

Press Release

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South African Institute of Race Relations
The power of ideas

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An independent water regulator is essential in SA – IRR

The appointment of an independent water regulator is essential if South Africa is to overcome its perpetual water crisis. This is one of the key findings of a paper published by the Institute of Race Relations (IRR) today.

Entitled "Thirsty Land", the paper notes that one of the key components of success in ensuring adequate water supplies is high-quality regulation. Regulation should be the responsibility of an autonomous government agency run by technocrats rather than politicians.

The paper notes that the South African government needs no encouragement to introduce controls, and it points out that an independent regulator would have to be free of corruption. It notes, however, that the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) has acknowledged that "potential conflicts of interest arise" from its own role as policymaker, regulator, implementer, and operator of infrastructure.

While the DWS has previously acknowledged the need for a "national water resources and services regulator", this authority has not yet been established, although, says the IRR paper, the South African government is increasingly acknowledging the need for an independent regulator.

The IRR quotes two lobby groups, Water Shortage South Africa and the Organisation Undoing Tax Abuse (Outa) as having recently stated that South Africa's "national water crisis – characterised by failing municipal infrastructure, lack of long-term planning, and implementation, the growing failure of sewage treatment plants across the country, and the lack of accountability – has made a powerful case for the need to establish an independent regulator".

Read the full report [here](#).

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