

08 July 2026

Mr T. Mokoena
MEC: Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
Corner Markgraaff and St Andrew Street
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9301

CC Ms N.F. Malatjie
Municipal Manager
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Dear Mr Mokoena

URGENT NEED FOR SUSTAINABLE WATER INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT AND IMPROVED MUNICIPAL ACCOUNTABILITY

AfriForum, a non-profit company with its main purpose being the promotion and advocacy of democracy, equality, civil, human, minority and constitutional rights, has a mandate from our members in the Setsoto municipal district.

AfriForum is deeply concerned by reports indicating that the Setsoto Local Municipality spent more than R14 million on the hiring of water tanker services between March 2025 and March 2026 to supply water to residents of Ficksburg, Clocolan, Marquard and Senekal.

While emergency water tankers may be necessary during unforeseen crises, they cannot and should never become the primary method of delivering a basic municipal service. Access to clean and reliable water is a constitutional right, and residents deserve sustainable solutions rather than costly emergency interventions that continue year after year.

June 2024

Address: 58 Union Avenue, Kloofsig, Centurion • **Tel.:** 086 10 200 30
Member Affairs – Email: ledesake@afirforum.co.za • **Directors:** Ms A. Bailey, Mr P.J.W. Buys, Dr H.K. Coetzee, Mr P.L. Dekker, Mr F.J.D. de Klerk, Mr G.R. de Vries, Dr D.J. Hermann, Mr W.G. Human, Mr C.M. Kriel and Dr R. Pretorius. • **Company Secretary:** Mr W.A. Vogel.
Registration number: 2005/042861/08 • **NGO number:** 054 - 590

The reported expenditure raises serious questions regarding the municipality's long-term planning and infrastructure management.

We therefore request clarity on the following matters:

1. Why has the municipality continued to rely on privately contracted water tankers instead of prioritising the rehabilitation and expansion of permanent water infrastructure?
2. What long-term infrastructure projects have been implemented to reduce dependence on emergency water tanker services?
3. What capital budget has been allocated over the past five financial years for the maintenance, upgrading and expansion of water infrastructure?
4. Why has no feasibility study been conducted to determine whether investing in permanent municipal assets and infrastructure would be more cost-effective than repeatedly contracting water tanker services?
5. What measurable steps are being taken to ensure that residents no longer have to depend on emergency water supply as a routine means of receiving water?

The Municipality has reportedly acknowledged that the lack of a functional storage dam in Marquard remains one of the principal reasons for the continued reliance on water tankers. This illustrates precisely why infrastructure maintenance and development should be prioritised over recurring emergency expenditure.

Good governance requires municipalities to plan proactively, maintain critical infrastructure and utilise public funds in a manner that delivers long-term value to communities. Continuous reliance on emergency interventions places an unnecessary financial burden on taxpayers while failing to resolve the underlying causes of water insecurity.

AfriForum is concerned that this situation reflects broader challenges relating to municipal planning, accountability and service delivery. South Africans deserve municipalities that invest in sustainable infrastructure instead of repeatedly spending millions on temporary measures that do not address the root causes of service delivery failures.

We therefore call on the Setsoto Local Municipality, together with the Free State Provincial Government, to:

- prioritise the rehabilitation and upgrading of existing water infrastructure;
- develop and publish a clear, time-bound infrastructure recovery plan;
- reduce dependence on contracted emergency water tanker services;
- ensure transparent reporting on all expenditure relating to emergency water supply; and

- strengthen accountability mechanisms to ensure that infrastructure maintenance and long-term planning become the priority rather than costly reactive measures.

AfriForum will continue to monitor this matter closely and will engage with all relevant authorities to ensure that residents receive reliable and sustainable water services. We trust that this matter will receive the urgent attention it deserves and look forward to your written response within the prescribed timeframes.

Kind regards

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