

CITY OF CAPE TOWN APPOINTS NEW HEAD OF DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT CENTRE



Dr Johan Minnie, head of centre, City of Cape Town Disaster Risk Management Centre

The City of Cape Town Disaster Risk Management Centre has appointed Dr Johan Minnie as its new Head of Centre. This follows the recent retirement of Greg Pillay. Dr Minnie, a longstanding DMISA member, EXCO member and a past president, shared his career journey with us.

Dr Minnie matriculated in Worcester in 1990 and served in the South African National Defence Force as an officer from 1991 to 1998. From 1998 until 2006, he was the coordinator for Disaster Management Liaison and Marketing at the Cape Metropolitan Council and in 2006 to 2007 the manager: Public Awareness and Preparedness, City of Cape Town Disaster Risk Management Centre, serving as acting head on several occasions. Dr Minnie joined Aurecon South Africa (Pty) Ltd, previously Africon, in 2008 as disaster risk and resilience advisor, a consultant in 2008, an associate in 2013, a principal in 2017 and director in 2018. He left in 2019 and joined the City of Cape Town Disaster Risk Management Centre once again as head of Disaster Operations Centre and Systems Integration from 1 May 2019 to 30 June 2021, periodically serving as acting manager (head) of the Disaster Risk Management Centre. On 1 July 2021, he was appointed to his current position as manager (head of centre) at the

City of Cape Town Disaster Risk Management Centre.

What made you choose disaster management as a career?

I have always wanted to be in a position to help people and to fix things/make things better and have a natural attraction to working behind the scenes and the physical adventure of emergency response, the cognitive adventure of risk assessment and the practical adventure of risk reduction.

How many years' experience do you have in disaster management?

I started in Disaster Management at the Cape Metropolitan Council on 1 July 1998. Before that, I joined the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) from 1991 to 1998, completing a B.Mil degree at the Military Academy in 1994.

What has had the biggest influence or impact on your career thus far?

The people I have had the pleasure to work with over the years, the part-time studies I was blessed to be able to complete, the very real experience of several major incidents and disasters and 11 years of international private sector consulting experience.

Are you first generation or has public service been in your family?

I am the youngest of five brothers and followed all of my brothers through the compulsory national military service grinder, an experience that instilled a service ethic and a commitment to keep on doing your best and keep on improving. As a family, our roots are in agriculture and construction but my father was a panel beater with a fine eye for detail and my mother was in the administrative stream in the social and financial services industries. This background, along with a religious upbringing and a shared love for reading, seems to have resulted in my professional inheritance from my

family being service to others, hard work, fixing stuff, getting the details right and life-long learning.

Who were your mentors and what role did they play in your profession?

During my career I am lucky to have crossed paths with many great people in every context where I have worked who have taught me much about Disaster Management and life. They are far too many to name here; I made a list of more than 40. The major influences in Disaster Management (thus far) must be first and foremost my first boss in Disaster Management the true gentleman, Mr Geoff Laskey and then also Ferdie Mostert, Pat Adams, Greg Pillay, Schalk Carstens, Thinus Rabe and Elretha Louw. I am looking forward to learn much more from current and future colleagues and friends.

What factors has kept you in the industry through the years ie what has been your motivation?

The knowledge that you are making things better, making a contribution to improving the human condition and protecting the environment and the opportunity to learn and develop every day while having fun.

How many years have you been a DMISA member and which portfolios were/are you involved in?

I joined DMISA in 1998 and have been regional chairperson for the Western Cape, Council and EXCO member, Deputy President and President. I am currently the EXCO member for professionalisation and website management and am helping out with finance and administration.

What role has DMISA played for you (ie in your career/in the industry)?

DMISA has been my professional home and a place where I could develop, thrive and be creative. DMISA has taught me much about professional communication and given me opportunities for learning and growth and has provided me

SALGA APPOINTS NEW ACTING PRESIDENT

The South African Local Government Association (SALGA) has appointed its two deputy presidents to share the responsibility of leading the organisation towards the upcoming local government elections and the elective SALGA National Conference. This follows a vacancy created by the departure of former Executive Mayor Thembu Nkandimeng, who was recently appointed as the Deputy Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA).

Executive Mayor Sebezile Ngangelizwe has been appointed as its acting president until the Local Government Elections, with Mayor Deon De Vos to take over the reign until the SALGA elective National Conference.

Cllr Sebezile Ngangelizwe, served as one of two Deputy Presidents of the SALGA National Executive Committee

since 2016. He brings along a wealth of local government experience and has a full grasp of the complex challenges facing local government, including what needs to be done to make local government work for the people and communities to achieve its the developmental agenda.

Cllr Ngangelizwe is no stranger to SALGA's leadership echelons; from 2008 to 2016, he successfully led SALGA Free State as the Provincial Chairperson. During those years, he served as executive mayor of Lejweleputswa District Municipality until April 2010. Later in that year, he was redeployed to serve as the executive mayor of Matjhabeng Local Municipality until July 2016.

During his tenure as the executive political head at Lejweleputswa, he is attributed for bringing stability and turning the municipality around from attaining qualified audit reports to



Cllr Sebezile Ngangelizwe

an unqualified audit report for the 2008/2009 financial year.

Following the 2016 municipal elections, Cllr Ngangelizwe returned to Lejweleputswa District Municipality where he is still serving as the executive mayor.

SALGA wishes Cllr Ngangelizwe well as he leads the organisation and the sector to prepare for the transition towards the fifth term of local government. 🌍

with some of the most important professional friendships in my career thus far.

How do you envisage your role as head of centre?

I want to build on the great groundbreaking work already done by my predecessors and the current staff and actively seek ways of optimising performance and the impact that we have as a Centre, focusing on continual learning and improvement. There is much that can still be done to improve how we work and what we achieve.

What are the challenges faced by the disaster management professionals in South Africa?

Disaster Management, as described in the Act, is a very broad concept that includes a wide array of activities requiring a wide variety of skills. To be fully effective in Disaster Management as envisaged in the Act, the disaster management professional needs

to be comfortable in operational response as well as strategic policy, in a corporate boardroom as well as on the scene of an incident. We need to be able to plan and implement, research and teach, convince and advocate, control and coordinate. This boundary-spanning role, encompassing risk reduction as well as response and recovery, is difficult but rewarding and very, very interesting and stimulating. Our biggest challenge though is to make others understand and contribute to what we are doing and to achieve our goals through the actions of others.

How do you envisage the future of the disaster management?

We will need to focus more and more on effective information management in an environment where everything is talking to everything and information overload is a reality. There are many technological advances to be made. An expected more harsher climate will bring more hazards and vulnerability

and demand better response management and adaptation and resilience. We will need to become more adept at inclusive and coordinated cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary actions, both in risk reduction and in response.

If you could mentor fellow disaster management professionals, what advice would you give?

Remember you are here to serve others first and foremost, not yourself. Read and research, learn, listen and experience as much as you can. Be respectful of others and open to learn from them, do not become too impressed with your own achievements or importance or grow long toes easily stepped upon. Avoid having strong opinions based on limited information. Take a deep breath and think before you act. Good collegial mutually beneficial relationships across all borders and boundaries are vital. Always cultivate a good sense of humour and remember to have fun doing good well. 🌍