



CAPE TOWN TO GET PERMANENT DESALINATION PLANT



Deputy Mayor of Cape Town, Ian Neilson. – Picture by Wempic Photography

Cape Town will get a permanent desalination plant in five years according to the city deputy mayor, Ian Neilson.

“We are now required to reassess our approach to water supply,” he said welcoming delegates to the Water Institute of Southern Africa (WISA) biennial conference, which opened last night at the CTICC.

The conference, themed *Breaking Boundaries, Connecting Ideas*, brings together close to 2000 water experts from around the world for four days of dialogue and engagement on the world’s most pressing water challenges.



By Munyaradzi Makoni

“The United Nations’ declaration of water and sanitation to be a basic human right in July 2010, was only brought home in South Africa in recent years as climate change heightened the country’s water insecurity,” said Natasia van Binsbergen, Chairperson of the WISA 2018 local organising committee.

Binsbergen said this year’s theme is a reflection of the clear need for collaboration, cooperation and integration within the water sector.

“The six themes to be highlighted at the meeting, are reminiscent of the tributaries of a river,” she said. “Each comes from a different place, but each contributes to the strength of the meeting as a whole.”

The real possibility of Cape Town running out of water has dominated news globally in recent months, sparking intense discussion among stakeholders who include industry, higher education institutions and non-profit organisations.

“The city has been forced to revise its strategy on saving water as part of broader resilience mechanism,” Neilson said, adding that two emergency desalination plants are already supplying water to the city.

Neilson said the rainfall variation in recent years

is greater than that which has been experienced in the past 100 years, and that the increasingly unpredictable rainfall patterns meant the city can no longer rely on surface water.

The city is already planning long-term programmes on resource allocation to sustainably take care of water resources. Schemes in the pipeline include extracting groundwater from the Table Mountain aquifer.

“Our focus and demand management has to cater for the future growth of the city’s population and industry. And in the meantime we should encourage sustained campaigns on water use and adhere to the 50-litres-a-day rule,” the deputy mayor said, adding that the restriction may be relaxed in future if the water situation improves.

Memories from the opening session...



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