contractor Daniel Williams and his assistant Boy Jaar told the Advertiser that they had been working for over a week to try to retrieve tools that had been dropped into the borehole by the municipal workers who installed the new pump. A length of piping, about 1.3m long, seems to be the cause of the trouble.

Incompetence or sabotage

Residents are up in arms about this - and there are questions raised as to whether it is incompetence or even possibly sabotage. Workmen have been on the site, and there have been unconfirmed rumours (not answered by the municipality) that the motor cannot be retrieved for repair, and possibly a new borehole will have to be sunk.

It is now near the end of January, and the problem has still not been resolved. Not only residents, but some businesses have also been affected. The Kamdebo Padstal, which was extremely busy during the holiday period, had to rely on their own borehole water for all needs.

Normally municipal water would be used for cleaning and toilets, and the borehole water only for drinks and irrigation, but as the municipal supply has been so unreliable, they have switched to using the borehole water for everything. Other residents in

the top part of town have used their own rainwater tanks, but with the lack of rain, this supply is obviously limited, and these are running dry.

There have also been many questions raised as to whether the indiscriminate use of borehole water by residents fortunate enough to have access to private boreholes has caused the water table to drop.

Farmers who rely heavily on borehole water use this resource responsibly, allowing all their fair share, but according to many complaints received, the majority of those in town seem unconcerned and in some cases even aggressive towards any suggestion that their usage is adversely affecting others.

New boreholes

At least three new boreholes have been sunk in town in the last few months.

According to the municipality, residents can sink new boreholes, but permission must first be sought from the municipality. It is unclear whether this procedure has been followed. In a written response received last week concerning the ongoing problems, the municipality acknowledged the water challenges experienced by residents in Aberdeen.

“When load shedding occurred in November and December 2018, reservoir

levels dropped drastically,” explained acting communications officer Wilca Smith.

“During December, the water supply could not meet the consumption. Two borehole pumps also broke down during December and this exacerbated the problem.”

According to Smith, one borehole was fixed and the municipality is currently busy with repairs at the borehole situated near the hospital.

The municipality stated that residents in the low-lying areas have water 24 hours a day (although no mention was made of the very low pressure) and those in high lying areas experience problems with water availability.

“The municipality has availed a water truck to assist all residents affected.

The municipality monitors all borehole

levels and abstract water according to guidelines set by DWS. Currently, there is enough underground water available for Aberdeen,” the statement continued. After the reassurance that the municipality is attending to the problems, there was a plea for residents to be patient. “Residents are encouraged to contact the municipal offices and standby number should they experience challenges’.

A reminder was also given about the water restrictions currently in place throughout the whole municipality. “Residents are hereby AGAIN seriously cautioned not to irrigate or use hosepipes for any reason whatsoever outside their houses. The municipality also requests residents to immediately report any water leaks and pay special attention to toilet cistern for leaks.”

Concerned at the lack of progress, the DA shadow MEC for Public Works, Vicky Knoetze, has submitted a written question to the Provincial Legislature, to ask about the cause and proposed solutions to the problem.

“It seems as though this is another case where, instead of regular maintenance checks on equipment and infrastructure, the municipality waits until something breaks and then has to deal with the total failure of the equipment,” said one frustrated resident, who did not want to be named.