

Desalination plant opens at Richards Bay smelter

A newly-opened R74m desalination plant will allow [South32](#) to maintain operations at its Hillside Aluminium Smelter complex during the drought, which has resulted in the implementation of stringent water restrictions in the Richards Bay domestic and industrial sectors.

“Desalinating seawater was identified as the preferred alternative as it will not only supply adequate water to ensure operations are maintained, it will also be able to supplement the municipal water supply in times of critical shortage,” says South32 president for the Africa region, Mike Fraser.



The smelter plays a significant role in the economic landscape of KwaZulu-Natal and availability and certainty of critical input variables such as water and power are vital for the smelter’s sustainability.

In recognising the issues created by drought in the area, the company investigated solutions to ensure consistent water supply to the operation was maintained and reduce reliance on the municipal water.

Construction of the plant commenced in April following approval from the KwaZulu-Natal department of economic development, tourism and environmental affairs. It is the first desalination plant in the province.