

LETTER: Outdated water model

CONSUMER PARTICIPATION IS SORELY NEEDED, AS IS EARLIER ACCESS TO WATER USAGE INFORMATION, A MODERN BILLING MODEL, AND COMMUNICATION.
BY LARRY SYMINGTON
30 MAY 2014



LETTER: Outdated water model



Wasting water in a country that's as dry as South Africa is almost a sin, and a very expensive one at that. But while there's growing awareness around the need to protect and conserve the country's water resources, at consumer level, millions of litres are lost every year, as well as millions of rand.

What's needed is a new domestic water management and billing model. The present system is letting everyone down. It's been in operation since 1947 and is grossly outdated. It's

also costly, requires special skills, has not kept pace with technology developments, and is not a fair system for an economy as diverse as ours.

A new model is required to reverse the current trend, where only 10% of consumers' accounts are paid in 30 days, while 80% are 90 days or more in arrears, as recorded in the Local Government Revenue and Expenditure report released by the Treasury in August.

This situation has a serious effect on the municipalities' cash flow and hampers service delivery, a situation we are constantly reminded of in the press.

The same report also mentions that municipal suppliers and creditors stand a 50:50 chance of being paid on time, a situation not conducive to attracting innovation.

Many municipalities are trying to tackle these issues on their own, but the lack of specialist technology skills is placing undue stress on municipal officials who do take an interest. Their ability to hold manufacturers accountable is unfortunately hindered by supply chain management policies.

Consumer participation is sorely needed, as is earlier access to water usage information, a modern billing model, and communication. Communication is critical, especially in poorer areas. What's also key at this stage is to get buy-in from all consumers, and the only way to do that is to have solutions tested by those who have to use them — the consumers themselves.

Larry Symington

CEO, MyWater

Source: <http://www.bdlive.co.za/opinion/letters/2013/11/11/letter-outdated-water-model>