

# Inkomati Flows

**28th Edition**

A weekly newsletter from the office of the CEO

## **Drivers of change**

In the mist of the political turbulence sweeping across the country, the Inkomati CMA Governing Board took time to consider a 50 Year plan proposal from management. The experience acquired so far in the water management area on integrated water resources management point clearly to a need to develop both a strategic framework and a plan to address the challenges of lack of infrastructure and the assurance of supply of good quality water.

Since 2006, when the administration of the ICMA was started, there was a constant need to identify the current and future needs of our stakeholders in the water management area. It is indeed the outcome of various processes that everybody in the water management area has come to an agreement on the following conceptualization of the needs of our stakeholders:

- Access to the resource.
- Assurance of supply of good quality water

These twin challenges will either become a crisis over a given time period or they will be the stepping stone towards finding a lasting solution to the challenges facing Historically Disadvantaged Individuals (HDIs) and commercial farming community of the Inkomati Water Management Area.

The first challenge affects mainly and probably solely emerging farmers. The emerging farmers, due to the history of this country, have no or poor infrastructure to take up water for use in their fields. Consequently, all meetings held with the emerging farmers, the problem comes out to be access to the resource. In this regard, therefore, unless there is a response to this challenge, there will always be an opportunity for the matter to come out. A water management institution will only be relevant to this group of stakeholders if it responds to the challenge of access to the resource. Considering this, the ICMA has to find a way of bringing forth, together with the stakeholders, robust long-term solutions to the above challenge.

The commercial farmers of the water management area experience challenges related to the management of the resource so that there is proper sharing as per the allocations of the available water in the system. The available water has to be of good quality hence the importance of pollution management.

The infrastructure carrying the water is in a relatively good standard. What has become a problem is the effectiveness and efficiency of the systems for managing the resource. In short, the challenges range from system operation to water quality management.

What has also become a problem in the past few years is the water availability problem. The expansion of agriculture and the population growth amongst others resulted in a stressed Crocodile River. This has sparked a debate around the need to develop further storage in the Crocodile River.

In spite of the need to consider augmentation options, a parallel debate is also taking place around the need to apply water conservation and demand management strategies. This debate received a major boost when the Director General of DWAF visited the Region to understand progress made in the this regard.

### **Compelling reasons for a 50 Year Plan**

Considering the challenges that the water management area is facing, there is a clear appreciation of the fact that there will be no quick fixes to the problems. A long range plan has to be developed to embrace the needs of all the stakeholders. An impact of water conservation and demand management, best practices have proven, can only bear fruits after twenty years of consistent and proper implementation. Global trends are a testimony to this.

Also, a response to climate change will require a strategy and a plan which will cover a period beyond what we have through the business plan and the CMS.

The maximum period for a water license is 40 years. Our CMS, fully developed, will cover only a 5 year horizon yet it will point out issues requiring solutions beyond the 5 years.

These and many other reasons resulted in the serious consideration by the Governing Board of the need to develop a 50-Year Plan. This is an indication of how the Governing Board thinks beyond its term and immediate challenges.

The road towards the development of this plan has not been traversed by any of us to be involved in this endeavour. The necessary skills from the universities, the research institutions, the various government levels, the private sector and

the stakeholders within the water management area, to mention just a few, will be sought. If things go according to plan, this endeavour may take a year and a half to be completed.

### **The last partner on Board**

In the early days of the establishment of the Inkomati CMA a commitment was made to establish an institution which has the aspects of a best institution in the world. This was going to be achieved through benchmarking of the Inkomati CMA with the likes of the Groot Salland Waterschap in Netherlands, the Environmental Agency in the UK and an Institution in Australia.

Coincidentally, two processes emerged which initiated the link with Australia. Brian Jackson, the Water Resource Planning and Programmes Manager, whilst attending the World Water Week in Stockholm, Sweden, took the initiative to link the Inkomati CMA with the Murray-Darling Basin in Australia. Quite interesting, a lively correspondence and sharing of knowledge have started between the Inkomati CMA and the Murray-Darling Basin.

On the other side, Dr Dirk Roux, having been recently appointed to lead the water resource Node of the Monash University South Africa, established an Advisory Board to the node. Monash University South Africa is a branch of Monash University Australia. This university links its programmes to Australia and there is a great chance to extent the network with Australia from this side.

During the launch of the Advisory Board, the matter of twining us with an institution in Australia came out. Very well, through the Chief Executive Officer, the Inkomati CMA is represented in the advisory Board.