Women’s safety is compromised when broken services are not fixed

Inadequate access to water and sanitation profoundly affects the health, dignity and safety of residents. This encompasses the absence of taps and toilets and also cases where existing infrastructure is in disrepair or non-functional.

Residents, especially women, suffer adverse consequences when infrastructure remains unrepaired:

- 1 in 4 women said that when their usual communal toilet is out of order, the alternative facilities are far and unsafe to reach.
- 1 in 5 women said that when their usual communal tap breaks, other taps are far and unsafe to reach.

Describing the risk, an Uitsig resident said, “If the tap gets damaged you have to go to Section 2 for water and it’s far and dangerous because you have to walk through the bush to get there.” Worried about their safety, some women resort to using unhygienic alternatives, like buckets, when their usual toilet is broken or damaged.

Knysna municipality’s slow response to broken taps and toilets is concerning. 58% of residents report that the municipality takes up to seven days to repair broken services, while 10% say it can take between one and three months. These delays lead to overuse and damage to functional facilities.

To address these challenges, the Knysna municipality should:

- prioritise funding for the repair and maintenance of services;
- engage residents to identify solutions; and
- commit to responding to fault reports within 24 hours.