



Press Release | Makana Municipality fails to submit monthly water quality data despite last results showing very high levels of E.coli bacteria

The press release has been prepared by members of the Action for Accountability (AAA) Project, which is a joint initiative of the Public Service Accountability Monitor (PSAM), Ahmed Kathrada Foundation (AKF) and Accountability Lab South Africa (ALSA). The project works to enhance public service accountability and good governance in four South African communities (including Makhanda) through citizen-led action for greater transparency and deepened public participation.

PRESS RELEASE - EMBARGOED UNTIL 5AM on 25 May 2023

The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) has sent Makana Municipality a [Notice of Non-compliance in a letter dated 27 April 2023](#) which explains that the Municipality has failed to submit water quality data for a number of months.

Water quality is measured against standards set in the South African National Standards (SANS 0241). The law requires that municipalities submit monthly drinking water quality-compliance data to the DWS via the Integrated Regulatory Information System (IRIS). The DWS Notice, while pointing out Makana Municipality's failure to comply with the law, also raises serious concern with the last water quality results dated 28 February 2023 which revealed that at Joza Clinic there were very high traces of E.coli bacteria, at 199 count per 100ml, while at Nyaluza High School the sample revealed 5 E.coli bacteria count per 100ml. The SANS 0241 requirement is that E.coli bacteria **must not be present in drinking water**. The Notice from DWS proceeds to note and warn as follows:

“The conclusion is therefore that the supplied water to Joza Clinic as well as at Nyaluza High School for E.coli bacteria is still a concern and noting that E.coli bacteria is considered “acute health risk”.”

The DWS Notice shows clearly that there is serious non-compliance by Makana Municipality. Residents' health and wellbeing has been placed at risk by government officials who have failed to carry out their legal responsibilities. The Notice indicates that the last water results submitted to IRIS by Makana Municipality for the town of Alicedale date back to November 2022, while water results for Riebeeck East were last submitted on 28 February 2023. Water results for Makhanda's 2 water treatment works were last submitted on 28 February 2023.

This state of affairs is not acceptable and we call upon Municipal Manager Mr. Pumelelo Kate to provide written answers to the following questions:

A partnership project
between the

**AHMED KATHRADA
FOUNDATION**

**ACCOUNTABILITY LAB
SOUTH AFRICA**

**PUBLIC SERVICE
ACCOUNTABILITY
MONITOR**

with co-funding by
the
EUROPEAN UNION



@ActionforAccount



072-677-9640



@ActionforAccount



loraine@kathradafoundation.org



Signet Terrace Office Park
Block B
Suite 2
19 Guinea Fowl Street
Lenasia
Gauteng
1827



A partnership project
between the

**AHMED KATHRADA
FOUNDATION**

**ACCOUNTABILITY LAB
SOUTH AFRICA**

**PUBLIC SERVICE
ACCOUNTABILITY
MONITOR**

with co-funding by
the

EUROPEAN UNION



@ActionforAccount



072-677-9640



@ActionforAccount



loraine@kathradafoundation.org



Signet Terrace Office Park
Block B
Suite 2
19 Guinea Fowl Street
Lenasia
Gauteng
1827

- Have you investigated the non-compliance to establish which officials in Makana Municipality failed to submit water quality data to the DWS via IRIS?
- Will disciplinary action be taken against implicated officials? If not, why not?
- Were users of water at Joza Clinic and Nyaluza High School notified that the water was not suitable for drinking? On what date were they notified? If they were not notified, why not?
- On what date did you bring the DWS Notice of Non-compliance to the attention of the Municipal Council? If you failed to do so, why not?
- What steps, if any, were taken by the Municipality to warn residents of the municipal area of the presence of E.Coli bacteria in the water? Please provide copies of any notices issued including the dates and means of distribution.
- Given the extent of compromised sewerage infrastructure, will the Municipality commit to monthly testing for cholera?
- The last Water Compliance Results posted to the Makana Municipality website are from November 2019. Please confirm that you will ensure that monthly results are made routinely available on <http://www.makana.gov.za/notice-board/water-results/> going forward?

We call upon Mayor Yandiswa Vara and the Municipal Council to provide the public with written answers to the following questions:

- On what date were you made aware that Makana Municipality was failing to comply with its obligations to supply water quality data to the DWS via IRIS?
- When you became aware of this unacceptable state of affairs, what corrective action did you take?
- Please confirm that there is currently no monitoring mechanism in place that allows the Mayor and Municipal Council to be kept up to speed on the submission of water quality data?
- What monitoring mechanism will be introduced within the Municipal Council to prevent a re-occurrence? On what date will this mechanism be implemented from?
- Will you commit to ensuring that an investigation takes place and disciplinary steps are implemented against municipal officials implicated?
- Will you regularly check to see that Municipality timeously uploads Water Compliance Results to <http://www.makana.gov.za/notice-board/water-results/>?

Schools should be places where learners can develop and grow and not face serious health risks posed by water that is contaminated. A clinic is a place where patients seek medical help - it should not be a place where your health is placed at risk by serious failures caused by municipal staff.



We note that certain types of E.Coli bacteria can result in serious health conditions (with symptoms like vomiting and diarrhoea) that may require urgent medical treatment and hospitalization. Municipalities that fail to manage and ensure quality water supply while also neglecting sewerage infrastructure, will invariably be implicated in posing health risks to residents, including placing lives at risk. Makana Municipality has [repeatedly](#) been found wanting in both its management of water quality and sewerage. What will it take before there is a return to functional management of both these core services by municipal staff? We are concerned that health facilities within Makana Municipality are not equipped to deal adequately with a widespread health emergency, such as a cholera outbreak.

This serious state of affairs is why we call upon the Municipal Manager to provide answers to the questions posed - there needs to be lasting and effective consequences. Residents also deserve answers from the Mayor and Council - it is high time residents see a shift towards proper and meaningful oversight over the municipal administration. To residents of Makana - make yourself heard, speak up and speak out against municipal officials that fail to perform their duties and which then cause health risks.

For queries contact: Jay Kruise (j.kruise@ru.ac.za) / Andile Nayika (andile.nayika@ru.ac.za) / Lindokuhle Vellem (Lindokuhle.vellem@ru.ac.za) / Lungile Penxa (L.Penxa@ru.ac.za)

Endorsed by:

1. The CivActs team members of the A4A project in Makhanda.

ENDS

A partnership project
between the

**AHMED KATHRADA
FOUNDATION**

**ACCOUNTABILITY LAB
SOUTH AFRICA**

**PUBLIC SERVICE
ACCOUNTABILITY
MONITOR**

with co-funding by
the

EUROPEAN UNION



@ActionforAccount



072-677-9640



@ActionforAccount



loraine@kathradafoundation.org



Signel Terrace Office Park
Block B
Suite 2
19 Guinea Fowl Street
Lenasia
Gauteng
1827