

Party reports MEC and MM to the Human Rights Commission

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THE MUNICIPAL manager (MM) of Kamiesberg Municipality in the Northern Cape, Rufus Beukes, and the MEC for Co-operative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs (Coghsta), Bentley Vass, have been reported to the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) for failing to intervene in the Kamiesberg water crisis.

The DA in the Northern Cape said yesterday that the party had decided to report both Beukes and Vass following their failure to intervene in the water crisis, despite numerous calls for them to do so, which had “ultimately violated the community’s right of access to sufficient water, as outlined in the Constitution”.

“The people of Garies have been battling water shortages for well over a year already. However, to date there has been no intervention from government. In effect, a water schedule, kept from August 8, 2019 to September 4, 2019, shows that the residents of Kamiesberg didn’t have water flowing through their taps for 15 days out of a total of 28 days. On the days that there was water, the pressure was so weak that it could not supply geysers,” DA spokesperson Veronica van Dyk said yesterday.

Van Dyk added that this was “unfortunately, nothing new”.

“Worst of all is that it is currently flower season, which means that tourism-related businesses in the Kamiesberg area are especially taking strain. While community members have tried to get the municipality to respond to the water challenge, the municipal office in Garies has instead opted to close its doors and put the telephone down in people’s ears,” Van Dyk said.

She added that the Department of Public Works was approached to assist with the ferrying of water to certain areas worst hit by the water shortages but to no avail.

“The Nama Khoi Municipality has also not responded to requests for help. Government is clearly not in the least bit concerned about its residents or the local economy. For more than a year, the DA highlighted the Kamiesberg water crisis. In July last year we even called on MEC Vass to suspend

Kamiesberg technical head Frederik Links following his dire inability to manage technical services including water. This, as Links lacks the most basic qualifications and experience necessary to address the Kamiesberg water challenges. It’s now more than a year later and nothing has changed, except the floundering levels of the boreholes. In fact three of the six boreholes that supply Garies have since dried up, while the remaining three are not functioning well.”

Van Dyk continued by saying that it was “unacceptable that the community had lost its basic right to access sufficient water”, in some cases for days on end.

“This, because the municipality does not invest in necessary infrastructure and also fails to appoint employees with the requisite skills to manage the municipality’s water infrastructure.

“The DA wants Beukes and Vass to be held accountable for failing to use the powers vested in them to monitor the situation and apply remedial action.

“We also want the government, including Premier Zamani Saul, to sit up and take note of the growing water crisis in Kamiesberg and the rest of the Province,” Van Dyk concluded.