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SPEECH BY THE EXECUTIVE MAYOR COUNCILLOR DADA MORERO AT THE WATER BRIEFING

Members of the Mayoral Committee,
The leadership of Johannesburg Water,
Members of the media,
Residents of Johannesburg,

Good afternoon.

We have convened this briefing to amplify the daily updates that Johannesburg Water has been sharing with residents through councillors and other platforms. Since 19 October, many parts of Johannesburg have experienced severe water outages and low pressure. Residents are now in their second week of disruption, and some households have had dry taps for more than 10 days. We acknowledge the frustration this has caused. Restoring a reliable water supply remains our priority.

Several factors have driven these challenges. Rand Water advised that it is already pumping at full capacity and will restrict supply to municipalities that exceed their allocation. Our reservoirs have struggled to recover because water is being used faster than reservoirs and towers can refill, and higher-lying areas have been hit hardest. Some reservoirs, including Hursthill, remain bypassed because of leaks. Labour action at Johannesburg Water also delayed the interventions needed to stabilise the system.

Overall storage across Johannesburg's water supply system has improved to 41%, up from 37% yesterday. Our teams are adjusting water flows, bulk meters and network pressures to manage available storage and direct supply to struggling parts of the network. Residents may experience reduced pressure or temporary interruptions while this work is underway. Restoration is being managed gradually so that we do not overwhelm the network or drain recovering reservoirs, and teams are releasing trapped air from pipelines to clear airlocks that restrict flow.

In the Commando system, Brixton Reservoir 1 is at approximately 91% with its outlet fully open, and Brixton Reservoir 2 is at approximately 50%. The Hursthill 2 interlink has been opened further to increase supply to Crosby, Brixton and Hursthill. Recovery across the Central systems remains mixed. Parktown Reservoir is still very low, and teams are working to improve inflows. Yeoville Reservoir has recovered to above 40%, with two pumps operating and supply restored. Inflows into Alexander Park have improved, restoring supply to most of the zone, although high-lying areas remain affected. South Hills tower is at approximately 69%, and Berea Reservoir improved overnight to above 60% with its outlet fully open.

Storage across the Sandton systems improved overnight to approximately 37%, from 27% yesterday. Levels remain low, however, and the Bryanston and Illovo pumping stations are operating on bypass. Bryanston, Illovo and Morningside remain under active management. In Midrand, Grand Central Reservoir remains very low and pumping to the tower is suspended. Erand Reservoir is at approximately 35% with its outlet fully open, improving supply to Kyalami, Noordwyk and Vorna Valley, although inflows remain low. President Park Reservoir is at approximately 67%, but Ivory Park, Allandale and Kaalfontein continue to experience challenges. In the Randburg–Roodepoort systems, Honeydew continues to experience very low inflows and reservoir levels, despite a slight improvement overnight.

Sundowner, Northriding and Northgate remain affected, and a technical team has been deployed to investigate. Waterval and Quellerina towers have water and supply has been restored. Parts of Cosmo City, including Extension 0, remain affected, but throttling was lifted yesterday afternoon, and the reservoir is receiving water. In Soweto and the southern areas, Power Park, Chiawelo, Protea Glen, Meadowlands, Zondi, Noordgesig, Diepkloof Extension, Eldorado Park and Pimville were affected by network configurations implemented to support recovery at Rand Water's Meredale Reservoir. Throttling was lifted yesterday, the affected reservoirs are recovering, and teams are monitoring and stabilising these systems. Crown Gardens Reservoir and Tower are both at 100% and supplying water. Across the network, teams are prioritising the prompt isolation of burst pipes and leaks, faster repairs and the clearing of outstanding service delivery backlogs.

Today, the South African Human Rights Commission released its findings on the water situation in Gauteng. We welcome its recommendations. The City will engage Johannesburg Water on their implementation, and several of the challenges identified are already being addressed. We will build on this work to improve water and sanitation services for our residents. Johannesburg Water is also building a fully municipality-owned water tanker fleet to reduce its reliance on outsourced contractors, following a Council resolution in the 2023/24 financial year to insource this service. Because of budget constraints, this is being done in phases.

In 2024/25, 20 tankers were procured and are fully operational. In the second phase, 16 tankers have been procured: 6 are active, 5 have been delivered and are being prepared for operation this month, and the remaining 5 are due during 2026/27. A further 20 tankers are planned for 2026/27 and 2027/28. Once complete, the fleet of approximately 60 trucks will replace contracted vehicles for daily services to informal settlements, and the savings will be redirected to water demand management projects that reduce physical losses, bulk purchases and consumption.

Lastly, we recognise that improving reservoir levels offers little comfort to residents whose taps remain dry. Our immediate focus is to turn system recovery into a stable supply for every affected household.

Thank you.