

**CIRCULAR 31 / 2022**

**NATIONAL WATER SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME**

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**ACTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

**TO : MUNICIPAL MANAGERS**  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS / HEADS / DIRECTORS / MANAGERS:**  
**WATER AND SANITATION SERVICES**

**DATE : 29 AUGUST 2022**

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**URGENT REQUEST FOR MUNICIPAL COMMENTS ON THE DWS NATIONAL WATER AND SANITATION SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME**

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**1. OBJECTIVE OF THE CIRCULAR**

To invite municipalities to submit written inputs to the Department of Water and Sanitation's National Water and Sanitation Services Improvement Programme.

**2. BACKGROUND**

Noting the current state of municipal water and sanitation services, the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) has developed the Water and Sanitation Services Improvement Programme (WSSIP). The purpose of the WSSIP is to put in place robust arrangements that will ensure that the DWS' intervention and support actions are effective. The WSSIP has two primary aims; the first is to guide national support and regulatory interventions to reverse the decline in the provision of water and sanitation services, and the second is to ensure consistent and systematic support and intervention for water and sanitation services.

### 3. DISCUSSION

The Minister's preface to the Draft National Water and Sanitation Services Improvement Programme (WSSIP) states that: *"both municipalities and national government have failed in their duty to progressively provide safe, sufficient and reliable water to every person, and a basic and safe sanitation service."* Whilst this statement is cause for great concern, it also recognises that the progressive realization of water and sanitation services is a joint effort, requiring all spheres of government to work collaboratively where failure or success is not the exclusive domain of one sphere, but all three.

The WSSIP is primarily guided by the following four principles:

- a) Developing common approaches for local government as a distinct sphere of government;
- b) Enhancing cooperation, mutual assistance and sharing of resources among municipalities;
- c) Finding solutions for problems relating to local government generally; and
- d) Facilitating compliance with the principles of co-operative government and intergovernmental relations.

The specific objectives of the WSSIP are to:

- a) Clarify municipalities' water services-related responsibilities by strengthening minimum norms and standards for water and sanitation services;
- b) Improve compliance and performance monitoring of water and sanitation services;
- c) Clarify what action to take, when and how – to implement robust mechanisms to support and intervene should municipalities fail to meet the requirements;
- d) Provide effective support and intervene by providing necessary capacity, making use of appropriately funded and financed public and private sector mechanisms;

- e) Provide short and medium-term actions that can be implemented within the existing legislative, policy and regulatory frameworks; aligned to the intervention frameworks as developed by the National Treasury;
- f) Make provision for parallel processes to address structural reforms and improve regulation, procurement and funding mechanisms;
- g) Present a radical departure from past approaches of the national government for national support and intervention for water services;
- h) Present a major change in the strategy, roles, and functions of DWS.

SALGA notes and supports the four principles and objectives of the programme. Whilst the WSSIP is a positive development from DWS, SALGA is of the view that the following three fundamental areas need to be addressed:

1. Clarifying the specific role and obligations of provincial and national government in the successful implementation of the programme.
2. Monitoring provincial and national government in the fulfillment of their mandate to support and strengthen the capability of local government and publishing data in this regard.
3. Taking appropriate remedial action where provincial and or national are failing to meet their obligations, within the provisions of intergovernmental relations.

The above items recognize the importance of the support role of national and provincial government as spelt out in Section 154 of the Constitution and will contribute to the successful achievement of the programme objectives.

Given the significance of the WSSIP for municipalities, it is important that we provide detailed comments and inputs to ensure that it achieves its purpose without disadvantaging local government in any way. We therefore request detailed written comments by no later than 19 September 2022.

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Yours Faithfully,



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