

## Respect: The Conerstone of Sustainable Water Service Delivery

South Africa has one of the most advanced constitutions in the world which stipulates rights to resources, free expression and dignity. It is surprising however that while we are most gifted at looking after our own rights and interests we are completely inept at respecting the rights of others. To illustrate the above statement we turn our attention to the matter of unauthorized water connections. As stated by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996, p. 5) in the bill of rights; "Everyone has the right to have access to, among other rights, sufficient food and water, and the State must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation of these rights." Taking into account the above mentioned it is clear that the installation of unauthorised connections is in direct contravention of the National Governments vision to ensure that everyone has a basic supply of potable water. You may wonder why unauthorised connections are so problematic. Well, every Municipality has to, on an annual basis, plan for the growth of the population and the water requirements of the different areas. Unauthorised connections however mean that a lot of water is taken out of the distribution network and cannot be accounted for by the municipalities. This also means that the Municipalities cannot cater adequately for the needs of the different sectors operating within their boundaries. The bottom line is that unauthorised connections are the exact equivalent of theft. It is important to note that when we refer to theft of water we not only speak of unauthorised connections but of meter bypasses and tampering as well. Meters are the property of the Municipality used for the measurement of water consumption. Tampering with them for any reason can be classified as an illegal act that can be prosecuted. Our rights as individual citizens are indisputably important but equally important are the rights of all those amongst whom we reside.



What renders me in awe is the creativity that is evident in our communities. Individuals have figured out that by turning the meter around; the meter can begin counting downwards. This is what we call reverse flow. Others have resorted to driving nails through the meters to halt the gears inside the meter. This kind of creative energy can be put to much better use starting up businesses and creating employment for the poverty stricken in our country. With the power crisis exerting increased demands on our water resources we cannot afford water that is unaccounted for. Let us work together to ensure that not only our rights but the rights of others are enforced.