PRESIDENTIAL NEWSLETTER

August 2019

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President, 2018-19

I am a little late in getting this communication out to members. I had fully intended to prepare this in June after the IAA meetings in Washington at the end of May, but time has passed me by and we are now already well into the June reporting cycles. Nonetheless let me give you some feedback on the activities in the Profession over the first half of the year.

Let me start with what Council has been addressing in this first half of the year. At the start of the year Council, along with the leaders of key committees and structures in ASSA, spent time considering the strategic objectives of the Society and what these should be over the next period of time. You will recall that these objectives were encompassed in the themes of Transformation, Education, Communication, Volunteerism, Research and Public Interest & Public Policy, which I have expressed as the “fire” supporting the “Potjie” of what we deliver.

ACTUARIAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICA

We considered how we were performing on these objectives, what key opportunities the Society should explore and what events would hold catastrophic consequences for the Society. Arising from this we have recast the previous items, plus some additional thoughts, into a framework for the next few years that smaller task teams of Council have been working on to turn into structured actions. These teams are focussing on:

Attract and Retain the Best Talent

- The objective of this strategic theme is to continue to attract the best talent to ASSA from a wider pool of potential members and ensure that this talent is retained by broadening scope of involvement of ASSA members in a wider area of practice.
- This will encompass us building on the brand of the current TASSA, AMASSA and FASSA designations and widening our net to seek out quality members for the profession in other spheres.

Connecting with the Student Community

- The objective of this theme recognises that the student members of ASSA represent the future of the Society and contribute to the sustainability of the profession and that we need to engage more with them meaningfully to address the future challenges for the profession.

Position ASSA as a Global Leader in the Development of Context-based Solutions

- The objective of this theme is to both expand what we do and how we do it so that we can say with confidence that we are a global leader in the field but to also increase awareness of the profession and our ASSA brand.
- While our history points to a very innovative and forward looking profession here in South Africa we feel that this objective is quite aspirational. The team therefore redefined the task team as the STRETCH task team to reflect that we need to continue to stretch ourselves to fulfil this objective.

To these three we have added a 4th objective:

Assure that the quality and integrity of the actuarial profession in South Africa is maintained.

- This objective is not a focus of a task team of Council as are the other three but is rather a maintenance of that which gives the foundation for our quality and integrity and covers the education programmes and professional standards.

As we move on through 2019 and into 2020 we will continue to flesh out these strategic objectives and no doubt you will continue to hear more as I and Lusani provide feedback to you.

Turning to international actuarial activities.

As mentioned above a delegation of ASSA representatives attended the IAA meetings in Washington and as leaders in the field of actuaries in Banking we had members involved in the Banking Seminar the day before the meetings. The main issue that the IAA has been dealing with has been an intensive review of the work and structure of the organisation with a goal to make it more effective and efficient.

The strategic objectives of the IAA has been settled as

Impact: Develop relationships with key supranational institutions, providing actuarial expertise on issues of relevance in global forums.

Assure: Support the development of the actuarial profession worldwide and promote appropriate professional/ education standards through Member Associations.

Advance: Promote the advancement of scientific knowledge and the skills of the actuarial profession.

The detail of the new structure is now receiving attention with a top down structure looking fairly settled but the application of the detail of how the various committees and sections fall into the new objectives above is still ongoing. Mike McDougall has represented ASSA in these restructuring task force meetings and has represented our views that we support making the IAA becoming more efficient and effective but we strongly feel that the growth of the profession into new parts of the world and into new fields must not be sacrificed in the process. We anticipate that in the Tokyo meetings some of the formal structural issues will be presented.

Also on the international theme I was privileged to attend the Actuaries Institute Australia Summit (their biennial equivalent of the ASSA convention) to engage with the Australian Institute and to see what the profession is dealing with there.

I attended some very interesting sessions on climate change and genetic testing and insurance, which I hope we will be able to also bring into our conventions or practice area seminars in the future as these are key future challenges that I believe our profession can be involved in.

However, a theme that ran through the event was the impact that the recent Royal Commission has had on the financial services industry. This is something that we as South African actuaries can learn from. Community expectations of financial services companies is changing and while in the past we may have focussed as actuaries on financial risks the time is here for us to focus on non-financial risks, especially those related to meeting community expectations, because unattended non-financial risks will ultimately result in real financial risk. A salient message for us all.

BREAKING NEWS

We have recently been informed that the American Academy of Actuaries, the US association that is primarily responsible for professional standards and pubic interest activities in the US, has chosen to withdraw from the IAA. We understand that the remaining US associations intend to continue their involvement but the impact on the IAA will need to be seen as it evolves.

Let me close with one of my favourite parts of being the president of ASSA, which I would not have been able to include if I had done my newsletter when I first intended. This is the special events we have held to recognise the new AMASSA's, CERA's and FASSA's in the profession.

These are special events because they recognise the success and hard work of the individuals and those that have supported them on the journey but also because it is an opportunity to recognise that the profession evolves as new generations of actuaries come through the ranks. In doing so, however, we need to recognise that while the profession must change to adapt to society our dedication to quality, ethics and professionalism must not change.

In our world today greed and self-interest seem to be increasingly prevalent, morality and ethics seem to be becoming more situational than absolute and the individual interest, "what's in it for me", seems to more frequently overrule the collective interest. In this environment the need for us all to protect our own reputations and that of 'Brand Actuary' and of ASSA becomes even more critical than in the past. We need to continue to emphasise our professionalism and build a culture of accountability that is enabling for us to have the courage call out where our reputation is potentially being impacted by improper practices and behaviours.

As president I believe that it is a part of my role to be a custodian of the development and reputation of ASSA but this is not for me alone, or for a limited group in leadership – **it is the role of each one of the members of ASSA. I challenge you all to join me to ensure we pass a strong and vibrant profession on to the next generation.**

Send your feedback to **President@actuarialsociety.org.za**