

RAINWATER HARVESTING VITAL

THE singular difference between say Mars and Earth is that we have water, "the essence of life". But with increased demand, a careless attitude and climate change, potable water is becoming increasingly scarce and all too soon the water that we expect to pour out of our taps may dry up.

The fact is, in KwaZulu-Natal 61 percent of households do not have access to piped water - that is about 7 million people. To give these people, many of whom live in rural areas, a reasonable supply of good water will cost in the region of R7 billion for the government and its agencies to fulfil its obligation of basic service delivery.

But that is not all. The South Coast is likely to have water restrictions forced on it soon and even Durban could face another round of water restrictions in the next year or two, if the gods are not kind and provide above average rainfall in the catchment areas of the rivers that feed the city.

At a breakfast to release its financial results, Umgeni Water claims it is doing its damndest to ensure an adequate provision of clean water for Durban. Construction has started on the Spring Grove Dam on the Mooi River, but this will only start providing water into the system in 2013, all being well - and the water it will provide is already taken up by demand.

There are also plans to dam the Mkomazi River by building the Smithfield Dam, but this will only be ready in 2023, and by that time its capacity will probably be overwhelmed by demand.

The council should insist that all new buildings provide rainwater tanks that can be connected to utilities such as toilets and washing machines. This will not only save on water and sewerage charges, but also ease water shortages that are staring us in the face.

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