

Preface

In 2002 the South African water sector, through the Water Research Commission (WRC), initiated a comprehensive research programme on climate-change impacts on water resources with a view to gaining insight into the magnitude of the impacts and the consequential adaptation needs in the sector. Subsequently, first steps to incorporate research on vulnerability and adaptation into this programme were also taken. The largely successful impacts research leaned heavily on the outcomes of considerable prior investment by the WRC in water-related climate, atmosphere and ocean-atmosphere research, as well as hydrological modelling research, done over a period of more than 15 years.

Continuing with these efforts, the WRC compiled a comprehensive discussion paper detailing all current research efforts in South Africa that address climate change in relation to water, as well as the national policy environment within which such research is being carried out. The purpose of the paper was to promote alignment and eventual convergence of research investments in this area by all role players and, furthermore, to encourage the identification and exploitation of opportunities for cross-sectoral research partnerships. Complementing this discussion paper was a national workshop, held at the WRC, that provided a platform for dialogue and sharing among most role players. The excitement and robust debate engendered by this event was evidence of its timeliness and the need for more regular get-togethers on a topic that is critical to the future well-being of the country and its citizens.

The draft paper referred to above was reworked repeatedly to accommodate comments by stakeholders and workshop discussion, and is here presented, in its final form, for the information of all South Africans interested in climate change and water. Special thanks are due to the persons listed below, who either contributed to the document through written or verbal comments, and/or attended the workshop. Special thanks are due to Dr George Green who authored the draft paper and facilitated the whole process.

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