



Publication: Cape Argus Late - Main
Title: Robben Island taps run dry
Publish date: 23 Nov 2023
Page: 6

Reach: 10459
AVE: R 24445.19
Author: Zolani Sinxo

REPORT-BACK BRIEFING

Robben Island taps run dry

ZOLANI SINXO
zolani.sinxo@ml.co.za

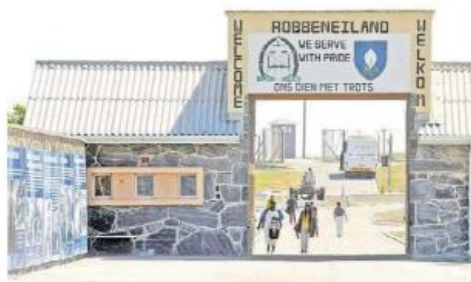
WATER scarcity remains a challenge at the Robben Island Museum and as a result visitors had to be turned away, the museum told the Portfolio Committee on Public Works and Infrastructure on Wednesday.

The committee held a report-back briefing on the implementation of its recommendations to deal with challenges found during an oversight visit to small harbours on the West Coast, the Cape Town coast and Robben Island.

During the committee's visits earlier this year it established that the majority of government-owned properties were underutilised, neglected, and frequently vandalised by communities.

The CEO of the Robben Island Museum, Abigail Thulare, reported that water scarcity remained a challenge on the island and that water had to be ferried from the mainland every two weeks, which had cost implications that museum now has to absorb, and this led to some tours being cancelled.

"The Robben Island Museum has resuscitated three of the eleven bore-



ROBBEN Island is experiencing water challenges. | DAVID RITCHIE Independent Newspapers

holes on the island," the Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment (DFFE) said.

"The three were identified as having high water tables, so extraction was not complex.

"Laboratory tests are currently being undertaken on the remaining eight boreholes.

"The three resuscitated boreholes are currently producing 800 to 1 000 litres per hour daily."

The committee established that the Robben Island Museum had issues such as human capital, funding, water, and sanitation, which remained chal-

lenges. It was found that the water scarcity situation placed the island in danger, that the current desalination plant currently had up to 70% power capacity, and that a new, energy-efficient system should be installed.

At Saldanha Bay, it was reported that there was estimated damage of about R45 million on the quayside where Sea Harvest production buildings are situated.

At Hout Bay, the committee was informed, human trafficking, poaching, and drug trade were rife at the harbour, and over time this worsened as there was no visibility from the

police.

At the time of their visit, the committee was informed by the DFFE that Hout Bay was the busiest but most chaotic fishing harbour. It was further reported that poachers launched from Hout Bay and poached abalone at Robben Island in spite of it being a marine protected area.

Penny Penxa, the Western Cape regional manager from the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI), said that DFFE approached the department for the development of the refurbishment plan for the proclaimed fishing harbours and that detailed technical condition assessments would be commissioned for scoping and costing. A maintenance plan for each harbour would be developed and submitted to the client for approval and funding.

"The long-term maintenance plan seeks to address the current maintenance and security challenges within the harbours. The plan will assist in retaining the existing tenants and attracting new ones," said Penxa.

She said in terms of security, the DPWI was providing tactical security services at Hout Bay harbour due to the high level of distraction and vandalism of infrastructure.