

## Annual Water Report 2025

There has been much speculation in social media on how to solve Plett's water situation. The Keurbooms River has sufficient resources to meet both the reasonable future development needs of Bitou and the environmental needs of the important Keurbooms Estuary. The estuary thrives on the highly variable river flow – the urban development not so, requiring a more constant flow. Our basic problem is thus how to bridge periods when the Keurbooms flow is too low for our needs and that of the estuary. Numerous studies have been performed over the years into providing a sustainable water supply including linking to Knysna for regional supply. The regional options did not provide viable solutions. Favourable options identified include transferring water for storage in Roodefontein Dam, groundwater development, desalination and recycling of waste water but a new off channel storage dam (Wadrif) was identified as the best (and cheapest) option to cover our needs for the medium to long term. It would also provide the necessary buffer against periods of low flow in the Keurbooms River. This is our Achilles Heel at present and the root cause of the current water supply situation.

All of this has been known for some time and an Environmental Impact Assessment was approved for the Wadrif site in 2014 but appealed. The appeal was overruled in 2017 so the EIA was valid for a further 5 years and expired in 2021 as the project was not taken further. This work will now have to be redone at significant cost to take the project forward.

We also have a problem that we are exceeding the assured yield of the current bulk water infrastructure. This means we are already living beyond our means for water supply. Coupled with our inability to bridge any low flow periods in the Keurbooms River, we can experience the perfect storm at any time and are faced with possible severe water shortages occurring with little prior warning. There are limited quick fixes and we will be living with this situation until the longer term options are effected.

The inevitable has happened with the current drought. We are experiencing a sustained period of low flow in the Keurbooms River coupled with lower levels in the Roodefontein Dam. This has led to the imposition of water restrictions to try to stretch our water resources. Stage 3 restrictions are currently in force with a prospect of higher levels of restriction being applied during the peak tourist season. Please use water wisely.

It is the prime function of a local authority to provide sustainable services creating an enabling environment so that development can take place. For too long Bitou has neglected to address the budgetary needs to keep the bulk infrastructure for services adequately maintained and ahead of development to prevent the possibility of catastrophic failure. This needs to be urgently addressed in future budgetary priorities by our politicians and senior officials.

On a more positive note, we continue to enjoy high quality potable water from our taps. Unlike large areas of our country, our tap water is safe to drink. Leaks and pipe breaks receive prompt attention and our water division does sterling work often under difficult circumstances.

Peter Pyke Dec 2025



The Plettenberg Bay Ratepayers and Residents' Association  
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