



Media Release

Monday, 11th September 2023

To: All Media

**Magalies Water Welcomes Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa
(BCCSA) Ruling in Its Favour Against SABC News**

Magalies Water has noted with vindication the judgement issued by the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa (BCCSA), which ruled in its favour against SABC news. The matter relates to a news report broadcast and published on the 21st of June 2023 across SABC news platforms, about alleged water quality non-compliances recorded at the Mmabatho Water Treatment Plant. The plant, through agreement with the Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality (NMMDM) is managed and operated by Magalies Water on behalf of the district municipality.

While Magalies Water is on record, admitting that prior to taking over the operations at the water treatment plant, which was previously operated and managed by the erstwhile Sedibeng Water, numerous operational challenges had affected water quality output, as was reported in the *Blue Drop Watch Report* for the 2021/22 financial year, the situation has improved. Within reasonable time, through collaboration many of the identified challenges were resolved. The NMMDM as the asset owner and a responsible arm of government, would have not continued to maintain a working relationship with Magalies Water at the detriment of the residents who are the primary recipients of this important service.

The progress was consequently reported to the accounting authority – the Department of Water and Sanitation and this information was supplied to SABC news as well, during their own investigations relating to the allegations of continued water quality non-compliances. Magalies Water's Scientific Services, through its SANS 241 accredited scientific laboratory ensures that water treatment processes at the water treatment plant, result in potable water of the highest quality, which is certified as safe for human consumption and does not pose any health-risks to the consumers.

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To date, the water treatment plant, is regularly monitored and tested for non-compliances. Where non-compliances are observed, Magalies Water immediately activates quality assurance processes in line with the water sector standards, to resolve such. In its judgement, the BCCSA found that the SABC news failed to comply with provisions of Section 12 (3) of the code of conduct which reads *“Clause 12(3) of the Code of Conduct determines if a person who has stated that he or she is not available for comment or such a person could not reasonably be reached to comment on a public issue, it must be stated in the programme. If there is no response from a person or party whose issues are to be discussed, or if, as in this instance the response is not received timeously, the Broadcaster is obliged to mention this fact on air. Applied to the facts of this case the Broadcaster should have indicated that the Complainant was asked for its comment but that their response had not reached the Broadcaster at the time of the broadcast”*. The Commission has assured Magalies Water, that the SABC news has been reprimanded in accordance with the ruling.

Reacting to the judgement Magalies Water’s Chief Executive Mr. Sandile Mkhize says, the judgement has vindicated the water utility’s position and reaffirmed its integrity as a reputable bulk water services provider. He said that the SABC news’ approach, story treatment and delivery fell short of the BCCSA code of conduct as Magalies Water’s complaint was based on fairness “we are not only relieved but also vindicated. It has always been our position that the SABC needed to act responsibly and not be sensationalist in its approach. The misrepresentation that Magalies Water suffered, extended to doubts in the minds many, as it relates to our capacity, skills, and technical knowledge to improve water quality within the area of operation. We appreciate the role of the media as the fourth estate and its watchdog function; however, it is critical that the conduct of journalists and editors alike is beyond reproach given their responsibility to society” Mkhize added.

End.

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