

Peter Gunter 1970–2018

Richard Garner¹ · Ritva Mühlbauer² · Christian Wolkersdorfer^{3,4} 

© Springer-Verlag GmbH Germany, part of Springer Nature 2018

Peter's Story

This is a tribute to Peter Gunther (Fig. 1), a wonderful person, family man, trusted colleague, professional and friend to many people within the water and mining industries. He will be sorely missed, and the profession, industry and country will be so much the poorer for his untimely passing on August 10, 2018. Peter was born on November 16, 1970, in South Africa's Western Cape, where he subsequently grew up and attended school, ultimately matriculating in the Camps Bay High School class of 1988. He achieved his BSc in Chemical Engineering and then an MSc in Water Utilisation at the University of Cape Town in 2004. This, with a healthy love for sport, led to Peter's ongoing support of Western Province rugby, for which we mostly forgave him.

Peter, having had an Anglo American bursary, joined Anglo American Thermal Coal in 2004 in Witbank. He quickly illustrated his ability to lead. As Manager: Hydrology, a role he was to stay with till 2012, Peter was extremely involved in all aspects of the business and it was during this time that he solidified his water position and began to shape the industry through his passion for sound

technical implementation, engaged deliverables, and making a difference.

In 2007, the fruits of his labours emerged in the form of the eMalahleni Water Reclamation plant, which was the first of its kind in the industry, built on a collaborative platform. This water treatment facility was ground breaking in its application of technology, integration with multiple stakeholders, and solution elegance in the South African Mining and Water Management Sectors. For many, this was seen as Peter's professional emergence, and a defining moment that is still to this day internationally recognized. This project received two Mail & Guardian Greening the Future awards, Nedbank Capital's Green Mining awards, a Global Mining—Sustainability Award (Africa), Lighthouse Project, Innovation Awards—Silver, and was recognized as “Innovative Environmental Strategies that Improve Business Performance – Greening the Future Awards”. The eMalahleni Water Reclamation Plant was also the only mining initiative to be endorsed by the United Nations Momentum for Change initiative at COP17.

Peter's Rise and Growth

Peter subsequently moved on to several senior management roles within Anglo American. This includes his role as the Head: Safety & Sustainable Development—OMI (Other Mining Industries), with operations mostly based in South America. In 2012, Peter again shifted roles to Group Manager: Environment for Anglo American—once again a global role that dealt with a variety of different cultures and people. Here his ability to collaborate and engage easily with people regardless of rank, culture, and profile, and seek deliverables made him successful in shaping a difficult area.

In 2014, with the restructuring of Anglo American, Peter moved to Anglo American Platinum as Manager: Infrastructure (Water), where he continued to champion the water and sustainability cause on an even larger scale. It is at this time that Peter, chasing solutions to the ever elusive zero brine treatment solution, engaged with Prentec, where, we believe,

✉ Christian Wolkersdorfer
christian@wolkersdorfer.info

Richard Garner
richardg@msgroupservices.com

Ritva Mühlbauer
ritva.muehlbauer@angloamerican.com

¹ Department Environmental Sciences, The MSA Group, PO Box 81356, Parkhurst 2120, South Africa

² Anglo American Coal SA, 55 Marshall Street, Johannesburg 2001, South Africa

³ Department of Environmental, Water and Earth Sciences, SARChI Chair for Acid Mine Drainage Treatment, Tshwane University of Technology, Private Bag X680, Pretoria 0001, South Africa

⁴ Department of Green Chemistry, School of Engineering Science, Lappeenranta University of Technology, Sammonkatu 12, 50130 Mikkeli, Finland



Fig. 1 Peter Gunter in 2012 on the occasion of the 2012 Anglo American Applauds Award. Photo: Philip Mostert

he saw an opportunity to spread his influence on a grander scale. After taking up the role of Managing Director with Prentec, he continued to chase implementation of the Eutectic Freeze Crystallisation process at a full scale, which was the result of a research programme he had championed at CoalTech with UCT for a number of years.

Peter, however, always looking to paint a bigger picture and pull together threads beyond his normal role. Peter was actively engaged in a variety of additional activities, from CoalTech to WISA Mine Water Division—Peter was a committed and passionate participant. His drive for academic furthering of water treatment with the University of Cape Town placed him in the position of lecturer for a water course that would be offered starting next year. The list of his involvements is a true tribute to an engaged leader.

The Private Peter

However, Peter was not just about work. Through it all, Peter loved sports, fast cars, and a good whiskey. He was ever one to have some fun and his explosive laugh of mirth was a constant when mixing both socially and privately. As an active family man, he loved spending time away on holidays with his family and he leaves behind two lovely children that will sorely miss him.

When asking friends and colleagues about what they remembered the most about Peter, there were many great

stories of him taking on projects, challenges, and situations bigger than most thought he would handle. This epitomises Peter in a way, always up for a challenge, always willing to help and always manoeuvring to drive action where others waived. “Tenacity gets things done ...”; and “Whatever you do, do your best” are words that were frequently featured when Peter’s name was mentioned and for this we must thank him—he has set the bar high and started something big, which knowing Peter he surely expects us to do something with. So, in honour of Peter’s memory, we challenge you all to look carefully at what Peter accomplished and seek to take it forward in a way that you would expect of the man himself, to the highest standard and with delivery in mind.

Peter’s Contributions in IMWA Publications

Günther P, Maree JP, Strobos G, Mtshikulu JS (2003) Neutralisation of acid leachate in a coal processing plant with calcium carbonate. In: Nel PJL (ed) *Mine Water and the Environment*. In: Proc, 8th. International Mine Water Association (IMWA) Congress, Johannesburg, pp 367–382

Harck T, Reynecke R, Bezuidenhout N, Govender K, Gunther P (2008) Managing the groundwater impact of mine water treatment waste. In: Proc, 10th IMWA congress, pp 275–278

Harck T, Pretorius J, Gunther P (2012) A case study of underground brine disposal. In: McCullough CD, Lund MA, Wyse L (eds) *International Mine Water Association Symposium*. Edith Cowan University, Bunbury, pp 607–614

Hutton B, Kahan I, Naidu T, Gunther P (2009) Operating and maintenance experience at the emalahleni water reclamation plant. In: Water Institute of Southern Africa, International Mine Water Association (eds) *Proceedings, International Mine Water Conference*. Document Transformation Technologies, Pretoria, pp 415–430

Maree JP, Günther P, Strobos G, Waanders FB (2004) Optimizing the effluent treatment at a coal mine by process modelling. *Mine Water Environ* 23(2):87–90

Maree JP, Strobos G, Greben HA, Netshidaulu E, Steyn E, Christie A, Günther P, Waanders FB (2004) Treatment of acid leachate from coal discard using calcium carbonate and biological sulphate removal. *Mine Water Environ* 23(3):144–151