MEDIA STATEMENT BY ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY MAYOR, CYRIL XABA, 2 NOVEMBER 2025

- Programme Director
- City Manager and Senior management present
- Members of the media
- Good morning

Thank you for availing yourselves for this crucial media engagement to update the citizens of eThekwini about the progress we are making on key service delivery interventions.

This media briefing takes place after a full council meeting which took place on Thursday hence, we will also take this opportunity to share with you some of the strategic decisions that were adopted by the council.

Ladies and gentlemen, a few months ago we announced concrete plans to address water and sanitation challenges in the city as outlined in the water and sanitation turnaround strategy that we are currently implementing. At the centre of this strategy, is our commitment to curb

water losses or what is referred to as Non-Revenue Water (NRW). We are pleased that this is now beginning to yield positive results.

Our latest data indicates a decrease of 2,9 percent of NRW for quarter one (July to September) when compared to the same period last year. As a result, NRW for quarter one of the current financial year is currently at 52,9 percent and this is a positive step towards achieving the target of reducing NRW by 5% annually to reach the target of 25% and below.

The current reduction is attributed to multifaceted interventions, which include the deployment of plumbers to reservoir zones with high water loss, the maintenance and installation of meters and Industrial commercial and institutional meter upgrades, to name a few.

I am pleased to also report that the number of reported water leaks and pipe bursts have been reduced from over 9000 in June 2025 to below 979 currently. It is in this context that in the past few weeks, almost all our bulk water reservoirs were stable with others operating at full capacity for the first time in five years.

Other progressive measures we are implementing to improve service delivery in the water and sanitation environment include the insourcing of plumbers. The recruitment of the first batch of 31 plumbers is at an advance stage. We also continue to insource water tankers with an intention of reducing hired services. Both these interventions will save costs and improve service delivery as there will be close and constant monitoring.

We must also state that there has been a notable improvement in the operation of the City's sewer system, with a significant reduction in overflows, particularly those affecting the beaches. Currently, out of 23 bathing beaches, 21 are open and safe for swimming. We want to improve and sustain this performance beyond the festive season

Ladies and gentlemen, this progress is attributed to ongoing repair and maintenance work on the sewer network, pump stations, and wastewater treatment works. The Municipality has also strengthened its capacity by increasing the number of jetting machines from 12 to 43, enabling teams to respond more swiftly and effectively to sewer blockages and spillages.

However, despite these interventions, the City continues to face challenges due to theft, vandalism, and misuse of its infrastructure.

Compounding this issue is the continuing of dumping of foreign or unwanted objects into the sewer system by both the public and some business owners, which often causes blockages and can lead to infrastructure failures. We have observed a disturbing trend among some restaurants of disposing fats into our system. We urge restaurants and eateries to install fat traps so that the fat they produce is disposed in a proper manner. This will assist greatly in the prevention of blockages in our sewer pipelines and clogging of pumps.

As a proactive measure to safeguard our critical infrastructure and assets from theft, sabotage and vandalism, the City has developed a comprehensive security enhancement plan. The focus of the plan is on Trading Services, specifically Water, Sanitation and Electricity services, which are central to service delivery and revenue generation. The plan aims to ensure uninterrupted service delivery to residents and businesses, while addressing the escalating threats posed by vandalism, theft, and sabotage of infrastructure.

This strategic initiative also places a strong emphasis on safeguarding Municipal vehicles, employees, and creating a secure working environment across all operational sites. The plan entails, among other things, physical infrastructure upgrades such as access control, perimeter security enhancements and improved surveillance and monitoring through CCTV cameras.

REVENUE ENHANCEMENT INITIATIVES

Ladies and Gentlemen in a strategic move to enhance the city's revenue and alleviate the financial burden on residents, the council has approved the extension of the special debt relief programme for business and residential customers.

You will recall that we implemented a similar programme from May to June this year and our customers and various stakeholders requested that it should be extended and be given adequate time to mobilise financial resources. As a responsive and caring municipality, we acceded to their request. This programme will run for three months from the 1st of November 2025 to the 31st of January 2026.

This initiative will assist customers with a 50% debt write off of their arrear's debt as at 31 January 2025 on condition that the customer pays 50% of the corresponding debt in full and final settlement. What makes this debt relief programme unique is that customers will be allowed to settle the 50% payment in instalments provided that all the payments are made by 31 January 2026.

Subsequent to the customer settling the 50% debt owed as at 31 January 2025, the customer must settle the entire outstanding debt, if any, relating to the period from 1 February 2025 to the 30th of June 2025.

Should a customer not be in a position to settle the debt for the months after 31 January 2025, such a customer must enter into an interest-free payment plan to settle the debt by the 30th of June 2026 without making any down payment.

We call upon our customers to take advantage of this programme by approaching our customer service centres and not wait until the last minute.

ROLLING OUT OF ELECTRICITY METERS

Ladies and Gentlemen, the municipality is committed in ensuring that residents are billed accurately and for the actual services they have consumed monthly.

However, the unavailability of electricity meters has been making this task difficult, resulting in the estimated bills being sent out to customers.

Following a drastic resolution we took at our strategic planning session earlier this year regarding the procurement of electricity meters, I am pleased to report that a total of 14 000 electricity meters have been received for installation to various properties within the municipality.

We are expecting additional meters in the course of the financial year so that we can adequately address critical service challenges and improve revenue collection. This move will enable us to fast track the issuing of revenue clearance certificates, address backlog in the metering of new

housing developments, changeovers from credit to prepaid meters, replacement of faulty meters and bypassed meters as well as new service applications.

We must indicate that as a city, we have significantly reduced the challenge of estimated bills, with only 12% of water bills being estimated. On electricity, we are currently estimating 22% and with the delivery of new meters this challenge will now be a thing of the past.

CREATING A CONDUCIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS TO THRIVE

Ladies and Gentlemen, eThekwini continues to be a preferred destination for investment and tourism. This can be attributed to the efforts the municipality, in collaboration with all spheres of government, is putting to create an investor friendly environment.

To demonstrate this investor appetite to our city, a few days ago, we launched the R3.6 billion Beachwood Estate development in Durban North which will create over 2000 sustainable jobs upon completion. This

was followed by the signing of a 50 year-lease agreement between the eThekwini Municipality and Southern Sun Hotels for the redevelopment of the Elangeni and Maharani Towers — the twin pillars of the Durban's Golden Mile.

This is a R622 million reinvestment in these two towers, part of a broader R1 billion hospitality portfolios that re-energises the beachfront as the heartbeat of our tourism economy. It will retain over 450 jobs, create more than 200 new ones, and reaffirm Durban's standing as South Africa's coastal capital of tourism and leisure.

Tomorrow, we will be launching the Insimbi Ridge Project, a 350-hectare logistics and light industrial development aimed at improving efficiency along the N3 from Durban to Johannesburg and to decongest the port.

Let me also take this opportunity to welcome the issuing of a Request for Information by the Minister of Transport, Barbara Creecy, for regional speed trains linking Durban and Johannesburg.

This demonstrates that the engagements we have been having with the Minister and the senior management of the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa and Transnet on numerous strategic projects are yielding positive results. Each time we meet, I have been constantly emphasising the importance of resuscitating the speed train project, improving the efficiency of our port and revitalisation of our rail infrastructure in Durban.

As a city, we welcome the move on the speed train as it will boost the economy of Durban, especially the tourism sector. Upon completion, thousands of people from Gauteng will be descending on Durban on a weekly basis for business and tourism.

Let me also take this opportunity to applaud Transnet for continuing to invest in infrastructure upgrades at the Durban Container Terminal to enhance the capacity and efficiency of the port following the announcement of a R1 billion investment for the procurement of four new ship-to-shore cranes. These investments are crucial in positioning Durban as a globally competitive city and confirming that we are indeed open for business.

We remain fully committed to work with Transnet on the development of a dry port in Cato Ridge, the establishment of truck staging areas and construction of a second access road to the port to ease congestion. I am happy that a Memorandum of Understanding has already been signed between the Municipality and Transnet Port Terminals to implement these initiatives.

ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS IN THE CITY

Ladies and gentlemen, it is an undeniable fact that safe public spaces are a precondition for investment and development in the city. It is in this context that we are working with all relevant stakeholders to address the challenge of homelessness in the city.

During the process of seeking solutions, the city identified a municipal owned property located in the south, in Ilovu. Sakhithemba has in the past been leased by YMCA as a halfway house for the parolees. The lease expired in July 2014 which provided opportunity for the city to explore its intentions of caring for the homeless within its boundaries.

We wish to emphasise the fact that Sakhithemba will operate as a transitional shelter to provide for the homeless persons and those who are drug users who are awaiting or already participating in rehabilitation programmes.

This is in line with our vision as eThekwini Municipality of “being the most caring and liveable city”. To achieve this, a critical review and development of policies that will facilitate the achievement of this vision are required.

This facility will accommodate a maximum of 1000 people. The admission to the shelter will be through a comprehensive screening process which will be undertaken prior to admission. The screening will take place at the Drop-In-Centre located in the CBD.

Service provision at Sakhithemba will include social services programmes and psychosocial support such as life skills, counselling, reunification and reintegration, skills development, and job readiness training.

Residents within the shelter are expected to take part in all programmes intended to help them to become independent, including programmes provided outside the facility. The centre will cater for homeless people who are over the age of 18 years.

The duration of stay will vary from three to six months, but may be as long as a year or two. To ensure that the programme is sustainable and impactful, the city intends to facilitate partnerships with non-governmental actors who are already operating in the space.

The funding requirements associated with operational costs and management of the facility are at R7 150 000 annually which includes meals, clothing, and skills development training. The centre is currently 70% complete, with the targeted completion date of the first week of December 2025.

We are confident that this initiative will contribute towards our vision of making eThekwini the most caring and liveable city.

SUMMER SEASON CAMPAIGN

In closing, the city of Durban is now gearing itself up for the festive season. Two weeks ago, we officially launched the summer season campaign to showcase the City's readiness to welcome an anticipated 1.3 million visitors over the festive season.

Working with all law enforcement agencies and tourism stakeholders, we are confident that Durban will deliver a safe and memorable festive season. Held under the theme***: "Visit Durban: Endless Waves of Tranquillity,"*** we will be showcasing Durban's hidden gems and pulling out all the stops to ensure an unforgettable summertime, further positioning the City as a premier holiday destination.

Our projections indicate that during this period, over R341 million in direct spend and a total of R845 million will be injected into the City's GDP. This influx will help create more than 15 000 jobs and generate over R630 million in taxes, a clear proof of how tourism drives growth and opportunity for residents.

Once again, we want to assure our visitors that there will be heightened police visibility in tourism precincts, with more lifeguards deployed to

Municipal beaches and pools, and trained child minders along the beachfront.

We want to reiterate that eThekwini is rising, and we are happy that institutions such as the National Treasury continue to commend us with the manner in which we handle public finances. In fact, we are one of the few municipalities that do not owe ESKOM and our Water Board for bulk water and electricity supply.

Our financial standing continues to be sound with consistent revenue growth. Our closeout report for 2024/25 financial year indicate that our revenue exceeds expenditure. As a testimony to our financial strength, we have been consistently adopting a fully funded budget, and we continue to maintain a favourable credit rating, enabling borrowing for infrastructure-led growth.

We call upon the residents of eThekwini to continue to work with us to make this city work, not only for us, but also for future generations.

Thank you very much for your attention.