Water woes

The Western Cape is in the middle of its most serious water shortage in decades and other provinces are not far behind. To BUILD put some questions to various of the key role players involved.

To BUILD asked Councillor Xanthea Limberg, Mayoral Committee (Mayco)member for Informal Settlements, Water and Waste Services and Energy at the City of Cape Town about water losses in the pipeline upstream of the consumer.

'The City of Cape Town, which has more than 11 000km of water mains and associated infrastructure (reservoirs, pump stations, water meters, valves and hydrants), has established itself as a national leader in reducing water losses - as well as user demand - through its Water Conservation and Water Demand Management Programme,' says Limberg.

'Water losses, which includes losses through leaks and bursts, as well as water lost through meter tampering, general metering inaccuracies and administrative errors, for the overall systems have been reduced from around 25% in 2009 to below 15% according to the latest data,' she adds.

Limberg explained that this reduction in water loss is because of various interventions, including extensive water pipe replacements, extensive pressure management of the water supply system and improved response times. These interventions
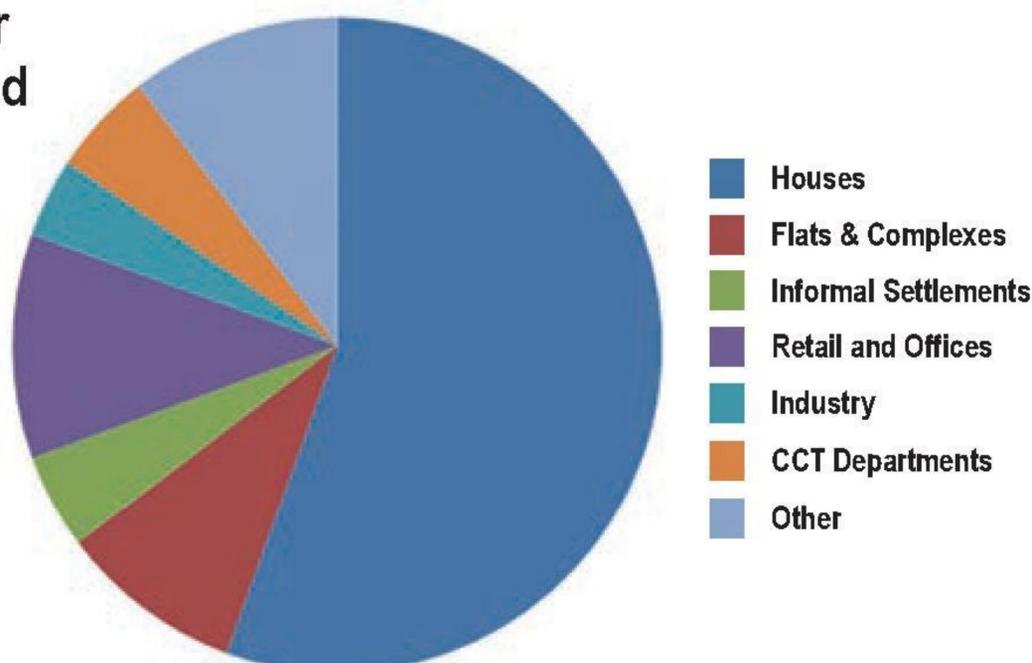

Photos by Gareth Griffiths Imaging

Leaky pipes

have also reduced the burst rate from 63,9 bursts per 100km of piping in the 2010/2011 financial year, to 31 bursts per 100km, saving millions of litres of water in the process.

While it is not possible to precisely delineate how much water was lost to theft and meter tampering issues as opposed to how much was lost to pipe bursts, estimates are that approximately 8,6% of total water fed into the City's reticulation network is lost through leaks, bursts and to a much less significant degree, overflows on storage tanks.

Consumption per category for period 01.07.2015 – 30.06.2016

- Houses
- Flats & Complexes
- Informal Settlements
- Retail and Offices
- Industry
- CCT Departments
- Other

Consumers of Cape Town's potable water supply – Graphic supplied by the City of Cape Town