

## OUR VIEWPOINT

# WATER 'MASTER PLAN'

**W**ATER and Sanitation Minister Lindiwe Sisulu has made a bold undertaking without giving any insight into how it will be achieved.

Last week she presented a so-called “master plan” to fix the country’s water problems. It will cost R898 billion over 10 years. While she spoke of a 23-point national water and sanitation plan, the thrust of the proposal is to spend on technolo-

gy research and on infrastructure.

Her desperation was evident when she noted that rain can no longer be relied on to fill dams, and that underground water needs to be found and preserved. Critics have pointed out that groundwater levels have dropped due both to drought and unregulated boreholes, and that the fact of the matter is that South Africa has run out of water. Sisulu’s promise to build the infra-

structure to get clean water to everyone is an expensive pipe dream and has to be seen for the boondoggle that it is.

President Cyril Ramaphosa, in his weekly mis-sive, has pointed out the problem: “Mismanagement of water resources and corruption in the water sector has in no small part contributed to the situation we currently face.” In other words, on foundations of corruption, any grand scheme will

fail in its objective.

There is an abject refusal to address the basics of skills, responsibility and accountability, in favour of grandiose silver-bullet solutions. No water? Build a big dam. No rain? Dig boreholes. No groundwater? Build a drought app, because, as Minister of Public Works Patricia de Lille has said, “drought is the new normal”. No it isn’t. Drought has been normal for a very long time,

and packaging the fact as a revelation is dishonest or stupid. Drought has nothing to do with the colossal waste of water taking place through corruption, ruined infrastructure, leaking pipes and running taps. Spending R898 billion is not going to change the facts. Perhaps Umgeni Water should take over the running of water affairs. Its efforts have something to show, and its plans are at least concrete.