

STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR WATER RESOURCES IN SOUTH AFRICA

JOHAN A. VAN ROOYEN

Department of Water Affairs

ABSTRACT

This paper offers an expression of the thinking and planning of the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, and how it seeks to meet its responsibility to reconcile growing needs from a limited supply, now and into the future.

Historically the focus has been on major dams, irrigation schemes and inter-basin transfer schemes - all to meet agricultural, urban, mining and industrial demands. The resource situation is very different now, with almost all readily available water already put to use. Water resource planning can no longer simply propose the development of new schemes to supply demand, but must work towards the careful management and optimisation of existing use.

The Department is required to ensure that water can be supplied to all major development centres, whilst also serving industrial, mining and agricultural requirements at regional and national scale. Planning must account for ecological imperatives, international obligations, and human needs at local level. There is a growing emphasis on ways in which water can make a difference to people's lives at all levels of economic growth and development.

Recognising that water does not drive development but is the resource that underpins most, if not all, development, it is the Department's duty to be in a position to respond to the expected growth, and to ensure, where economically viable, that water is available when and where it is required.

The planning for water resources must be done long in advance of the actual need. Whilst planning for the next 25 years, thinking has also to be extended beyond this to a time when there may no longer be "available water" as we have come to know it. A long-term view is thus also given.

For more information please refer to the report "Strategic Planning for Water Resources in South Africa: A Situation Analysis 2009", (Report no.P RSA 000/00/7809) on the Department of Water Affairs' website at <http://www.dwa.gov.za/documents/>. Go to "All Categories" and scroll down to "Other: Integrated Water Resource Planning - National Documents".