

'It's a challenge not a crisis'

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Cape Town - According to the Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry Lindiwe Hendricks, the state of the country's water supplies "is an issue of concern, it's a challenge, but it is not a crisis".

Making a special statement in the National Assembly on Tuesday, Hendricks told MPs that the quality of drinking water was one of the best in the world, with 94% of samples testing well, that the dams were safe, and that the quantity of water available at present was above average, thanks to recent good rains.

But she said that she was concerned about the pollution of many of the country's rivers.

The minister assured members that the pollution by acid drainage from mines, and by from informal settlements along riverbanks, was being dealt with, but that pollution from ill-maintained sewage works was a municipal responsibility, and this was a challenge.

She also assured the house that the department was planning well for the future - and as an example disclosed that a new dam for Gauteng was being planned. A study to find a suitable location for the dam was coming to an end, she said, and an announcement would be made within a few months.

Her remarks were not well received by opposition parties, which constantly referred to the denial by the government for years that there was a crisis in electricity supplies.

"This is a characteristic of this government," said Stan Simmonds of the National Alliance. "Denial."