



# ***DISASTER MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE OF SOUTHERN AFRICA (DMISA)***

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25 August 2021

Hon Mrs. F. Muthambi  
Chairperson  
Portfolio Committee on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs  
Parliament of South Africa

Attention: Ms. S Cassiem  
[scassiem@parliament.gov.za](mailto:scassiem@parliament.gov.za)

Dear Madam

## COMMENT ON DISASTER MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT BILL [B2-2021]

The Disaster Management Institute is a non-statutory Professional Body for Disaster Management in South Africa and wishes to make the following comments on the Disaster Management Amendment Bill.

The Bill is in conflict with the intention of the Disaster Management Act, 57 of 2002 as outlined in the preamble "To provide for an integrated and coordinated disaster management policy that focuses on preventing or reducing the risk of disasters, mitigating the severity of disasters, emergency preparedness, rapid and effective response to disasters and post disaster recovery and rehabilitation;"

The purpose of the legislation is to ensure that risk reduction and rapid response is provided to potential disasters and disasters. As each disaster is unique and must be addressed on the evolving merits of the situation there must be sufficient flexibility for this to take place.

Evidence of this is the more than 200 regulations that were promulgated by several ministers following the national declaration of a state of disaster to manage the COVID-19 pandemic. The fact that regulations and directions could be quickly adjusted based on lessons learnt with earlier versions is testament to the effectiveness and utility of the enabling legislation.

The Institute recognizes the importance of accountability but cautions that it should not hamper the rapid, effective management of a disaster where life, property, the

environment and the functioning of communities are under immediate threat. It is highly likely that the proposed amendments to the declaration of a national disaster (section 27), provincial disasters (section 41) and local disasters (section 55) will add to bureaucratic processes and will result in delays that are not conducive to rapid response.

Requirements such as a 60% majority for adoption of resolutions and the need for public debate will result in unnecessary time-consuming processes.

Any amendment should strive to unlock blockages that could result in delays, while maintaining the necessary oversight. The more effective functioning of the Intergovernmental Committee on Disaster Management, as envisaged in section 4 of the Act, could perhaps provide an opportunity for the exercise of Parliamentary oversight.

Slow onset disasters such as epidemics, drought and famine extend for months to years and consideration should be given to the extension of the three-month declaration period to accommodate these longer duration events rather than to reduce the validity period.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P Adams', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Patrick Adams  
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