

Media Statement
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City of Tshwane Rejects False R777 Million Water Tanker Claim and Launches Independent Forensic Investigation

The City of Tshwane has convened this briefing to address recent allegations by News24 regarding water tanker expenditure. We recognise public concern and remain committed to full transparency and accountability.

It is important to correct factual inaccuracies and provide context about how this expenditure arose, what the verified figures show, and the measures being implemented to strengthen oversight and reduce dependency on water tankers.

The Myth of R 777 million

The claim that the City of Tshwane “spent R777 million on water tankers” is incorrect and misrepresents the real situation. This figure is not based on audited expenditure but on a system extract showing the total value of purchase orders, including about R156 million in cancelled, duplicated or unprocessed transactions. It reflects procurement activity, not actual spending.

Verified financial records show a very different picture.

In 2023/24, the City ring-fenced the tanker function for the first time and recorded R322.95 million in expenditure. This includes R179.9 million in unpaid invoices that were only processed and paid in 2025. These invoices belong to the 2023/24 financial year, not 2024/25.

The R140 million quoted in the media excludes these unpaid bills and therefore understates the true cost incurred under the previous administration.

When these invoices were eventually settled, they were carried over to the new administration’s books, creating a false impression of a sharp rise in spending.

In 2024/25, verified records from Group Finance confirm total payments of R621 million, which include the R179.9 million accruals from 2023/24.



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Once these are excluded, the actual 2024/25 expenditure amounts to R441.1 million. This represents a 36% increase on the previous year, corresponding directly with a 58% increase in water outages during the same period.

Of the R441 million, R98 million was from Q1 of 2024/25, prior to the election of the new administration which amounts to approximately 22%.

It is also important to note that the first budget upliftment for tanker operations in 2024/25 was initiated before the new administration took office in October 2024.

In September 2024, a request for an additional R150 million was submitted to the City Manager after the initial budget had already been exhausted within the first quarter of the financial year. This upliftment was later regularised through the February 2025 adjustments budget.

These upliftments, together with the need to settle R179 million in unpaid invoices from the previous year, confirm that the City's tanker expenditure challenges were driven by pre-existing operational pressures and unpaid liabilities.

It should also be noted that expenditure incurred between July and mid-October 2024 falls under the previous administration, even if payments were processed later.

This distinction is important for accurate financial accountability and to ensure that responsibility for expenditure is correctly attributed.

Expenditure and Outages

Data shows a clear link between the number of water outages and the City's tanker expenditure.

Between 2021/22 and 2022/23, Tshwane recorded an average of 7,800 "No Water" reports each year. This figure doubled to 14,998 in 2023/24 and surged to 23,746 in 2024/25. The increase in incidents mirrors the rise in tanker costs, confirming a direct operational link between service interruptions and spending. The measured correlation between the two is 0.95, showing a very strong relationship.



In 2023/24, tanker expenditure totalled R322.95 million, aligned with 14,998 reported outages. In 2024/25, outage reports rose by 58%, while verified expenditure increased by 36% to R441.1 million (after excluding accruals).

Despite the sharp rise in incidents, the average cost per outage fell by 14%, reflecting improved efficiency in tanker deployment and coordination.

Periods of higher spending directly matched specific operational events that placed exceptional strain on the water system:

- **July 2024:** Major Rand Water maintenance shutdowns on the Mapleton and Palmiet systems affected Regions 1, 3, 4 and 6.
- **November–December 2024:** Planned maintenance on the Heights Reservoirs, combined with peak summer demand.
- **May 2025:** Rand Water's Hartebeesthoek shutdown disrupted bulk supply to Region 1 and surrounding areas.
- **June 2025:** The highest number of low-level reservoir alarms ever recorded on the City's telemetry system, coinciding with the year's largest tanker expenditure.

These four periods account for most of the variation within the R441.1 million verified expenditure for 2024/25. The evidence shows that higher spending was a direct and proportionate response to the scale of water supply interruptions, not financial mismanagement or irregular procurement.

Spending was focused on essential service needs linked to unavoidable outages, external factors and the Constitutional need for continuity of supply. The main cost categories for 2024/25 were:

- **Rand Water planned maintainance** (July, August, December): R75 000 000 (Emergency tinkering during largescale shutdowns).
- **Infrastructure Breakdowns:** R138 214 267 (Failure at the reservoirs pump stations and networks).
- **Hammanskraal Court order** (Cholera response): R84 000 000 (Court-mandated potable water supply)
- **Rooiwal-Apies River Area** (Court-order determination: R24 000 000 daily tinkering to affected small holdings).



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Moreover, data from the City's SCADA telemetry system confirms this link between reservoir performance and tanker deployment, showing that peaks in tanker expenditure coincide with verified periods of low reservoir levels and water supply interruptions recorded through the City's monitoring network.

Causes of Water Interruptions

The sharp rise in water outages over the past two years is the result of several long-standing challenges that continue to affect Tshwane's water network.

These problems are structural rather than administrative and reflect years of under-investment in bulk supply, treatment capacity and network renewal.

The main contributing factors include:

- **Bulk supply interruptions from Rand Water:** Regular planned and emergency shutdowns for maintenance on the Mapleton, Palmiet and Hartebeesthoek systems cause citywide disruptions and long recovery periods once supply resumes.
- **Contamination of the Apies River and Hammanskraal supply area:** The Temba Water Treatment Works remains unable to treat water safely because of pollution from the Rooiwal Wastewater Treatment Works. In compliance with a court order, the City must continue providing potable water to Hammanskraal residents through tankers.
- **Ageing distribution network:** Years of deferred maintenance have left a fragile pipe system with frequent leaks and bursts. The pipe replacement programme currently receives only about **20%** of the funding required each year, creating a growing backlog.
- **Failures at key reservoirs and treatment facilities:** Repeated breakdowns at sites such as the Bronkhorstspuit Water Treatment Plant and other regional reservoirs have required sustained tanker support.
- **Power supply disruptions:** Load-shedding and substation faults often interrupt pumping and treatment operations, extending recovery times.



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- **Vandalism and sabotage:** Damage to valves, pumps and electrical systems has increased in several regions, further undermining reliability and security of supply.
- **Critical facilities and high-risk users:** Hospitals, clinics and other essential services require uninterrupted water supply, which necessitates dedicated tanker provision during disruptions.

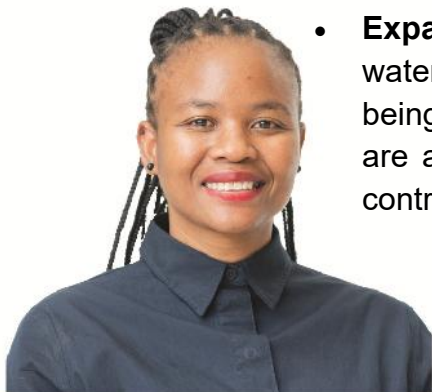
These challenges explain the increase in water outages and the City's reliance on emergency tankering. Addressing them requires both immediate operational response and sustained investment in infrastructure renewal and water security.

Reducing Reliance on Tankers

The City recognises that water tankers are a temporary measure to ensure residents receive potable water when systems fail. The current administration is investing in infrastructure renewal and diversifying supply to reduce dependency and build a sustainable, internally managed system of water provision.

Key measures include:

- **Borehole Development Programme:** The Human Settlements Department has allocated R10 million to develop boreholes in informal and peri-urban areas such as Dewagendsdrift, Kameeldrift, Leeuwfontein and Pienaarspoort. Feasibility studies are complete, and implementation planning is under way.
- **Partnership with the University of Pretoria:** A Service Level Agreement is being finalised to compare the costs of internal versus outsourced tanker operations.
- **Alternative Water Source Policy:** A new policy is being developed to diversify supply through boreholes, reclamation, sand abstraction and rainwater harvesting.
- **Expansion of the City's Internal Tanker Fleet:** The City operates 18 water and sanitation trucks, of which 13 are fully functional, with more being refurbished. Trained drivers from the waste management division are assisting during emergencies to improve response times and cut contractor costs.



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- **Installation of Communal Taps:** Pilot projects are providing permanent communal taps in settlements near bulk pipelines, gradually replacing mobile tanker services as infrastructure expands.
- **Hydrant Metering and Digital Monitoring:** All hydrants used for water extraction are being fitted with meters and digital tracking systems to prevent abuse and ensure accountability.

Together, these initiatives are moving the City away from costly emergency measures toward a reliable, sustainable and internally managed water supply system that delivers better value for residents.

Strengthening Financial Controls and Oversight

The City has introduced a series of reforms to strengthen governance, improve accountability and ensure that tanker-related expenditure is tightly managed. Key measures include:

- Centralising tanker operations under a single command structure.
- Installing meters on hydrants to monitor water extraction and prevent unauthorised use.
- Tracking tanker movements through GPS and digital verification systems.
- Expanding the use of City-owned tankers to reduce reliance on contractors.
- Redeploying municipal drivers to support tanker operations.
- Establishing an operational optimisation team and registering tanker expenditure as a monitored operational risk.
- Enhancing oversight by the Municipal Public Accounts Committee, Internal Audit and the Auditor-General.

Forensic Investigation Ordered

To ensure full accountability, I have directed the City Manager to institute an independent forensic investigation into all aspects of the City's water tankering operations.



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The investigation will review procurement processes, expenditure patterns and delivery records to identify any irregularities or possible corruption. The investigator will have scope to follow related findings that emerge, with any major expansion requiring approval to prevent unnecessary delays.

The objectives are to:

- Identify and address any financial misconduct or irregular expenditure.
- Hold accountable any person found to have abused the system.
- Implement corrective measures to prevent recurrence.

The City will cooperate fully with all relevant authorities to ensure transparency and integrity throughout the process.

The Way Forward

The City will continue to strengthen the sustainability, efficiency and transparency of water provision through the following key actions:

- **Hydrant Metering and Monitoring:** All hydrants are being fitted with meters to track water extraction accurately.
- **Expansion of the Internal Fleet:** Increasing the use of City-owned tankers to reduce outsourcing costs and improve response times.
- **Installation of Community Taps:** Rolling out permanent communal taps where bulk infrastructure is available.
- **Collaboration with the State Security Agency:** Implementing the City's Integrated Asset Protection Strategy to safeguard critical water infrastructure.
- **Infrastructure Renewal:** Continuing investment in boreholes, small-scale treatment systems and network upgrades.
- **Blended Finance Applications:** Engaging National Treasury to access funding support for essential water and sanitation infrastructure.



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Together, these measures will help build a more resilient water system, reduce reliance on emergency tankers and ensure transparent, sustainable service delivery for all residents.

Conclusion

The verified data confirms that water tanker expenditure reflects the operational realities of a strained water system. The decision to commission an independent forensic investigation reinforces our commitment to transparency, fiscal discipline and zero tolerance for corruption.

The City calls on residents, the media and all stakeholders to engage constructively with verified information and to support ongoing efforts to ensure clean governance and effective service delivery across Tshwane.

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