

# Mystery of the missing Mt Moreland water

By Michelle Dennis

MT MORELAND residents received the short end of the stick last week with excessive outages and no water for at least 48 hours during hot, humid weather.

The cause for the sudden lack of water last Monday seemed an unsolvable mystery at first. All that could be established was that the La Mercy Airport Reservoir, which supplies Mt Moreland, had run dry.

Ednick Msweli from the municipality's water and sanitation department said on Monday afternoon that his staff were investigating the problem and were feeding the reservoir manually.

Whether the fault was due to the outage (from 6am to 9am and again from 4pm to the early hours of Monday morning) was still to be ascertained. Meanwhile, head of the Lake Victoria Conservancy, Hillary Vickers and members of the Mt Moreland Ratepayers' Association were frantically phoning around to get relief from a water tanker, and for the reason of the drought.

"Then we heard that La Mercy airport builders had diverted the water pipes and accidentally by-passed Mt Moreland," said Vickers.

However, a phone call to the Airport's Company South Africa's (ACSA) Communications and PR manager, Colin Naidoo, received swift attention.

Within minutes Naidoo told Northglen News that he had checked with the project managers, and that no pipes had been

touched, however he would investigate further to make sure.

By Wednesday, residents were frantic, and a water tanker arrived just as water supply was re-instated.

It was a call to Umgeni Water that finally solved the mystery of the missing water supply.

Acting area manager for the north, Shabbir Habib, said the problem started on Sunday evening when lightning struck the electrical supply to Hazelmere waterworks and water could not be pumped to the La Mercy Airport reservoir from 10pm to 6am.

"Our generators are not strong enough to pump the water," he said.

"The problem was exacerbated by cable theft at the reservoir and a battery was running the signal station that indicates the levels of reservoirs.

Coincidentally, the battery ran flat at the same time as the lightning struck, and the low level of the reservoir was therefore not picked up."

*'The problem was exacerbated by cable theft at the reservoir and a battery was running the signal station that indicates the levels of reservoirs'*

- Shabbir Habib, Umgeni Water acting area manager for the north

Habib said although water supply was established by midday on Monday, there was another problem. "When the reservoir runs dry, the pipes are empty and air can be trapped in the pipes, stopping the flow of water.

The pipes need to be scoured by the municipality to find the blockages and the air removed before water flows as it should. This takes time, hence the delay."

Vickers said it was bad enough being without water without notice, but what was really frustrating was the lack of communication between the municipality and the residents.

"When we phoned, and believe me, many residents did phone, we were told the supply would resume soon. When we asked for water tankers, we were told they were on their way, when clearly, they were not. In future, council must tell us if there is problem and not fob us off with the line that the water will be connected 'just now'."

