

Welcome address: Patron Members Lunch – 16 November 2011

On behalf of the Executive Board and Council of WISA, I would like to welcome you to the 2011 Patron Members Lunch. A special welcome to Mr Dhesigen Naidoo, WRC, CEO, Dr Harrison Pienaar, CSIR, NRE, and Mr Manu Padiaychee, Johannesburg Water, Managing Director.

WISA has had a very challenging year which began with the precautionary suspension, investigation and subsequent termination of the previous Chief Executive's contract. However for every low there are always a few good highs! Proof of this is in the 3rd Municipal Water Quality Conference which was attended by over 800 delegates and proved to be very successful from the technical program, to the Awards evening, exhibition and technical tours! Membrane Technology division held a successful conference during September 2011 in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal Province. Young Water Professionals held its 2nd Regional Conference that was attended by more than 400 delegates in July 2011. There are also other technical divisions and branches who have arranged activities for information sharing in their respective areas, this is much appreciated.

WISA membership has grown increasingly: Associate Members has grown by 27%, Members by 18% and students by 4%, an overall increase of 11.5%; this is the fruits of our efforts to market WISA extensively this year. Exhibitions included two Career Expos, the Spring Show in Pretoria, Afriwater, IMESA, Ground Water Conference, YWP Conference, etc.

In May 2011 WISA appointed Ms Anita Pillay as the Training Coordinator and Manager! This is in line with WISA's Strategic Plan to ensure that training gaps in the sector are addressed and the appropriate training is arranged to meet the sector needs.

Through the tireless efforts of Ms Susan van Heerden and her colleagues, WISA has finally established a branch in Nelspruit, Mpumalanga Province. This branch has been extremely busy since its launch in June 2011 and it is hoped that WISA will attain more members through this branch's initiatives.

On 21 – 22 September 2011 Technical Managers and Operational staff converged in Swellendam, Western Cape Province, in a bid to establish a Water Care Forum. The forum will serve as a platform at which the Department of Water Affairs can interact with Local Government in the Western Cape with regard to all sectors' water management. The forum will be utilized as a vehicle to support municipalities with the implementation of the Blue and Green Drop Certification and legislation pertaining to the National Water Act. This is the first forum of this kind in our country and our members in this province need to be commended for the job well done. I would like to see this approach being rolled out to other Provinces. We are currently facing a challenge of officials within the sector not taking decisions as soon as possible and this leads to unfavorable working conditions. I believe that a forum like this will play an important role in enhancing role players' decision making and improving water sector performance.

This delay in decision making may be associated with skills shortage or lack of experience. I believe that you as Patron Members can play a vital role in training the youth entering the work environment. As much as we have a role as Patron Members, the issue of career development rests with the individual and therefore youth must also play their role.

We are also proud that Mr Ronald Brown, WISA Vice President, was selected as the Mission Leader for the South African Delegation that attended the International Water Week Conference held in Amsterdam recently. WISA will be working to strengthen its ties with the Dutch to the benefit of the water sector.

In conclusion I am glad to inform you that WISA was recently awarded a certificate of Professional Affiliate Membership of IMESA.

Thank you

AM Mancotywa
WISA President

