

[Presidential Inauguration Message – 27 May 2009](#)
[DR KEVIN PIETERSEN](#)

[Distinguished Guests](#)
[Ladies and Gentlemen](#)

Thank you to the Council and Board of the Water Institute of Southern Africa (WISA) who have entrusted me with the position of President of WISA. I warmly thank Dr Heidi Snyman for her service and inspired leadership as President and her continued contribution to WISA and the wider water sector. In this regard, I also welcome Mr Anderson Mancoty as Vice President and look forward to his support and contribution.

I have been involved in a number of professional societies over the years. They exist because of the efforts of a few dedicated volunteers. Upfront, I would like to acknowledge the WISA volunteers. The Webster's Third International Dictionary defines "volunteer" as "one who enters into or offers himself for any **service of his own free will**. To these uncoerced persons, I say thank you.

As the T-shirt slogan says "Volunteering does not pay but at least your resume will be three-quarters of a page"

Today, we are a sector in flux. We are faced with unprecedented public scrutiny and are confronted with frequent media headlines about a water crisis! We can debate what a water crisis means but we are confronted with the following challenges water issues **NOW!**

- Rehabilitation and maintenance of aging infrastructure
- Planning and implementation of new infrastructure projects
- Poor drinking water quality in some areas
- Decant of acid mine drainage and other water quality threats
- Limited human resource skills base
- Non-compliance
- Rising demand for water

Again, we can debate the seriousness of each issue, its relevance and its degree of importance. We, however, all must agree that these challenges are **URGENT!**

I believe that we are at a juncture of time in the water sector, and that we need to take firm responsibility for our future. We need to start working more closely as a team, rather than as individual stakeholders. We need to move beyond debate, discussion, pilot studies, case studies and workshop. We need to work on large-scale implementation programmes.

We need to be ambitious. We need **HYDROSOLIDARITY!** After all our **BLOOD IS BLUE.**

So, what is the role of WISA?

I would contend an extremely important one. Our role is nothing less than to find solutions to the water challenges that confront us.

Our value proposition is:

- We provide the forums/networks for the water sector to **INTERACT** on a range of water issues.
- We **FACILITATE** discussions between sector stakeholders.
- We provide **KNOWLEDGE** and **ADVICE** on a range of important water issues.
- **A SPECIALIST POOL** of persons is available within WISA to address most of the water problems.
- We can **MONITOR** good and bad governance in the water sector

- We can **TRAIN the TRAINERS**. We can **ACCREDIT** services, professional registration, training etc.
- We can **CAPACITATE** the next generation of young professionals in the water sector.
- We are able to do **DUE DILIGENCE** and **PEER REVIEW** of the sector.
- We are able to **ARBITRATE** on disputes
- We can **PROMOTE** the water sector.

We can do all of these things, but in these difficult times I believe we are still not doing enough. My tenure of **PRESIDENT** starts with the implementation of a new WISA Strategic Plan. This requires a number of strategic actions over the next few years, which include:

1. Improve corporate structure effectiveness
2. Drive membership quality growth
3. Cultivate Donor, Sponsorship and Volunteer Support
4. Excite Brand and Visibility
5. Produce Deliverables and Operations
6. Strengthen Corporate Governance
7. Optimize Sourcing

We need to focus on improving and simplifying WISA's corporate structure in order to align it with organizational strategy, size, accountability, effectiveness and efficiency as well as governance requirements. At the same time we need to ensure improved membership benefits as well as increasing membership growth. We need to ensure continuous prudence with regard to corporate governance, especially as we work with third party contributions.

We need a viable financial model for WISA. What are our income streams? How do we source opportunities? How do we ensure that any offerings do not compromise the strategic intent, goals and corporate governance policies of WISA?

The WISA Brand! How do we raise our profile and ensure visibility?

Importantly WISA is about product offerings. We need to make sure that WISA through its membership is able to provide services in the water sector that are of high quality.

The role of WISA is to build expertise, share knowledge and improve quality of life. This we have done on the reputation of WISA members labouring in water and wastewater treatment works, industrial and mine water plants, teaching institutions and government offices.

To these members who are at the coal face, I would like to dedicate my term. Without you, this organisation is much diminished. I would like to invite you all to join me in meeting the coming challenges in our sector. Together, and working with our partners, I believe that we can overcome even the gravest of them.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I look forward to working with the WISA Team:

- **The Chief Executive. Mr Junior Potloane and the rest of staff of WISA**
- **Mr Koos Wilken (WISA Treasurer)**

I look forward to their continued support.

I owe a debt of gratitude to all those who have supported my career in the water sector. Thank you for your understanding and support over the years. Finally, thank you to my employer Water Geosciences Consulting for donating my time to the sector in this vital manner.