

Call for comments on Water Acts amendments

The Department of Water and Sanitation will next week kick-start a series of public consultations on the amendment of the National Water Act and Water Services Act across the country.



Image source: Riccardo Lennart Nels Mayer – [123RF.com](https://www.123RF.com)

The two legislations were published in the Government Gazette on 17 November 2023 and members of the public were invited to submit written comments on the draft amendment bills within 60 days from the date of publication.

The department said the objective of the consultations is to garner comments from the public and stakeholders, which are necessary to bring about legislation that will benefit the current and future generation of the country by ensuring equitable water allocation for all, and optimise access and use of water and sanitation.

“The amendments of the two legislations will strengthen the role of the department as a regulator of the water and sanitation sector, thus, decisively address socioeconomic challenges facing the country.

“Furthermore, this will ensure that the country’s water resources are managed, protected, used, and conserved, while promoting equity and redressing past imbalances. The redress of past imbalances will ensure that all citizens of the country have access to water,” the department said.

Protection and conservation

The amendments of the National Water Act are mainly aimed at strengthening the protection and conservation of water resources, including strategic water source areas; ability of the department to consider and decide on water use applications timeously; and the ability of the department to improve equity in water use allocation.

They are also aimed at strengthening the ability of the department to phase out previous water entitlements in order to achieve the targets for water allocation reform and ensure the efficient use of water, and representivity and governance of water user associations.

In amending the Water Services Act, the department aims to enhance the following regulatory objectives:

- Expand on the objects of the Act the regulation for safely managed sanitation;
- Include enforcement and rectification as further object of the Act;
- Provide for the accountability of water services providers in respect of the management, reporting and financial transparency through requirement of operating licence;
- Provide for the issuance of operating licence, content of the licence and Regulations for licence procedure;
- Develop regulations relating to registration of persons who install and operate water service works;
- Provide for the quality of potable or drinking water;
- Provide for the establishment and governance structures of water boards, the appointment of the chief executive officer and employees of water boards;
- Provide for monitoring, enforcement and intervention on poor performance and non-performance of WSPs (Water Safety Plans); and
- Expand on penalties for non-compliance with the Act

The public consultations will start in Upington, Northern Cape on 30 January 2024, followed by the engagements in all other provinces.

For confirmation to attend the Northern Cape consultation can be sent to cloetes@dws.gov.za

The closing date for written submission is on 1 March 2024 and submissions should be sent to Mapula Khuduga at KhudugaM@dws.gov.za or telephone number +27 (0)12 336 7835.

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