Cardinal Stephen Brislin
Archbishop of Johannesburg

STATEMENT ON WATER CRISIS IN AREAS OF JOHANNESBURG

We have been deeply concerned to witness the frustration of the communities of Coronationville, Westbury and Sophiatown that manifested itself in the recent protests. The extraordinary burden placed on the people of Wards 82 and 69 In terms of poor service delivery, growing poverty and the lack of one of the most basic human rights - water - has led to growing discontent and anger. Their plight has largely gone unaddressed and their needs ignored to the point that the communities, in sheer frustration, have mounted a series of protests. The principle of 'those in most need receiving the most urgent support' has held no sway, causing exasperation in the community.

The abysmal lack of response of the various layers of government, implementing authorities and boards, in not providing the basic necessities to these and other communities, as the Constitution envisages, is deplorable. The recent water throttling in the wider Johannesburg Water area has exacerbated this already serious situation. Some communities have been without regular water supply for an unconscionable extended time.

At the very least the people of the affected areas have the basic right to information regarding future plans to meet their needs as well as accurate, transparent and reliable information with regard to the present situation. Unless there is basic communication between the authorities and the people, as well as better consultation with the people who posses their own agency and insights, we will experience more confrontations and outbursts as we saw last Thursday.

We strongly urge the Mayor, the leadership of Rand Water and Johannesburg Water to engage with the communities with plans, time lines and uncompromising service delivery so that the dignity of all, and living conditions, can be a credit to the courage and long years of struggle carried on by so many in this area.

Stephen Cardinal Brislin
Archbishop of Johannesburg   11 September 2025