

Ministry of Public Utilities

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE OF LAND AND PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

3rd Report of the JSCLPI on an Inquiry into the Management of
the WASA with Specific to the 2020 Cabinet Sub-Committee
Report on WASA and Related Recommendations

APRIL 2023 |

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A. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1) THE CURRENT STATE OF WASA'S ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATIONS

1. That the restructuring/transformation plan for WASA be forwarded to the Committee for its consideration before its implementation.

RESPONSE:

WASA is in the process of developing a transformation plan after which WASA must engage in the required consultation with all stakeholders including trade unions, on relevant matters, before implementation. There is no final restructuring/transformation plan for WASA at present which can be forwarded to the Committee for its consideration before its implementation.

2. The implementation of the IWRM policy six (6) months from the laying of this report.

RESPONSE:

The IWRM policy was approved in 2022 November, five (5) months ago. Implementation commenced with the following ongoing initiatives: preparatory works for separation of the Water Resources Agency from WASA, preparation works for the drafting of water resources management legislation and continuation of activities to expand and upgrade the country's hydrological network.

3. The provision of funding for WASA's Implementation Plan.

RESPONSE:

Please see **Appendix 1**

4. That the RIC submit WASA's Business Plan for the Committee's consideration when the Plan is received.

RESPONSE:

While this is entirely within the remit of the RIC, having regard to the sensitive nature of the material contained in the Business Plan, WASA does not recommend that a step such as this time be taken until the RIC is ready for public consultation. WASA has not yet begun its consultation with the RIC on its Business Plan and may be required to make further

adjustments on same when such consultation commences. Therefore, to place the plan before the Committee at this time will be counterproductive.

5. The re-establishment of negotiation meetings with Union representatives with an aim to conclude same for the establishment of new collective bargaining agreements.

RESPONSE:

The Collective Agreements were redrafted for each Bargaining Unit which are represented by the Public Services Association (PSA), the National Union of Government and Federated Workers (NUGFW) and the Estate Police Association (EPA) respectively. It is anticipated that negotiations will commence within the upcoming year. In addition, the Ministry of Public Utilities wrote to the Chief Personnel Officer on behalf of the Management of the Water and Sewerage Authority on 2021 July, 26th on Management's recommendation for negotiations. (See Appendix 2).

6. Monthly negotiation meetings with the relevant stakeholders to allow for all issues to be adequately discussed and the formulating of amicable solutions.

RESPONSE:

The three (3) Collective Agreements i.e. between Management and the Public Services Association, the National Union of Government and Federated Workers and the Estate Police Association have been redrafted and negotiations will commence within the upcoming year.

7. MPU, WASA and Cabinet Committee Appointed Members for both the preparation of the Cabinet Sub-Committee's Report and Restructuring Transformation Plan meet with Union representatives to fully ventilate and discuss plans for the Authority.

RESPONSE:

WASA is in the process of developing a transformation plan after which WASA must engage in the required consultation with all stakeholders, including trade unions, on relevant matters, before implementation. There is no final restructuring/transformation plan for WASA at present which can be forwarded to the Committee for its consideration before its implementation.

As WASA must consult with Union Representatives (as required by the Industrial Relations Act) on those matters in the transformation plan which concern the unions, before implementation, any meeting at this time by the Committee with Union representatives to discuss plans for WASA, before WASA finalizes its transformation plan and holds its consultation with the Unions, could have serious legal implications for WASA in implementing the transformation plan.

8. That the MPU launch an investigation into the claim made in the Cabinet Subcommittee's Report of Union representatives being suppliers of goods and services to WASA prior to serving in the Secretariat to the Sub-Committee.

RESPONSE:

The Committee's recommendation is noted.

9. That WASA evaluate its requirements for in-house and contracted out works. This information should be used to inform the manpower needs of the Authority which as indicated by the Authority is being revised. (Transformation Team).

RESPONSE:

An assessment of the current workforce against the future workforce requirements will be conducted during the transformation initiative and the future manpower requirements for the Authority will be determined as part of the transformation initiative.

10. That WASA engage in a cost benefit analysis to assist in determining its requirements for in-house and contracted out works, to ensure that its customers and its interests are best served.

RESPONSE:

This is part of the Authority's current Transformation exercise.

The Authority has conducted prior cost benefit analyses pertaining to the utilization of internal and external resources with focus on pipeline maintenance and new services. The results of these findings highlight that a hybridized approach will best suit the Authority in providing the best possible service to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. However, the Authority will engage in a revised cost benefit analysis to determine if there have been any additional variables to be considered.

11. The submission of the revised manpower needs analysis for the Authority to the Committee six (6) months subsequent to the laying of this report.

RESPONSE:

A report on the assessment of the manpower needs will be submitted as part of the transformation exercise.

12. An efficiency indicator of ten (10) employees per one thousand (1000) connections via natural attrition up to the year 2024. Thereafter, a review of WASA's staffing needs should be articulated and action be taken to meet the regional benchmark of eight (8) employees to one thousand (1,000) connections. This should be subject to the revised manpower needs analysis being done by WASA.

RESPONSE:

An assessment to identify the optimum manpower requirements for the Authority using the benchmark of eight (8) employees per one thousand (1000) connections will be conducted during the current transformation exercise. Thereafter, the relevant strategies will be implemented to realize the Authority's optimum staffing requirement consistent with the regional benchmark.

13. The continuation on the freeze on hiring with exceptions until WASA's recruitment structure improves and meets regional standards.

RESPONSE:

The Water and Sewerage Authority has continued the freeze on hiring except for mission critical positions and if the expertise does not reside within the Authority.

14. Any separations by the Authority should be supported with the provision of adequate technology to ensure the delivery of WASA's services is not affected.

RESPONSE:

This is part of the Authority's current Transformation exercise.

15. The rewording of the Collective Agreement and nullifying of the Memoranda of Agreements, to allow RMUs to hold a consultative position.

RESPONSE:

The new Collective Agreements have been redrafted which will detail the terms and conditions of staff, thereby nullifying all Memoranda of Agreements.

16. The implementation of alternative work arrangements and a concomitant reduction in overtime work at the Authority where practicable.

RESPONSE:

The draft Collective Agreements include proposals for varying work arrangements.

17. The implementation of additional cost reduction initiatives as outlined in Appendix XVI.

RESPONSE:

Due to the ongoing Transformation exercise, this is expected to result in a reduction in Operating cost primarily in the areas of Emoluments and associated costs (Allowances, Overtime, NIS contribution, Travelling and subsistence); Vehicle Rentals, Telephones and Communication expenses.

In FY 2022, the Authority commenced a review of its annual Security expense which resulted in a decision to implement an Intelligence Virtual Guard System (IVG) (camera monitoring system) as a cost reduction initiative. The system will operate similar to the Bmobile Vigilance System where cameras will be installed at various locations and will be supported by Rapid Response Units once an intrusion is detected. Once this system is operationalized, it is expected to result in a reduction in manned security at identified facilities / plant.

For FY 2023, the procurement of the IVG System is on-going and is expected to be implemented in FY 2024.

18. That in the review of its rates, the RIC consider the effect an increase in T&TEC's rates will have on WASA's revenues.

RESPONSE:

The RIC cannot set a specific rate for WASA as the RIC Act mandates that it treats customers that are similarly placed in a non-discriminatory manner. A fundamental principle accepted by regulators is that when pricing electricity it is important to relate the tariff applicable to a particular customer class to the utility's cost of supplying electricity to that class. In fact, one of the most important concepts in rate design is cost causality.

The RIC does consider the impact of its pricing decisions on customers, via a broad assessment of the impact on typical bills of commercial and industrial customers, but not any specific customer. The RIC also considers the impact of its proposed bills by assessing average electricity cost as a percentage of overall expenditure for commercial and industrial and projecting what this proportion would be at the new rates, but not for a specific customer.

19. That WASA meet with the MPU and MOF to review WASA's \$10B debt.

RESPONSE:

WASA's Loan Portfolio balance is submitted to the MPU on a monthly basis. For facilities that are due to expire within the short term, discussions are on-going with regard to the restructure of these said facilities between all parties. There is currently no proposal to address the repayment/ restructure of long-term facilities given WASA's current cash flow position.

20. The development of a policy to be instituted at the Authority to address its approximately \$10B debt portfolio.

RESPONSE:

Preliminary meetings to be held with MPU and MOF within the short term to determine and finalize the scope for the completion of the Debt Policy.

21. That WASA employ stricter action to recover debts from customers both residential and industrial especially those with more than three (3) outstanding bill cycles or owing in excess of one (1) year.

RESPONSE:

In addition to the issuance of 33,251 reminder and demand notices over the period 2021 to current to customers owing approximately \$ 96.8Mn., the Authority revised its Debt Recovery Policy in November 2021 to include implementation of stronger enforcement strategies to

improve the recovery of debts owed by both Residential and Non-Residential (Includes Industrial, commercial etc.) customers. These enforcement actions will continue being implemented as part of the Authority's thrust to improve debt recovery:

a) Publication/Advertisement of Accounts in arrears to Contact the Authority on matters of mutual interest.

In February 2022, the Authority's Board of Commissioners approved the commencement of publication of accounts in arrears in the daily newspapers requesting that customers contact the Authority they are unresponsive to the Authority's efforts to have them settle their outstanding balances. A total of (426) customer accounts with a receivables balance of \$9,907,978.42 were published in the three (3) daily newspapers. As at March 31, 2023 a total of Two Million, two hundred and forty-three thousand, one hundred and thirty-five dollars and thirty-four cents (\$2,243,135.34) was collected.

b) Final Notice Letters signed by the CEO

The initiative to issue a final notice to customers from the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to settle outstanding amounts before stronger action is taken commenced in April 2022. To date, Two Hundred and Eleven (211) letters have been hand-delivered to customers before stronger enforcement action is pursued.

c) Final Disconnection Notices

Following the issuance of the Final Notices signed by the CEO, Final Disconnection Notices are served. To date, thirty-two (32) such Notices have been issued to customers.

d) Disconnection of Properties facilitated by Meter Installation

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic a moratorium was granted in June 2021 to suspend disconnections. However, due to the progressive relaxing of restrictions from April 2022, the resumption of disconnections was approved in November 2022 as a critical debt recovery strategy for improving the Authority's cash flow position.

Therefore, in November 2022 the Board of Commissioners approved the resumption of disconnections to delinquent customers following issuance of a Final Notice from the CEO. To date, twenty-one (21) of thirty-five (35) accounts/properties approved for disconnection have been disconnected and payments totaling \$161,396.00 received as at April 20, 2023. This strategy will be escalated in the upcoming months and is supported through the effective use of flexible payment agreements for customers depending on their ability to pay. **(See Appendix 3)**

Further, in order to facilitate a less disruptive, more cost-effective means of conducting disconnections which can be performed as and when required, disconnections of unmetered connections are facilitated through the installation of meters.

e) Debt Collection Agency Engagement

In November 2021, the Authority's Board of Commissioners approved the engagement of a debt collection agency Credit Chex Limited to collect long outstanding debts on behalf of the Authority. As at March 31, 2023, a total of four thousand (4,000) accounts were submitted to Credit Chex Limited with a total receivables balance of \$41,428,577.45. The records submitted comprised accounts in arrears greater than two (2) years. Thus far payments totaling \$1,588,921.18 have been collected as a direct result of this debt recovery intervention strategy. **(See Appendix 3).**

f) Legal Action/Sale of Property

Post-Covid-19 restrictions, this strategy has not re-commenced hence, earlier data presented remains the same. It is anticipated that this strategy will continue in the 3rd quarter of 2023.

22. All efforts be made by the MPU and WASA to recover the debt owed to WASA by PETROTRIN via the Guaracara Refinery Limited.

RESPONSE:

The Authority has been in long outstanding discussions with Petrotrin. Discussions to be had with the MPU.

23. The utilization of unspent balances on the NWSIP on new/existing priority projects to improve the water supply to underserved communities.

RESPONSE:

Fifteen (15) projects have been completed under the NWSIP utilizing unspent balances of the PSIP. This totaled approximately \$13,000,000.00. This represented the first phase of projects under WASA's Transformation Programme. This directly benefitted approximately 25,000 persons from underserved communities e.g., Penal, Las lomas, Arouca, Mt. Pleasant, French Fort and Concordia in Tobago.

24. That WASA provide the Committee with an updated Status Report of the unspent balances six (6) months subsequent to the laying of this Report.

RESPONSE:

Please find response in **Appendix 4.**

25. That WASA establish an annual priority list of road reinstatement works.

RESPONSE:

The Authority would only engage in road reinstatement works either from

- i. The reinstatement of a minor portion of roadway as a result from a completed leak or
- ii. The reinstatement of a trench upon completion of a pipeline installation/ replacement project

In these cases, the Authority is guided to have these restorations completed within the service standard of seven working days.

However, the Authority is aware of the large outstanding list of pending restorations. To address same, the Authority has engaged additional road restoration contractors to treat with this large volume of works. The Authority aims to have this outstanding restoration listing reduced by a minimum of 70% by the end of the year.

26. The publicizing of the annual priority list of road reinstatement works as recommended at Recommendation 25, on the websites of the MPU and WASA as well as on Social Media sites which can serve as a public advisory of anticipated works in a financial year.

RESPONSE:

The Authority will arrange the works planned and provide tentative schedule periods for when patching works are conducted for restorations to areas disturbed for leak repairs.

27. That WASA develop clear specifications for road repairs and provide an adequate level of supervision of restoration works to ensure that roads are restored in keeping with the specifications.

RESPONSE:

The Authority has recently developed and implemented a Road Restoration policy that dictates the methods and procedures to follow for the execution of road restoration.

28. That WASA engage in an assessment of its non-functional facilities to assist with its decision on whether they should be sold or reactivated. Based on the outcome of this assessment the appropriate action should follow.

RESPONSE:

Agreed.

29. The Committee be provided with a status report on the action to be taken with regard to the selling-off of quarters in the comprehensive review of the operations and reorganization of WASA which should ideally be completed one (1) year subsequent to the laying of this Report.

RESPONSE:

Noted.

30. That WASA include in its estimates, funding for the renovations of at least a portion of its unoccupied quarters and submit same to the MPU for funding consideration.

RESPONSE:

Noted.

31. That WASA continue to implement the actions identified at paragraph 1.253 to reduce the cost for the leasing of vehicles whilst ensuring that reduction activities do not strain Divisions within the Authority to the point that they are unable to provide an effective service.

RESPONSE:

Noted. This is currently being done.

32. That WASA seek to settle payments to contractors in a timely manner to avoid litigation matters being filed against the Authority that is resulting in additional costs to the Authority.

RESPONSE:

WASA established a Claims Review Committee, which is a sub-committee of the Board and has existing processes in place to address contractual claims (litigation and non-litigation)

notified to it and verified/validated as payable. Over the period January 2022 to February 2023, WASA settled and closed thirty-two (32) contractual claims (litigation and non-litigation), comprising eight (8) non-litigation matters and twenty-four (24) litigation matters, at reduced financial exposure. With respect to these thirty-two (32) contractual claims (litigation and non-litigation):

- i. Overall Sum Claimed/ Exposure - \$298,797,966.81
- ii. Overall Sum Paid - \$249,545,982.79
- iii. Costs Savings to WASA (based on verification and negotiated settlement) - \$49,251,984.02.

33. That funding be directed at the implementation of the Universal Metering Programme which will assist in providing some required information for WASA's Cadastral Survey.

RESPONSE:

Noted.

34. That WASA incentivize its public call to report illegal connections.

RESPONSE:

The Authority is unable to incentivize the public to report illegal connections as funding is not available in Financial Year 2023 to do so. Therefore, consideration will be given to the introduction of this initiative based on priorities for the upcoming financial period. WASA has offered an amnesty to members of the public in order to regularize their status. Further, WASA has begun an exercise in order to verify all its customers and their status. Once the amnesty comes to an end, WASA will begin updating its customer database and illegal connections will be addressed. This forms part of WASA's Non-Revenue Water reduction strategy.

35. That WASA give assurance to the public that reports will remain confidential in its public call to report illegal connections.

RESPONSE:

See response in 34 above.

36. That WASA utilize the RIC's official position on the reporting and monitoring on customer issues to assist in informing the development of its standard operating procedure for complaints resolution.

RESPONSE:

The RIC does not currently have an official position on reporting and monitoring of customer issues for WASA. Upon finalization of same and receipt by WASA, WASA will examine the position and determine the applicability and resulting appropriateness of using same to inform the development of its standard operating procedure for complaints resolution.

37. The implementation of the recommendations for addressing the challenges facing the New Services Department.

RESPONSE:

In April 2022 the Authority formed a Task Force Team in the New Services Department (NSD) which successfully implemented the following to improve service delivery to customers seeking approval for Building Development and Plumbing infrastructure applications:

- i. Processing the backlog of aged applications for building development and plumbing infrastructure approvals. To date 5,728 files have been verified with 994 active files remaining.
- ii. To develop and implement policies to guide the approval system, and provide a framework for re-engineering the New Services processes to simplify and expedite processing – 16 policies were developed and approved and are currently being implemented by the NSD. The policies are as follows: Customer Care, Appointments, Design Review, Inspection, Fee System, Appeals, Capital Contributions, File Closure, Standard Estimate, Whistleblower, Information Management, Onsite Wastewater, Wastewater Facility, Pressure Logging, Feasibility and Wastewater Connection.

These policies have increased efficiency in processing applications due to the following:

1. Revised work flow process resulting in the reduction in design review time from 11- 14 days to within 5 – 7 days

2. Training of technical staff in all areas (e.g. meter inspections, percolation tests, etc.)
 3. Developed and made available standardized detailed drawings for purchase by developers/LSCs which ensures submissions adhere to the required standards, while improving the efficiency and timeliness in granting approvals which supports Government's mandate to improve the "ease of doing business" creating an enabling environment for businesses to promote the expansion of the economy.
 4. Implement multiple inspections per day and/or per site by an officer and also implementing a calendar system resulting in the reduction in inspection time from 14- 21 days to within 7 days
- iii. Developed and implemented an independent online application system for building development and plumbing infrastructure Approvals. The online application system was launched on November 16, 2022.
 - iv. The updating of the National Plumbing Code – In progress (See action item 38 below for the status update)

38. [The revision of WASA's National Plumbing Code.](#)

RESPONSE:

A Specification Committee for the Trinidad and Tobago Plumbing Code was established by the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards with key stakeholder inclusive of the Water and Sewerage Authority to review the 2021 International Plumbing Code and implement a revised National Plumbing Code for Trinidad and Tobago. Biweekly meeting sessions are being held and to date the Committee has reviewed approximately forty seven percent (47%) of the document. The review is projected to be completed by December 2023.

39. [An improvement in the average time taken to process applications for approval for Building and Development and Plumbing Inspectorate/Single Property.](#)

RESPONSE:

The overall time taken to process a file to completion was found to be one hundred and ninety-two (192) days compared to two hundred and twenty-seven (227) days. Within this process the

time taken for the issuance of design approvals showed an increase from one hundred and twenty-two (122) days in 2020 to one hundred and thirty-six (136) days in 2022 because of the time taken to conduct the water feasibilities in the regions. Notwithstanding this increase, the overall time taken to issue the completion certificate has been reduced to 192 Days. The Authority is reviewing its Operations Process flows to find further ways to improve the processing time for Feasibility studies.

40. That WASA, RIC and MPU keep proper records of events reported where applicable which is necessary for tracking the progress of the Authority.

RESPONSE:

Noted.

41. That WASA establish a target to increase the percentage of the population who receive a 24/7 supply to at least 25% of the population by 2030 and implement projects directed at same given the anticipated growth in the population and its demand for water.

RESPONSE:

A mandate of the MPU and the Authority has been to improve the levels of service to the severely underserved (i.e. those receiving less than 24/3). Through programmes such as the CWIP, Regional programmes and through loan agreements with the IDB several projects have been targeted for execution to address the communities that receive less than 24/3 with the sole purpose to increase the quality of supply to a minimum of 24/3.

Upon completion of the population receiving a minimum 24/3, the Authority will realign its focus to increasing the percentage of the population receiving a 24/7 supply. With this in mind it is quite possible to achieve this target by 2030. Based on work done over the last two (2) years, over 46% of the population is in receipt of 24/7 water supply. Below is

LEVEL OF SERVICE	Population	Percentage
24/7	558677	46.38%
24/6	4643	0.39%

24/5	106553	8.85%
24/4	50926	4.23%
24/3	85593	7.11%
24/2	185839	15.42%
24/1	212275	17.62%

42. In addition to targeting young school children that WASA also engage in a public education programme directed at customers who do not receive a 24/7 supply.

RESPONSE:

Apart from school children, the Authority’s public education programme has also been directed to all segments of customers regardless of their level of service. Most recently, this has been done through the Authority’s water conservation campaign themed “Value Every Drop”, which began February 2022 and continues into 2023.

The campaign published and broadcast tips promoting water conservation, via different channels such as radio and television ads, as well as the Authority’s social media platforms and those of stakeholders including Ministry of Public Utilities, Business Chambers and Farmers Associations, among others. Several Town Hall meetings were also held with various communities receiving less than a 24/7 supply to share conservation tips, provide details of project works in the community to improve their level of service and to elicit feedback from these customers.

Apart from this, the Authority participates in different public exhibitions and other activities, where the conservation message is promoted to persons who receive varying service levels. Between May 2022 (post COVID-19 restrictions) and March 2023, the Authority participated in seven such exhibitions; four non-school outreach sessions, involving 127 participants; and 13 facility tours, engaging 320 persons. It should be noted that all of these activities are used to promote water conservation messaging.

43. Refer to Recommendation 56.

44. That WASA update its Disaster Plan to include its supplemental Operating Procedures for hurricanes and the COVID-19 pandemic including the learnings, experiences and measures that had to be implemented e.g., work from home arrangements, expanding the list of critical supplies to include hand soap, water, the use of N95 masks, hand sanitizer, temperature checks/thermometers and office shields/sneeze guards. This will also be an opportunity to include the following:
- a. Alternate Emergency Operating Centre Location and Layout; and
 - b. Tobago Emergency Operating Centre Location and Layout.

RESPONSE:

The Hurricane and COVID-19 plans do exist as stand-alone documents but will be incorporated as annexes to the Disaster Plan.

The floor plans for the Alternate EOC and Tobago EOC will also be included but there are presently some modifications being made to those rooms and a revised layout will be included on completion of such alterations.

45. The implementation of the national assessment of household storage to be spearheaded by the CSO in collaboration with WASA.

RESPONSE:

Noted.

46. The completion of the WRA's Hydrological Network Project by 2023.

RESPONSE:

WRA's Hydrological Network is being expanded and upgraded, to meet the ever-increasing demand for hydrological data and information, identification of new production sources, allocation of the resource, pollution monitoring, resource assessments and environmental impact assessments and climate change monitoring. The entire project is expected to be completed over a five-year period. The following table summarizes the status of the project to date.

TYPE OF STATION	CURRENT LEVEL AT APRIL 2023 (functional)	TARGET LEVEL	PROJECTED COMPLETION DATE
Rainfall	116	225	2025
Streamflow	12 (additional 14 will be completed in 2023)	45	2025
Groundwater Observation Wells	276	316	2027
Crest (Flood) Gauges	57	75	2025
Climatic Stations	3 (1 fully functional) (2 additional will be completed in 2023)	13	2027
Water quality sites	104	300 <i>(100 rivers)</i>	2025
TOBAGO			
Rainfall	11	30	2025
Streamflow	0 (2 will be completed in 2023)	15	2025
Groundwater Observation Wells	36	50	2027
Crest (Flood) Gauges	0	25	2024
Climatic Stations	1 (partially functional)	2	2024
Water quality sites	25	90 <i>(30 rivers)</i>	2024

47. That WASA review and reconsider its contract with Seven Seas.

RESPONSE:

Noted.

48. That in future, contracts be negotiated in Trinidad and Tobago Dollars and avoid payments having to be made in United States Dollars.

RESPONSE:

Noted and agreed.

49. That the MPU undertake a review of the Water Improvement Rates as it relates to commercial customers receiving a supply from DESALCOTT.

RESPONSE:

The Committee's recommendation is noted.

50. That a detailed feasibility study be undertaken for the possible purchase of DESALCOTT by the relevant authorities.

RESPONSE:

Agreed. Policy decision to be taken.

51. That WASA seek to make timely payments to DESALCOTT and ensure that its payments are up-to-date to prevent any interruptions in supply from DESALCOTT.

RESPONSE:

At present (April 2023), all payments to Desalcott are up to date and there are no outstanding invoices. The next invoice will become due on 14th May 2023.

52. The implementation of District Metered Areas (DMAs).

RESPONSE:

The Authority has 97 District metered Areas implemented throughout Trinidad and Tobago. There may be some instances of defective bulk meters. The Authority intends to procure replacement meters as well as additional meters to implement additional District Metered Areas throughout the country.

53. That WASA embark on the review of its Standpipes with an aim of removing all Standpipes that are no longer needed to prevent any further unnecessary water loss.

RESPONSE:

The Authority has conducted the removal of several standpipes in areas that receive a level of service greater than 24/5. It is a policy that once a particular area has achieved the minimum level of service of 24/5, the standpipe is removed from the distribution network.

54. Refer to recommendation 51.

55. That WASA revert to in-person school outreach lectures and maintain the use of its social media platforms to promote water conservation practices.

RESPONSE:

Following the full resumption of in-person learning by the Ministry of Education, the Authority recommenced its schools' outreach programme into schools in May 2022. From then to 31 March 2023, the Authority has held 184 sessions at 67 schools, engaging over 6300 students. The Authority also continues to use its social media platforms as a main channel for promoting proper water conservation habits to customers and members of the public through its water conservation campaign themed "Value Every Drop".

56. That the MPU submit a progress report on the construction of 100 Rainwater Harvesters in communities across the country to the Committee, six (6) months subsequent to the laying of this report.

RESPONSE:

A report on the Rainwater Harvesting initiative will be prepared and submitted in June 2023.

57. That the MPU continue to engage in partnerships as it pertains to watersheds management activities.

RESPONSE:

The MPU through the Water Resource Agency have been partnering with stakeholders to carry out watershed management activities such as river cleaning exercises, river water quality monitoring, river bank stabilisation and re-vegetation activities.

58. That the MPU and WASA meet with MoPD, TCPD to develop and implement strategies for addressing poor land-use practices that affect watersheds in Trinidad. In this regard, there may be need to use enforcement measures to treat with illegal developments particularly those that are a threat to watersheds.

RESPONSE:

Noted. The National Integrated Water Resources Management Policy was approved in November 2022 by Cabinet and will serve as the guiding document for the management of the country's water resources. Cabinet also approved the establishment of the Office of Water Resources Management (OWRM) as a division under the MPU. The OWRM will have lead responsibility for managing the country's water resources, which includes but is not limited to

watershed management, but will depend on close coordination and collaboration among relevant government entities. The process of establishing the OWRM is currently underway. As outlined in the approved Policy, the OWRM will have Lead responsibility for preparation of watershed management plans, classification of catchments and public education with respect to watershed management. The OWRM will also work collaboratively with WASA, Forestry Division, TCPD, the THA and the Regional/Municipal Corporations to name a few as it relates to watershed management.

59. The Gazette of the draft QSS Order in the year 2022.

RESPONSE:

WASA and the RIC will work towards ensuring that the QSS is settled and published in the current calendar year - 2023.

60. That the five standards that WASA is unable to meet should remain as part of the set Standards for WASA.

RESPONSE:

WASA and the RIC are currently reviewing the Quality-of-Service Standards (QSS), as documented in the “November 2020, *Quality of Service Standards (QSS) for Water and Wastewater Services, Further Consultation with the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) (Revised Final Decision)*”, based on WASA's monitoring of its compliance with these standards. The outcome of this review, which may result in an amendment of these five standards, will be communicated to the Committee and associated actions taken accordingly.

61. In its next review of WASA’s standards, that a standard be developed for notification with respect to unplanned supply interruptions.

RESPONSE:

This will be difficult for WASA at this time as WASA does not currently have the technology to allow WASA to always be aware of a break in the line or a leak or other reason for resulting unplanned interruption or the unplanned interruption itself. In the circumstances, to put a time limit from the time of the interruption for the notification of same may be impossible because

WASA is not aware of the interruption until the customer has informed WASA and this information has made it to the appropriate field officer.

62. That WASA engage in transparent accounting practices via the provision of the evidence required for auditing purposes.

RESPONSE:

In order to improve the level of accounting practices, qualified Chartered Accountants have been engaged to oversee the management of the Financial Services department and the preparation of the draft Financial Statements to be audited. In addition, two (2) financial consultancies have been undertaken to address key audit qualification matters.

63. That the MPU confirm the year of the latest Audited Financial Statements received from WASA in its Ministerial Response to this Report.

RESPONSE:

The last Audited Financial Statement is for the period ending September 30, 2020.

64. That the MPU monitor and provide the Committee with an annual update on whether WASA is meeting its reporting requirements as it concerns the provision of evidence required for its audits.

RESPONSE:

WASA periodically provides to MPU a status update of the External Audit Management Letter Action Plan for FYs 2017 and 2018 to address the concerns relating to the provision of audit evidence.

65. The completion of the remaining 39% of WASA's Action Plan which dates back to 2016. In this regard, we anticipate a status report on the completion of same six (6) months subsequent to the laying of this report.

RESPONSE:

The last Action Plan Status Update was submitted to MPU in March 2023 for FYs 2017 & 2018 External Audits. The Action Plan for the recently completed External Audits for FYs

2019 & 2020 is due to be submitted in April 2023. Therefore, the revised Action Plan is scheduled to be completed in May 2023.

2) THE CHALLENGES FACING THE AUTHORITY IN FULFILLING ITS STATUTORY ROLE AND FUNCTIONS, WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO THE 2020 CABINET SUB-COMMITTEE'S REPORT

66. Refer to recommendations 18, 20, 32, 51 and 65.

67. That WASA provide the Committee with a progress report on its backlog of 2,800 leaks in the Ministerial Response to this Report.

RESPONSE:

As at the 11th of April 2023 the Authority has a total of 1116 Outstanding leaks. Moreover, these leaks can be further categorized as current leaks (704) and backlog leaks (412). These leaks are further distributed as identified in the table below.

District	Current	Backlog	Total
North West	259	272	531
North East	147	90	237
Central	107	34	141
South West	105	6	111
South East	26	2	28
Tobago	60	8	68
Total	704	412	1116

68. That WASA review and increase the number of its pipeline projects in Trinidad and Tobago directed at addressing its aging pipeline infrastructure and that funding be accordingly provided for same.

RESPONSE:

Noted. This is part of the transformation process and pipelines have already been identified for replacement. This will be an ongoing project.

69. Priority be given to the provision of funding for:

- a. The settlement of outstanding payments to suppliers of chemicals;
- b. The infrastructure for adequate storage capacity at a suitable location;

- c. The purchase of chemical stock to ensure there is at least three (3) months' supply of chemicals at all Treatment Facilities.

RESPONSE:

- a. The settlement of outstanding payments to suppliers of chemicals;

This will be facilitated to the extent of fund availability confirmation from Finance in specific periods. In instances where the lack of adequate records for long outdated invoices impacts payments, Notes will be prepared to request authorization given the criticality of the supply to the Authority's operations. Notably, only a few chemical suppliers fall within this category.

- b. The infrastructure for adequate storage capacity at a suitable location;

In the first instance, the storage areas at Navet & North Oropouche have been targeted for renovation as they would require less capital expenditure and grant quicker usage access than an entirely new facility. A Note, inclusive of a project charter has already been prepared for CEO approval to invite bids to this end as the estimated value falls within his remit. Subsequently, the construction of storage infrastructure at Carlsen Field will be pursued, utilizing space on the Stores compound with the intent to hold at least 1800 bags of Granular Alum (most bulky chemical item).

- c. The purchase of chemical stock to ensure there is at least three (3) months' supply of chemicals at all Treatment Facilities.

To accommodate this storage level, the infrastructure at each Treatment Facility requires renovations and/or upgrading, where applicable. An inquiry will be sent out to the Operations Division for the 3-Month requirement for each chemical per location, in addition to the current holding capacity. This will be followed by immediate use of storage accommodation that is readily available.

- 70. That WASA submit a progress report on the success of its initiatives in addressing its challenges six (6) months from the laying of this Report.

RESPONSE:

No.	Initiatives	Status
1	Develop a Project Management Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Management Policy was developed and submitted for approval in July 2022. • Policy is being reviewed by consultant as per recommendation of the Board.
2	Revise performance targets for Project Manager and Project Supervisors	Performance objectives were aligned with the objectives of the department and of the Head of Department and aligned with the SOPs. This is also consistent with recommendations of the Audit Department. This resulted in an increase level of accountability.
3	Establishment of service level agreements with key stakeholder which support procurement process	Meeting held with key stakeholders. Adjustments made by stakeholder departments resulting in a reduction timeframe for procurement and the award of contracts and processing of payments.
4	Prioritization of Projects for implementation on state of readiness	<p>Completed the preparation of all documents to engage contracted services for recommended projects prior to start of fiscal year 2023.</p> <p>All statutory approvals such as CEC and Town and Country approvals were obtained prior to the start of fiscal 2023. Approvals to invite tenders for recommended projects were obtained prior to the start of FY 2023.</p>
5	Improvement of payment process	Consultation held with all stakeholders involved in payment process, it was reviewed and revised. Therefore, the timeframes for the Invoicing and Payments processing was reduced from: twenty -two days (22) days to 12 days.

3) THE MEASURES REQUIRED TO IMPROVE THE ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATIONS OF THE AUTHORITY

71. Refer to Recommendation 1.

72. That WASA submit its Business Plan, 2022-2027 within 2022 to the RIC to complete its review.

RESPONSE:

WASA's draft business plan was submitted to the RIC in December 2022.

73. That the RIC ensure that it does not take into account any proposal that is not included in WASA's Business Plan in establishing a new rate.

RESPONSE:

The RIC confirms that only proposals made by WASA via its Draft or Final Business Plan for the regulatory control period, will be considered for the purposes of preparation of its Draft Determination. However, after the RIC's Draft Determination is published for public consultation, proposals from stakeholders may be taken into consideration by the RIC, prior to publishing its Final Determination on rates.

74. The establishment of the Inter-Ministerial Technical Team to review the Public Utilities Assistance Programme prior to the completion of the rates review to develop social tariffs directed at vulnerable groups.

RESPONSE:

Noted.

75. That proposals that are not funded by WASA not be included in the Rates Review for the period 2022-2027.

RESPONSE:

WASA recommends that the proposals within the business plan should be followed.

76. That the MPU strengthen the RIC's punitive powers, specifically in relation to the failure to submit information by Statutory Bodies under its remit.

RESPONSE:

The Ministry recognises that there may be a need for enhanced regulatory powers by the RIC and as such will liaise with RIC so that the commission can identify if applicable, areas that require said enhancement of powers.

77. That WASA submit a status report to Committee on:
- a. the installation of 2,500 meters for high consumption domestic/commercial customers by January, 2023; and
 - b. “Implementation of District Metered Areas” programme by December 2023.

RESPONSE:

- A. Of the 2500 meters procured 477 have been installed on commercial customers while 552 meters have been reserved for WTC 68/2022 in the NWSIP programme which involves the installation of 552 domestic meters within the Blue Range DMA in North West. The balance of meters (1471) will be allocated to project WTC 27/2022 to complete the installation of meters on commercial customers throughout the country.
- B. Of the 97 District metered areas established only forty (40) are functional. The other fifty-seven (57) are defective due to defective meters and valves as a result the first initiative was to replace meters in existing DMAs where the meter was defective. This has been begun via projects being executed by the PCM division in addition to acquiring some through minor procurement. There were 49 DMAs where the meter is defective, thus far only fifteen (15) meters have been procured by PCM via the project’s division. Another eleven (11) meters were sought via minor procurement but is awaiting CEO approval. In addition, there are twenty-three (23) additional DMAs we are working to establish throughout the country.

78. A tariff based on consumption for metered customers.

RESPONSE:

WASA's current tariff for metered customers is based on the customer's consumption. However, the existing rate is too low and does not reflect the cost to WASA of providing the service (Customer rate: TT\$1.80 per meter cube - Cost to WASA to provide water:TT\$10.25

per meter cube). WASA's proposal is for the revised tariff to be linked to the cost to WASA to provide water to customers. Current rates are based on annual taxable value of the property which bears no relation to the cost of providing the service.

79. That WASA develop a priority list of areas in need of an improvement in water supply, utilize the priority list to inform the development of localized supply sources and forward same to the relevant authorities for funding in anticipation for the metering programme.

RESPONSE:

The Authority will prepare a priority list based on the lowest levels of service and potential localized projects to improve the level of service in these particular areas. Examples of such areas are Mayaro, Palo Seco, Charlotteville, Icacos, Freeport and Penal. Works to improve water supply in some of these areas have already started and will be intensified during the remainder of the year and into 2024 and 2025 with the objective of attaining a minimum level of service of 24/3.

80. In the implementation of its metering Programmes, that WASA give priority to customers who receive a regular supply.

RESPONSE:

Noted.

81. That WASA examine stormwater models and implement same in its supply network.

RESPONSE:

The Authority through the Water Resources Agency will explore the utilization of stormwater models.

82. That funding be provided for the implementation of stormwater management infrastructure.

RESPONSE:

Noted.

83. That WASA engage in a public education programme directed at customers who do not receive a consistent supply from the Authority and areas that are not connected to WASA's distribution

system to inform on alternative measures that can be taken to capture and conserve water such as the use of tanks, cisterns, and WASA's truckborne water service. This information should be posted on all WASA and the MPU's social media sites and its website. Blast messaging should also be used to inform customers as applicable.

RESPONSE:

The Authority's commenced its water conservation campaign themed "Value Every Drop", in February 2022 and this continues into 2023 and it will pursue an educational campaign as recommended to promote alternative measures to capture water. Presently, the Authority collaborates with the Adopt A River Programme, attached to the Water Resources Agency, to promote the use of rainwater harvesting in areas not supplied by its distribution network. Further, for customers who do not receive a consistent supply, the Authority shares information with customers about the Ministry of Public Utilities Water Tank Assistance initiative, under its Utilities Assistance Programme. It also uses its website and social media platforms to advise customers on the availability and access of its truck borne water service and through its disruption notices and news releases. The Authority also encourages customers to use the self-service WASA services App to access its truck borne water service.

84. That funding be provided for the development of WASA's pipeline network in addition to metering programmes.

RESPONSE:

There is a category of planned projects for pipeline network infrastructure and a four (4) phase metering programme. For those projects to be completed in FY 2022, funding allocated is derived from a combination of GORTT PSIP Capital programmes Subvention and internal revenue.

85. That WASA undertake an assessment to identify unplanned developments that have resulted in inefficiency and high leakages overloading of WASA's pipeline network and that suitable action be taken accordingly.

RESPONSE:

The Authority will investigate developments of this nature and explore legal frameworks for action. It has been noticed that in the cases of some of these developments, the developer has sometimes abandoned the development.

4) THE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE PARLIAMENT IN RELATION TO IMPROVING THE ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATIONS OF THE AUTHORITY

86. Refer to Recommendation 2.

87. The separation of the WRA from the WASA.

RESPONSE:

Cabinet approved the establishment of the Office of Water Resources Management (OWRM), as a department under the Ministry of Public Utilities. The OWRM would be the vehicle for implementing the NIWRMP 2022 and its establishment requires legally removing the functions of water resources management from the WASA, and vesting it in the OWRM. The responsibility to operationalise the OWRM resides within the MPU and requires the establishment of frameworks (policy, strategy, institutional and legislative) to ensure its implementation. A Working Group which consists of MPU and WASA personnel was formed to carry out the operationalisation of the OWRM. The working group has, amongst other required activities, engaged the Legislative Drafting Department of the Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs to begin the process of drafting a Water Resources Management Bill that aligns with the NIWRMP 2022.

88. As an additional initiative to address the issues with the truck borne water service, that the following also be implemented:

- a. The promotion of a contact number for the Customer Feedback Unit on the websites of the WASA and MPU and respective social media sites and all WASA's service centres which will assist with redirecting calls away from the call centre;
- b. The recording of customer's request for action immediately when a call is received and action to be taken 6 hours subsequent to a call;
- c. The use of the Customer Feedback Unit to engage in follow-up calls to ensure customer satisfaction with the truck borne water service and the use of the information from follow-up calls to inform a database to be used to assess the truck borne water service.

RESPONSE:

- a. The customer feedback centre was formed as an auditing process to ensure customer satisfaction of the delivery of truck borne water. The Authority's mobile app has been

modified to have the capability to request a truck borne water supply. However, the Authority can focus on a separate number with the sole purpose for the request of truck borne services.

b. Noted.

c. The customer feedback centre was formed as an auditing process to ensure customer satisfaction of the delivery of truck borne water. This unit is in operation and is recording the data on deliveries conducted on the previous day.

89. A final step in WASA's system for monitoring the filling of water trucks at approved filling station should be the implementation of a reporting mechanism where weekly records of water filled and distributed are submitted to the Operations Division to be checked against records of follow-up calls done by the Customer Feedback Unit recommended above.

RESPONSE:

The Authority is in the development stages of planning a platform to upload weekly records of water consumption of each of the filling bays.

90. The implementation of the centralised management of the administration of the water trucking service only if it is:

a. supported with adequate staff and other required resources to ensure that it will not put a strain on the Operations Distribution Division or impact its regular function in any way; and

b. equipped with an adequate and seamless feedback mechanism between the Operations Division and the Water Trucking Units; and

c. supported by a suitable system for prioritising truck borne supply requests.

RESPONSE:

The Authority is exploring the digitization of the water trucking system with the utilization of GIS data models and handheld tablets for the water trucking staff as well as the water tankers delivering the water supply.

With this process implemented the entire process from receipt of request to delivery of water will be digital and paperless. Another improvement will be the immediate automation of the completed request upon signature of receipt from on the handheld tablets.

91. The Operational Division be provided with the necessary major capital investment which will be needed to facilitate the centralised water trucking system.

RESPONSE:

The Authority will compile the scope and costing for the provision of this system

92. A progress report on the performance of the centralised water trucking system be submitted to the Committee one (1) year subsequent to the establishment of the centralised water trucking system.

RESPONSE:

Upon completion the Authority shall compile and submit a report on the progress of the centralized system

93. That the Authority seek to implement proposed revenue streams.

RESPONSE:

Of the proposed revenue streams the Authority has initiated the following:

1. Disposal of septage at WASA's Wastewater Treatment Plants (WWTP).

On October 14, 2020 a group of external septage haulers were invited by the Authority to discuss the process and pricing arrangements for transactions relating to disposals at WASA's facilities. In support of this strategic initiative, SWMCOL issued a media release on 14 March, 2022 advising their haulers (clients) to utilize WASA's WWTPs. (See **Appendix 5**). The Authority is currently in discussions with SWMCOL to ensure a smooth migration of services to the Authority.

2. Commercialization of Biosolids.

In January 2023 approval was sought and granted to engage the University of the West Indies for the acquisition of intellectual property to convert class B sludge material into class A

biosolids for sale of sale as a premium fertilizer/soil amendment. A Memorandum of Agreement has been drafted and is currently being reviewed for execution.

94. The implementation of a bottled water initiative to bring in much needed revenues for the Authority.

RESPONSE:

At a meeting held on January 18, 2018 the Board of Commissioners recommended for consideration by the Ministry of Public Utilities the implementation of the Bottled Water Project.

95. That WASA provide accurate information and confirm statistics with regard to the following in its Ministerial Response to this Report:
- a. Information on Salaries and Wages for the period 2017-2020; and
 - b. Total Employment figures for FY 2021

RESPONSE:

- a. (Unaudited)

YEAR	SALARIES	WAGES
2017	\$963,854,871.80	\$337,049,033.30
2018	\$907,863,468.00	\$386,933,546.00
2019	\$835,814,770.00	\$380,943,639.00
2020	\$915,393,418.00	\$386,070,377.00

- b. Total Employment Figures for FY 2021 is as follows:

MONTH	TOTAL EMPLOYMENT (HEADCOUNT)
October 2020	4903
November 2020	4890
December 2020	4880
January 2021	4863

February 2021	4855
March 2021	4855
April 2021	4853
May 2021	4838
June 2021	4828
July 2021	4819
August 2021	4798
September 2021	4790