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Drought: 'Go get City an iceberg'

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"IT SOUNDS like a crazy idea, but if we break it down it is not so crazy after all. There is tons of fresh water just melting away in Antarctica; all we have to do is guide it here and let the current do the rest," said salvage expert Nick Sloane, who spoke at the African Utility Week conference yesterday.

Sloane said harvesting water from icebergs would be mother nature's solution to the drought in Cape Town as there were about 140 000 icebergs drifting in the southern oceans and melting, some of which were just 2 000km away from Cape Town.

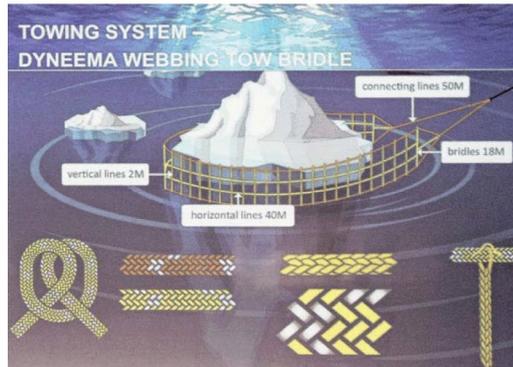
He said harvesting icebergs was a solution we hadn't considered as it digressed from the norm, however, it could help provide at least 20% of Cape Town's water needs.

He said the melting water could deliver up to 60 million litres a day and with milling, this could increase to 150 million litres a day which could be pumped into tankers, ferried to land and treated before it went into the water system.

"It's something that hasn't been done before and the technology is not proven, but all we have to do is guide it here and the Benguela current will do the rest. Then we can look at harvesting (the iceberg).

"We've been talking about it for years, and we put together a team of scientists and academics who have been researching. If there is one place on Earth where we can do it, it's Cape Town. We can't do it on any other coast," said Sloane.

He said the icebergs were drifting our way and we just



NEW SOLUTION: The blueprint for harvesting fresh water from icebergs to solve the water crisis. PICTURE: JUSTIN SULLIVAN



'CRAZY' PLAN: Nick Sloane

needed to know how to deal with them. He suggested that the icebergs be captured, possibly using rope, in the vicinity of Gough Island and be moored about 40km offshore from St Helena island to be harvested.

Sloane said a saucer would then be needed to capture the melting water. "With four to six of these tankers, 150 million litres can be harvested per day for one year."

The City's director of water and sanitation, Peter Flower, said the City still needed to reduce consumption to 450 million litres of water a day to keep Day Zero at bay.

Director of BiomimicrySA Claire Janisch said we should look to nature and copy it to relieve increasing pressure on our natural resources.

Giving just two examples, she said emulating the humpback whale's attack manoeuvre in wind turbines could increase efficiency, as could learning about desalination through the example of mangrove trees that make use of seawater in order to survive.

