

Cape hospitals invest in water supplies

By [Tamar Kahn](#)

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Private hospitals are not taking any chances with Western Cape Premier Helen Zille's promise that water supplies to their facilities will be maintained in the event of Day Zero.



The three biggest hospital groups - Netcare, Mediclinic and Life Healthcare - are investing in alternative water supplies from the sea and underground. Many of the measures they are taking in Cape Town are also being rolled out in other water-scarce regions, such as the Eastern Cape.

The Western Cape is gripped by severe drought and dam levels have fallen to 25.9% of their capacity. Should the levels fall to the critical 13.5% level, which the DA-led municipality says could happen by mid-April, it will turn off the supply to most of Cape Town's taps. From Day Zero, residents will be rationed to 25 litres per person per day, which they will have to fetch from collection points.

Jacques du Plessis, MD of Netcare's hospital division, said Netcare was installing a desalination plant at its Christiaan Barnard Hospital on the Foreshore, which would yield enough water for the group's five Cape Town hospitals, its Medicross primary healthcare facilities and its renal dialysis units. The plant could also provide enough water for staff showers and drinking water, he said. Netcare had drilled boreholes on the grounds of three of its Cape Town hospitals and was investigating the use of black water, he said. Black water comes from toilets.

Netcare had cut water consumption at its Cape Town hospitals by 44% since 2015.

Mediclinic GM for infrastructure Kobus Jonck said the group could not risk relying on promises that hospitals would be guaranteed water if Day Zero arrived. "We are drilling boreholes and will transport water between facilities if need be."

Ten of Mediclinic's hospitals were directly affected by the water crisis, he said. Mediclinic had reduced its water consumption by, on average, 3.5% a year over the past eight years, he said.

Life Healthcare had sunk boreholes, which would be able to supply water to its Cape Town hospitals - Vincent Pallotti and Kingsbury - as well as its renal, rehabilitation and mental care units by mid-March, said CEO Lourens Bekker.

On Tuesday, Zille assured Cape Town residents that public and private healthcare facilities would be prioritised should the city fail to avert Day Zero. Even so, the provincial government intended to make sure 18 priority public hospitals could turn to borehole water should the municipal supply fail, she said.

Source: Business Day

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