

MEDIA STATEMENT - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEHAWU STATEMENT ON THE DEPARTMENT OF WATER AND SANITATION FINANCIAL BUNGLINGS

Wednesday November 15, 2017

The National Education Health and Allied Workers' Union [NEHAWU] has been for some time monitoring how reckless the Department of Water and Sanitation has been with its finances. Since the establishment of the department in May 2014, it has always hogged headlines for all the wrong reasons especially financial mismanagement.

As NEHAWU, we blame the Minister for the current financial state of the department. We are also not surprised by her written reply to MP's in Parliament that the current financial woes faced by the department should be blamed on circumstances beyond her control. This blame shifting and scapegoating is meant to take away attention from the fact that the Minister has been at the helm of a crumbling department which has also been without a Director-General for the past four months, including double and triple payments to some companies by the department and failure to pay others within 30 days.

The national union will write to the Special Investigating Unit (SIU) in order to release the report into the investigation on the irregularities at the department in relation to a probe into supply chain irregularities and conflicts of interest. This report will shed light into the severity of the rot at the department. Part of the rot was contained in the 2015-16 audit report by Auditor-General, Kimi Makwetu, who noted that the department incurred fruitless and wasteful expenditure to the value of R87.2-million and irregular expenditure amounting to R2.5-billion.

The status quo cannot remain while the finances of the department are being depleted in expenditures that do not benefit the public. The fact that Treasury is silent on this matter leaves much to be desired. The fact that the department has not been fulfilling its mandate of ensuring that there is access to sanitation and safe drinking water should have raised alarm.

As NEHAWU, we are disgusted by the fact that more than R30 million was splurged on bonuses while some sections of the South African population still do not have access to clean and safe drinking water and that some families still use the bucket system. The government made a commitment to phase out the bucket system 11 years ago yet in 2017 people are still reduced to this inhumane system while the department enjoys huge bonuses.

We hope the Minister is well aware of the financial ruins the department finds itself in and that she is not planning to "pick it up" when the money dries up. South Africans deserves a caring government that will be preoccupied with delivering much needed service in a speedily fashion. NEHAWU will continue to raise alarm whenever tax payers' money is misused and we will always act for the benefit of our members and communities. In this regard, the national executive committee held on the 30th –

31st October 2017 took a decision to support and mobilise members in the entire department including those in construction division and water and catchment. As a result, the union will establish war rooms starting with Eastern Cape Province on the 21st and other provinces on the 22nd November 2017 culminating into the national war room focusing on mobilisation. We want also to confirm that the national programme of workplace general member meetings has been finalised for implementation.

We call on all members in the department to ready themselves for a real battle in pursuit of their issues and the union is ready to hold the bull by its horns in defending worker's rights.

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