



a world class African city

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## Media Statement

### For Immediate Release

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### **City of Johannesburg updates residents on the Continued Closure of the Johannesburg Central Library (JCL) which is undergoing Upgrades**

The City of Johannesburg is aware of the concerns raised by the public regarding the closure of the Johannesburg Central Library and the protracted refurbishment works in completing the necessary upgrades.

Around 2019, the JCL experienced great water ingress into the facility. As we are aware, this Library is a world class library with archived material dating back to mid - 1900 century. Protecting the archived material from the elements is of utmost importance to the city.

In March 2020, the Library was closed due to COVID 19 lock-down, like all public facilities. During the lockdown, it became an opportune time for the City to conduct a visual conditional assessment to ascertain what brought about the leaks into the building. A report was produced, and these documents can be made available to the public at the library for inspection. This report (dated 20 March 2019) highlighted pertinent maintenance and refurbishment aspects that had to be dealt with. The leaks were not the only issue that the building encountered. There is a report conducted by Emergency Management Services in consultation with the appointed fire engineer, that has rendered the building unsafe for human habitation, from a fire compliance point of view. The defects outlined in the report included, but not limited to:

- Architectural - Damaged internal finishes due to water ingress
- Civil and Structural – roof repairs including stormwater discharge (gutters and downpipes)
- Electrical, Mechanical and Fire Engineering Works
  - Fire protection and detection
  - Heating ventilation and air-conditioning
  - Back-up power supply (generator)
  - Other fire related works

In May 2021 when it was permissible to undertake unrestricted construction works, the City, through its entity, Johannesburg Development Agency (JDA), appointed a contractor to undertake the remedial works pertaining to the leaks and some fire aspects against the available budget at the time. To date the received budget has been R 25 million, over 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23 financial years of which R 18 million has been spent to date. An additional R 45 million including fees is required to get the building compliant with regulations.

Some remedial work has been undertaken in the previous financial years which included making the library watertight and impermeable to water. This scope is still to be completed. Other components of the current scope related to **some and not all** electrical and mechanical works that has to be completed.

It is important to note that to open the library to the public, all statutory compliance matters pertaining to the Emergency Management Services by-laws and the National Building Regulations must be completed and certified as such, before the building can be deemed for occupation and safe for use.

The city understands the importance of this community facility and the role it plays in providing access to information and resources for residents. We can assure the public that addressing the infrastructure and safety issues at the Central Library is a top priority for the City.

The Library and Information Services unit is working on securing additional funding in the 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years to complete the necessary repairs and upgrades to the facility including compliance to fire safety. Due to the complex nature of the repairs and the need for careful planning and execution, it is anticipated that these renovations will take some time to complete.

The City will provide regular updates on the progress of the Central Library upgrade project, including timelines for completion and the reopening of the facility which is anticipated to be in the 2024/25 financial year, should adequate budget be made available for the fire safety compliance as outlined by the EMS: Fire Safety Unit.

The closure was necessary to ensure the safety of both staff and library users. During this time, efforts were made to temporarily relocate the majority of employees to other facilities within the city.

It is important to note that the City Library is currently a construction site and access to the facility is restricted to authorized personnel only. Any unauthorized entry is strictly prohibited and would be in violation of health and safety regulations.

The safety and accessibility of the library are our utmost priority, and we are committed to providing a modern, safe, and vibrant space for the community to enjoy.

The City of Johannesburg has noted various communication from members of the community and would like to address some of the concerns regarding access to information and heritage resources at the Johannesburg City Library. Members of the community who need resources as part of their research or general academic enquiries will be remotely assisted by dedicated librarians using the following email address: [JCLenquiries@joburg.org.za](mailto:JCLenquiries@joburg.org.za). The turn-around time for reference or research queries is dependent on the nature and scope of the query, minimum being 24 hours.

The city also subscribes to a number of online databases (ebooks, online periodicals (academic journals, magazines and newspapers, online reference sources). The electronic resources available for community members are available on the city's website [www.joburg.org.za](http://www.joburg.org.za)

Ends

Issued by the City of Johannesburg  
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For all media queries, send an email to [mediaqueries@joburg.org.za](mailto:mediaqueries@joburg.org.za)