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'Stop the lies premier, we have not had tap water in over 10 long years'

Residents in Vryburg blast Maape's boast

By **Nomazima Nkosi**

Days after North West premier Bushy Maape painted a rosy picture of service delivery, citing his hometown of Vryburg in parliament, residents in the area plan to embark on the second protest in a month over the lack of services.

The community of Vryburg in the Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati municipality, which Maape referenced during his speech at the state of the nation address debate last week, said they haven't had running water for years.

Maape last week boldly told parliament that in Vryburg, although there were no tarred roads in Mahuma Street where his home is located, "there's a flushing toilet, there's a tap with running water and at my home we have electricity".

According to South African National Civic Organisation (Sanco) regional coordinator in Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati municipality, Kevin Bareki, residents in the street Maape mentioned have not had running water for years.

"We protest then have water for a day - and the day after that, there's no water again.

"It's not that we don't have water in our dams but it's contractors who deliberately damage infrastructure so they can get [water] tank tenders. They damage the infrastructure that delivers water to our taps," Bareki said

He said residents have planned a protest for the end of this week.

"The situation is very bad. More than 70% of our roads are gravel and this includes some of the previous ones that were

tarred and it's mostly due to poor maintenance and unfunded projects," he said.

Bareki said during the last protest, Maape and Cogta MEC Nono Maloyi didn't meet protesters to receive their memo, which was one of the reasons they were planning a second protest.

Another resident, Tebogo Lebona, said the water problem in the town had been going on for over 10 years.

"We have taps in our homes but the water's simply not coming out. We're told that pumps are deliberately sabotaged and when we ask if cases are opened with the police we're told no. All of this is about tenders," Lebona said.

Maape also claimed he'd never hit a single pothole on roads in his province.

"I travel from Mahikeng to Rustenburg, I travel from Mahikeng to Klerksdorp, I travel from Mahikeng to Schweizer-Reneke, I travel from Mahikeng to Madibong and I've not hit a pothole," Maape said.

He also said businesses should buy generators to operate during power crises.

In Mahikeng, just outside the ANC's North West offices, a pothole filled with water due to the rains makes for a sore sight. Driving to Montshiwa clinic past the department of education offices, motorists dodge many potholes.

This is the reality of residents who have to navigate deep and wide potholes to reach their destinations.

DA MPL and party caucus leader in the North West legislature Freddy Sonakile said if Maape was the most travelled in the province, he would know residents' plight.

"It's arrogance from the premier's side because I sit in the public works committee and it was said it would take more than R500bn to fix roads in the province. He did not give



A pedestrian walks past a pothole in front of the ANC's North West head office along a busy main street in Mahikeng. /TIRO RAMATLHATSE



Motorists navigate a pothole on Carrington Street in Mahikeng. /TIRO RAMATLHATSE



Water being pumped into one of the many Jojo tanks in Vryburg. /KEVIN BAREKI

the real state of the province and it was a missed opportunity because budget could be allocated to provinces whose premiers have pleaded with government and gave an honest account. He's out of touch [with reality]," Sonakile said.

EFF provincial secretary and MPL Papiki Babuile said Maape misled the government and cabinet which, according to him, showed the level of disregard for the people of the province.

Maape's spokesperson, Sello Tatai, said the premier had made reference to specific roads in the province, "which are in good condition and have no potholes" and that he had not denied the existence of potholes in some parts of North West.

"Over 35 road projects for upgrading and maintenance have been commissioned for the 2022/2023 financial year, and over R1.3bn has been set aside to address road infras-

tructure backlogs in the North West," he said.

ANC provincial chairperson Nono Maloyi defended his premier, saying he was simply saying it's not all the roads that are bad in the province.

"His statement was a balancing one. He made examples of good roads. That was not the whole story. Some of the roads he mentioned are okay but the majority of our roads are in a bad state," Maloyi conceded.