

PUBLIC STATEMENT – 25 March 2026

George’s Water Crisis Is Being Ignored — And Residents Deserve Answers Now

George is facing a water crisis that is no longer distant or manageable through routine restrictions. It is a crisis that threatens households, businesses, livelihoods, and the long-term sustainability of our town. Yet the leaders entrusted with safeguarding our water security have, to date, responded with silence, deflection, and administrative non-engagement instead of transparency and accountability.

Since December 2025, Dr Dennis Farrell, on behalf of **Garden Route First**, has submitted detailed, evidence-based questions to the George Municipality and subsequently escalated these matters to Minister Anton Bredell. These questions were grounded in the Municipality’s own reports, statutory plans, Treasury circulars, and audit findings. They were not political, speculative, or accusatory. They were **governance questions**, raised lawfully and in the public interest.

What Was Asked — And What the Public Still Has Not Been Told

The submissions requested clarity on issues that directly affect every resident of George:

- Why **Non-Revenue Water remains at ±30%**, with no transparent reduction plan
- Why **National Treasury maintenance ratios** (MFMA Circular 71) are not being disclosed
- Why **smart-meter performance data** has never been published
- Why the **Water Management Task Team** operates without transparency
- Why **alien vegetation on state-owned land** remains unmanaged, reducing water yield
- Why **groundwater monitoring** required by the Water Services Development Plan is not being reported
- Why **development approvals continue** despite severe water stress
- Why **alternative water supply solutions** — desalination, groundwater expansion, water reuse — have not progressed
- Why **environmental concerns**, including those relating to the Gwaing River, remain unaddressed

These are not minor administrative queries.

They are **structural risks** that determine whether George has water in the coming years.

The Municipality’s Response: Deflect, Minimise, Avoid

Instead of answering these questions, the Municipality:

- Incorrectly labelled the submission as containing “allegations”
- Declined to identify a single statement it considers an allegation
- Provided no reasons, contrary to PAJA
- Repeatedly instructed that PAIA requests be submitted — avoiding public accountability



Putting People First – Through transparent, inclusive, independent governance

- Ultimately reduced its engagement to a single-sentence acknowledgement

This is not transparency.

This is not accountability.

It is a **pattern of administrative non-engagement** in the middle of a water crisis.

Silence from Minister Anton Bredell

Minister Bredell's office acknowledged Dr Farrell's correspondence on two occasions and indicated that a response would follow.

To date, **no response has been provided** following the third correspondence on 4 March 2026.

When a town is facing water scarcity, silence from provincial leadership is not only disappointing — it is unacceptable.

The George Herald Confirms What Residents Already Feel

The recent *George Herald* analysis makes the situation clear:

- The Garden Route Dam can supply only **two-thirds of billed water use**
- George's population has surged to **nearly 295,000 residents**
- The town is approaching **"water bankruptcy"**
- Any new dam would take **8–10 years** to deliver water

These findings echo concerns raised months ago — concerns that remain unaddressed.

A Call for Leadership — Not Excuses

Residents are doing their part.

Businesses are doing their part.

Households are cutting consumption, adapting, and absorbing punitive tariffs.

Leadership cannot demand sacrifice from the public while refusing to answer basic questions about:

- Water losses
- Infrastructure failures
- Maintenance investment
- Environmental risks
- Long-term supply planning

Water security is not achieved through silence.

It is achieved through **honesty, data, planning, and accountability**.

George Needs a Government That Treats Water as a Shared Responsibility

Garden Route First calls on:

- **The George Municipality**, and
- **Minister Anton Bredell**



Putting People First – Through transparent, inclusive, independent governance

to provide substantive, evidence-based responses to the questions formally submitted.

This is not a political fight.

This is a fight for **water security, public trust, and the future of George.**

Residents deserve answers.

Residents deserve transparency.

Residents deserve leadership that does not hide behind administrative tactics while our water future hangs in the balance.

Issued by:

Garden Route First – Interim Executive Committee

Web: grfirst.org.za

Email: admin@grfirst.org.za

Tel: 082 453 5840