

Press Release

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South African Institute of Race Relations
The power of ideas

Media Contact: John Kane-Berman Tel: 011-482-7221 Extension 2019 Email: jkb@sairr.org.za

Time to wake up to affirmative action dangers

Official data on wastewater management at municipal level show that very large numbers of people are potentially at risk, says the IRR (Institute of Race Relations).

Citing government data, the IRR says that although the proportion of households with access to sanitation has been rising steadily, more than four million households have to make do with "substandard toilet facilities". A great many municipalities, particularly in rural areas, are also not emptying latrines.

The IRR quoted the former minister of water affairs, Edna Molewa, as having said that "there have been terrible weaknesses, especially at the municipal level, in terms of maintenance". One of the reasons for this, says the IRR in its latest *@Liberty* policy bulletin, is the appointment of unqualified people, along with failure to fill key posts when the only available candidates are white.

"This does not mean that all those appointed on grounds of race or political allegiance are unqualified. But a great many are. Given the skills deficit caused by Bantu education, it could hardly be otherwise."

The IRR says that it is now widely recognised that government in South Africa is plagued by corruption, nepotism, incompetence, and lack of accountability. A few people are also beginning to identify cadre deployment as a problem in the system of appointments to government jobs. But the country also needs to wake up to another component of the toxic mix in the government's appointments policy – affirmative action.

The government has said that "race will remain an issue until all echelons of our society are demographically representative." However, says the IRR, "given the country's human needs and its skills profile, this can only have dire consequences."

Ends
