

## Desalination one of Netcare's options

Netcare is investing in desalination technology and is conducting a feasibility study on reusing sewage water in its South African facilities, CEO Richard Friedland says.



Netcare Milpark Hospital

Netcare and other private hospital groups are taking steps to reduce their water consumption, partly in response to the Western Cape's worst drought in a century.

Mediclinic CEO Danie Meintjes said last week his company was sinking boreholes and monitoring its water use across the province.

Friedland said that while Netcare had reduced its average water use by 44% over the past two years, "that's not enough".

The group had a number of short-term initiatives in place but was also looking at treating waste water in the future.

"The longer-term programme that we're investigating and we're running a pilot on is the reuse of water, in other words the potential use of sewage water. We're doing a feasibility study on potentially bringing that technology into SA," Friedland said.

Netcare was also sinking boreholes at all of its hospitals and is taking additional steps to mitigate the drought.

For instance, it was installing a desalination plant at the Netcare Christiaan Barnard Memorial Hospital. The facility was built on reclaimed land, which held large amounts of underground seawater.

"The amount of water in that sump that we suck up on a daily basis is actually adequate to supply all of our hospitals in the Cape, so we're putting in a very significant desalination plant there, which will supply the hospital and could potentially supply the other hospitals."

Further, Netcare would invest in a mobile desalination plant that could travel between its hospitals in Kuilsriver, N1 City and Blaauwberg to treat borehole water on site, should the group decide not to transport clean water between its facilities. It was also adding more water tanks to each facility to increase storage capacity.

Meanwhile, Netcare said that it had reduced its electricity use per bed in SA by 16% from 2013 to 2017, as part of its efforts to adapt to a lowergrowth environment.

Friedland said the group would "digitalise" its patient and nursing records, which would yield long-term cost savings.

Netcare, which was "extraordinarily manual and paper-based at the moment", spent significant amounts on stationery, filing records and "the entire billing process".

It would run a pilot programme at one of its largest and most complex facilities - "probably at Milpark in Johannesburg" - in early 2018 before a wider roll-out.

**Source:** *Business Day*

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