

Urgently needed Makhanda water project six years behind schedule

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2 Mar 2023

Makhanda residents will have to wait until at least December 2023 now for the long-awaited upgrade of the James Kleynhans Water Treatment Plant. The most recent delay was triggered by the liquidation of the contractor last year.



Residents of Nkanini town in Makhanda collect water from a Gift of the Givers water tanker in October 2020. Source: Lucas Nowicki/GroundUp

This means that Makhanda residents will continue to suffer inadequate and intermittent water supply for yet another full year. The drought made the project a matter of urgency, and yet it is now six years behind schedule. Currently, water is restricted to 50-litres per person per day in Makhanda.

GroundUp has [previously reported](#) on the significant delays to the project.

Originally approved by the Department of Water and Sanitation in March 2015, it was initially meant to be completed by [December 2017](#) at a cost of R102m.

Amatola Water was appointed as the implementing agent in July 2015 in an agreement that included the Department of Water and Sanitation and the Makana Local Municipality.

The pumping capacity at the James Kleynhans Water Treatment Works has to be doubled from 10 megalitres a day to 20 megalitres. The municipality says this would be enough to supply the town, which uses about 18 megalitres a day, according to the Makana Local Municipality's [water crisis page](#).

The upgrade was supposed to be completed this month, March 2023, but the contractor, Mamlambo Construction Company, was liquidated in June 2022.

Municipal manager Phumelelo Kate said, "A new contractor, by the name of Water and Wastewater Technology SA, was appointed on 25 November 2022. The new completion date is scheduled for 12 December 2023."

Kate said the Department of Water and Sanitation, as the project funder, directly pays the implementing agent, Amatola Water, which in turn pays the contractor.

"When Mamlambo was experiencing financial challenges, they could not timeously honour payments to local SMMEs. This led to unrest that delayed the project."

He said the new construction company could not immediately commence work as it was still finalising paperwork.



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Sindy Peters 1 Mar 2023



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Makana Residents Association secretary Tim Bull said, "Reliable daily water in Makhanda is entirely possible, but officials have failed to respond to many requests to engage. The damage Makana [municipality] is doing to the local economy by keeping us in a water crisis state is very serious."

Last year, David Mahlobo, deputy minister of water and sanitation, expressed disappointment with the lack of progress.

The municipality was given two weeks to provide the Portfolio Committee on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (Cogta) with all documentation regarding its interaction with the water project. The committee chairperson, Fikile Xasa, says all the required documentation was received.

Mava Lukani of parliamentary communication services said, "Amatola Water Board was asked by Makana Local Municipality to accelerate the project and submit a final implementation plan to the municipality. Amatola Water Board is assisting with the provision of water tankers for the provision of water to the people in the municipality. The committee has not gone again to Makhanda to check progress following the agreement and recommendations."

[Article](#) originally published on [GroundUp](#).