



Quick Brief

A news update from the NBI on its programmes, business leadership and issues on sustainable development.

25 September 2018

The NBI's Drought Task Force is Evolving

From crisis to resilience in the Western Cape

The fantastic news is that levels in the vast majority of the Western Cape dams have stabilised, and areas such as Cape Town and Saldanha Bay are breathing a much-welcomed sigh of relief. In Cape Town water restrictions will shift from Level 6B to Level 5 from 1 October 2018, offering respite from the punitive tariffs that were needed to curb demand. Globally, Cape Town and its citizens are being recognised for their water conservation efforts.

However, it would be short-sighted to assume that concerted action is no longer required. While the crisis has largely abated, the water risk in the Western Cape remains. It will be years before sufficient additional water augmentation is in place, there are areas in the province where dam levels are still critically low, and the risk to agriculture remains very high in a few specific regions.

In this context the work of the National Business Initiative's (NBI's) Drought Task Force is highly relevant and remains a key example of strengthened collaboration between business and government in the face of adversity. The focus has shifted, however, from immediate drought relief to ensuring water resilience across the province. As such, in August 2018 the Western Cape Drought Task Force, spearheaded by the NBI since its inception in November 2017, has been renamed the '**Western Cape Water Resilience Task Force**', and has unanimously agreed to continue its work. The Task Force will focus on water conservation best practice, policy and regulatory issues, collaborative planning and the development of medium-term programmes.

The NBI has for many years flagged the systemic risk factors at play in the South African water sector, many of which have recently played out in the Western Cape. The Water Resilience Task Force will seek to address at least three of these systemic

risks: a rising urban population with growing water needs, increasing temperatures and evaporation rates with climate change, and cyclical periods of severe drought experienced in the province.

The NBI is also preparing to replicate the significant learnings from its collaboration with the Western Cape Government and City of Cape Town in other parts of the country, commencing with Gauteng. While less widely known, the Vaal System currently faces its own challenges given that the second phase of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project will only start to come on line from 2025. This necessitates a proactive response to ensure Gauteng's water resilience, as the province faces a window of system vulnerability for at least the next seven years.

For more information on the **NBI's Western Cape Water Resilience Task Force** please contact: [Alex McNamara](#).

In June 2018 the City of Cape Town gazetted an amendment to its 2010 Water By-Law. You can review the media release summarising the key changes to the by-law [here](#).

Business Action for Sustainable Growth

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