



NEHAWU KZN STATEMENT ON THE ONGOING DISPUTE BETWEEN KING CETSHWAYO DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY AND UMNGENI UTHUKELA WATER

MEDIA STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday March 19, 2025

The National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union [NEHAWU] in KwaZulu-Natal is deeply concerned and strongly condemns the ongoing situation between King Cetshwayo District Municipality [KCDM] and uMngeni uThukela Water [UW], which has severely affected the livelihoods of employees and local communities.

We are appalled by the inhumane treatment of workers, whose well-being has been compromised due to the reckless and irresponsible manner in which this matter has been handled. The commodification of our members and employees in KCDM reflects a disturbing disregard for human dignity and a dangerous politicisation of labour.

NEHAWU is dismayed at the poor management and finger-pointing between KCDM and UW, who continue to accuse each other of breaching contractual obligations. This has only deepened the crisis while workers bear the brunt of a dispute they have no control over.

We note with concern the statement made by a KCDM Council, who criticised the "callous manner in which UW commenced water restrictions on 12 March 2025," while the matter was still under inter-governmental intervention mediated by the Department of Water and Sanitation. UW's justification, that water restrictions are their standard procedure for dealing with non-payment issues, shows a disregard for the severe social and economic consequences of this decision.



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This dispute is a glaring contradiction to the commitments made by both the National and Provincial governments to ensure water provision, job creation, and effective partnerships between state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and municipalities. These are key priorities outlined in the State of the Nation Address (SONA), the Finance Minister's budget speech, and were echoed by the KZN MEC for COGTA during UUW's 2023/2024 annual financial report address.

Allowing this impasse to continue unchecked sets a dangerous precedent for other municipalities, threatening the job security of UUW employees across the board. The ripple effects will severely undermine economic stability and service delivery within affected communities.

As NEHAWU, we demand that all stakeholders, including the leadership of UUW, urgently come together to resolve this matter. We call for decisive leadership to provide certainty, safeguard jobs, restore water services, and protect the livelihoods of all parties affected.

END

Issued by NEHAWU KwaZulu-Natal Secretariat Office



[Ayanda Zulu \(PS\)](#)

Ayandaz@nehawu.org.za



081 758 5199



[Ntokozo Nxumalo \(PDS\)](#)

Ntokozo@Nehawu.org.za



081 525 5983