

**Attention: Mario Sassman**

Manager: Committee Support

Western Cape Government

7 Wale Street, Cape Town

Tel: 021 487 1681

Email: [msassman@wcpp.gov.za](mailto:msassman@wcpp.gov.za)**From: The Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute (SAFCEI)**

Green Building, 9b Bell Crescent, Westlake, 7945

Tel: 021 276 2034

Email: [info@safcei.org.za](mailto:info@safcei.org.za)

Date: 11 October 2018

**RE: Submission into the Western Cape Government's proposed amendments to the Provincial Constitution (2018)****SAFCEI's Objections relate to:****1. The Proposed Removal of the Environmental Commissioner position:**

SAFCEI – the multi-faith NGO that played a pivotal role (along with Earthlife Africa Johannesburg) in stopping the unconstitutional nuclear deal – objects to the Western Cape Government's (WCG) proposal to remove the position of Environmental Commissioner.

As an organization that is focused on eco-, energy, and social justice, SAFCEI urges the WCG to urgently fill this role, in order to address a number of issues that are currently experienced in the Western Cape – which we believe to be a direct result of the lack of an Environmental Commissioner (a role created 20 years ago, but never filled.)

The Environmental Commissioner post was provided for in the Provincial Constitution in 1998, an independent ombud position that was hailed by environmentalists as a type of "green knight". The WCG was previously called to task for failing to appoint an Environmental Commissioner; it was argued that the Environmental Commissioner could have helped prevent Cape Town's water crisis and other issues at hand.

**What environmental issues did Cape Town have to face during the past years?**

- Reports have confirmed the City of Cape Town's borehole drilling programme is posing an environmental threat to the protected Kogelberg biosphere, raising concerns that provisions of the National Environmental Management Act, have been ignored<sup>1</sup>. Dr Jasper Slingsby of the South African Environmental Observation Network (SAEON) also claims the City has disregarded provisions of the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA), "threatening one of the most sensitive, biodiverse 'hotspots' in the world and the extinction of endangered species of plant and animal life".

---

1

<https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/kogelberg-under-threat-from-city-of-cape-town-drilling-programme-20180930>

- Eskom proposed to construct a nuclear power station with a power generation capacity of up to 4,000 MW in Bantamsklip and Duynefontein both in the Western Cape. Disadvantages being a water pollutant, expensive to build, waste disposal issues, etc
- According to Ground Up reports, The Western Cape generated approximately three million tonnes of waste in 2017 according to the government. The City of Cape Town alone produced almost 7 000 tonnes of waste per day last year<sup>2</sup>. The Western Cape has a serious waste problem and is running out of landfill space. The Western Cape estimates that the province recycled 1.8-million tonnes of waste material “via municipal and private recycling activities and alternative waste treatment and beneficiation of waste material” in 2017.
- Aquifers destroyed for a short time gain due to the water crisis (groundwater used as an alternative to combat the crisis).
- Karoo farmers lose millions due to drought- Oudtshoorn farmers, who had their own Day Zero almost a year ago when their irrigation dams dried up, have suffered losses of hundreds of millions of rands in lost production<sup>3</sup>.
- Nearly 60 percent of Cape Town's natural vegetation has been lost to development<sup>4</sup> - such as Phillipi Horticultural area
- Pollution of both freshwater and coastal ecosystems - the rapid expansion of the urban environment not being matched by an expansion of appropriate infrastructure, and a lack of access to critical sanitation services because of widespread poverty<sup>5</sup>.
- City of Cape Town acknowledging the fact that climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our generation and seeks to use it as an opportunity to build a better future for all.
- Access of climate financing

### Conclusion:

It is our duty to the citizens of the Western Cape, to speak out against these proposed amendments. Public participation in government decision-making processes is an important part of our democracy. However, in recent times this important element has too often been circumvented by government. As a result, public perception is that government does not want checks and balances in place that could have addressed concerns, and possibly prevented poor decision-making.

We make our submission, with the hope of ensuring a fair process in these matters. Should there be an opportunity for us to present our issues, we request to be a part of this process.

Thank you.

Compiled by Natasha Adonis (on behalf of SAFCEI)

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://mg.co.za/article/2018-05-17-western-cape-tackles-its-mounting-landfill-crisis>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/karoo-farmers-lose-millions-due-to-drought-20180926>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.iolproperty.co.za/roller/news/entry/significant\\_environmental\\_challenges\\_hinder\\_cape](http://www.iolproperty.co.za/roller/news/entry/significant_environmental_challenges_hinder_cape)

<sup>5</sup> Significant' environmental challenges hinder Cape Town