

ACTis provides risk analysis and early intervention recommendations against state capture and corruption in South African government institutions

PUBLIC ENTITY

ACT | ACCOUNTABILITY TRACKER

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Vaal-Orange Catchment Management Agency Date issued: 5 August 2026

About the Institution

The Vaal-Orange Catchment Management Agency (VOCMA) is a national public entity established in 2022 to manage water resources in the Vaal-Orange Water Management Area (comprising the Vaal and Orange Rivers, which cross Mpumalanga, Gauteng, the North West, Free State, Eastern Cape and Northern Cape).¹ VOCMA reports to the Minister of Water and Sanitation. The VOCMA Board is its accounting authority, except for transactions and contractual obligations during the transitional period, for which the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) is accountable. In 2024/2025, the agency’s expenditure was R146m.²

VOCMA is in a transitional phase, gradually assuming water resource management functions previously centralised within DWS. Responsibilities, staff, budgets and systems have been transferred from DWS to VOCMA as the agency becomes established. This process was expected to be complete by the end of 2025/26. In April 2026, the Chairperson of VOCMA confirmed that the organisation was continuing to develop internal administrative capacity, governance frameworks and operational processes, while securing physical office space to accommodate staff transferred from DWS and to establish its institutional presence.³

Flag Status

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
								
Improper appointments	Co-opting key functions	Climate of fear or favour	Corrupt awards	Financial malpractice	Obstructing accountability	Manipulating perceptions	Private gain	Shadow network

ISS Analysis

- ACTis has raised one flag for VOCMA and placed two under monitoring.
 - VOCMA is a relatively new organisation and is still transitioning from DWS. VOCMA’s issues largely centre on financial governance, over which it has limited control. In 2024/25, DWS provided this function, which raises financial governance issues (see the ACTis
- DWS Report). Accountability lines have been blurred between the two institutions during the transition, although VOCMA has sought to demonstrate accountability through its focus on cooperation and a targeted action plan following its negative external audit outcome.



- The flags under monitoring reflect administrative weaknesses in VOCMA, not deliberate coordination by officials.
- VOCMA is showing weak performance in core areas. Response times for 80% of pollution incidents exceeded 78 hours, and only 95 of the targeted 208 water users were monitored for compliance.⁴

Findings

Flag #1

Improper Appointments

The flag is not raised because VOCMA had only three permanent staff members in 2024/25, as operations continue to transition from DWS.

- The VOCMA Board was appointed in December 2023 and assumed operations on 1 April 2024 as part of the entity's transition from DWS.
- Chief Executive Officer Lerato Morake, Chief Financial Officer Fanisa Lamola and Board Secretary Ms van Gensen were appointed in 2024/25.⁵

Flag #3

Climate of Fear or Favour

The flag is not raised because VOCMA is still in a transition phase with very few permanent employees.

- In 2024/25, as part of the transitional phase, VOCMA mainly relied on staff from DWS and had only three staff members (see Flag #1: Improper Appointments). The Annual Report states that 194 DWS employees were involved in VOCMA's operations during the year.⁶

Flag #4

Corrupt Awards

The flag is being monitored because VOCMA's procurement processes appear irregular and non-compliant.

- The DWS provided the procurement function for VOCMA in 2024/25.
- The Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA) identified Material Irregularities in contract awards made in 2024/25. These included a failure to obtain the required three quotations, a failure to check whether bidders were employed by the government or



Flag raised



Flag lowered



Under monitoring

connected to government officials, a lack of evidence that preferential point systems were correctly applied, and a lack of evidence that contract awards were made to the highest-scoring bidders.⁷

Flag #5

Financial Malpractice



The flag is raised due to weak and non-compliant financial management.

- The DWS provided financial management functions for VOCMA in 2024/25.
- The AGSA identified several material findings, including underperformance in revenue collection, failure to achieve key performance targets, and non-compliance with applicable legislation on financial reporting, strategic planning, and procurement and contract management.⁸
- The AGSA found 'significant internal control deficiencies' by management, including failures to implement adequate controls over transaction processing and financial record-keeping. The AGSA also reported a lack of compliance with procurement legislation and a failure to adequately review the financial statements for errors and correct them.⁹

Flag #6

Obstructing Accountability



The flag is being monitored for further signs that a pattern of obstructing accountability is evolving.

- VOCMA received a disclaimer audit opinion for 2024/25, although DWS prepared the financial statements on its behalf. The AGSA could not express an opinion on whether the financial statements were a true representation of VOCMA's financial position, as they were incorrectly prepared. The AGSA could not verify whether all transactions had been included, and a system failure affected access to transaction information.¹⁰
- VOCMA stated that it is collaborating with DWS and AGSA to resolve the issues raised in the audit report. VOCMA has published a detailed Action Plan to address each issue. According to VOCMA, many of the issues stem from the transitional arrangements between the DWS and VOCMA.¹¹



Flag raised



Flag lowered



Under monitoring

Recommended Actions

	DUTY BEARER	ACTION(S)	ASSOCIATED FLAGS
1.	Department of Water and Sanitation	- Identify the weaknesses within the DWS procurement and financial management functions that impacted on VOCMA's audit outcome. - Pursue consequence management for those responsible.	Flag #5: Financial Malpractice
2.	Vaal-Orange Catchment Management Agency Board and Chief Executive Officer	- Establish strong internal financial management and procurement units, staffed by experienced individuals with irreproachable records who understand how to address and correct the findings of the AGSA. - Vet any officials transferred from DWS who may have been responsible for the issues identified by the AGSA. - Track implementation of the Action Plan established in response to the AGSA audit outcomes.	Flag #5: Financial Malpractice
3.	Portfolio Committee on Water and Sanitation	- Monitor the transition of functions from DWS to VOCMA, especially the finance and procurement functions. - Require that VOCMA presents how they are going to establish their finance and procurement functions without importing weaknesses from the DWS structures. - Monitor VOCMA's progress on the Action Plan to address the AGSA's concerns. - Ensure that the new Board and executives are suitably experienced and qualified for their posts.	Flag #1: Improper Appointments Flag #5: Financial Malpractice



Flag raised



Flag lowered



Under monitoring

The 9 Flags

Flag #1

Improper Appointments

Improper appointments, dismissals or failure to remove individuals in senior positions may be used to drive a corrupt agenda.

Flag #2

Co-opting Key Functions

Informal control may be established over critical functions within the institution to abuse them.

Flag #3

Climate of Fear or Favour

The working culture favours loyalty over duty; alignment with a corrupt agenda is rewarded, and resistance is punished.

Flag #4

Corrupt Awards

Contracts, licences, partnerships, loans and/or investments may be awarded irregularly and repeatedly benefit the same actors.

Flag #5

Financial Malpractice

The institution's financial management practices may be abused to advance a corrupt agenda.

Flag #6

Obstructing Accountability

The institution's internal operations might be deliberately obscured to hide potential misconduct.

Flag #7

Manipulating Perceptions

A public narrative that frames misconduct as innocence may be promoted.

Flag #8

Private Gain

Illicit gains may be distributed to benefit the same actors.

Flag #9

Shadow Network

The same public and private actors may collude to gain control over an institution's assets and functions, benefiting repeatedly.

About ACTis

What is ACTis?

The Anti-Corruption Tracker Information System is an initiative of the Anti-Corruption and Accountability Project at the Institute for Security Studies. It provides analysis on corruption and state capture in South Africa, to inform early intervention and enforcement. It utilises a system of indicators and an AI-driven data-collection and analysis tool, validated by human experts. It identifies risks within individual government institutions and produces actionable recommendations to address them, with a view to disrupting patterns of state capture and corruption.

Findings are shared directly with government and other duty-bearers, civil society organisations, the media and the public, empowering authorities to intervene, strengthening accountability, and enabling citizens activism.

Links to ACTis Information:

Further project information may be found at the following links:

[Terms and Definitions](#)

[Project Methodology and Analytical Framework](#)

[About the Anti-Corruption and Accountability project](#)

[About the Institute for Security Studies](#)

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Flag raised



Flag lowered



Under monitoring

References

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- ² VOCMA, Annual Report 2024/25, 29 September 2025, https://static.pmg.org.za/1/VOCMA_Annual_Report_2025_Final_submission_Version_11_29_September_20250011.pdf, p. 69.
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- ¹⁰ VOCMA, Annual Report 2024/25, https://static.pmg.org.za/251021_VOCMA_2024-25_Annual_Report_Presentation.pdf, pp.21-26; Parliament, Announcement, Tablings and Committee Reports, 28 October 2025, <https://www.parliament.gov.za/storage/app/media/Docs/atc/01ls62wqbyjwdw3l6s6fezzwbwyp36b6jj.pdf>, p. 227.
- ¹¹ VOCMA, Vaal-Orange CMA Annual Report Presentation 2024/25, 10 October 2025, https://static.pmg.org.za/251021_VOCMA_2024-25_Annual_Report_Presentation.pdf, pp. 20-30.



Flag raised



Flag lowered



Under monitoring