



PRESIDENTIAL NEWSLETTER

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After two years of disruptions due to Covid, it looks as if we may be returning to some normality. There are signs that we may have entered a more benign stage of the Covid epidemic, where Covid becomes endemic and we manage it as part of our lives like the normal flu.

I certainly hope that is the case, but then I am an eternal optimist! The current dominant strain is more infectious, but less severe, which apparently is the general trend of the evolution of a virus. This has allowed us to have our first in person Council meeting in February. It was great to see most of Council there, over the last two years they have been faces on Zoom. This epidemic has taught us a number of lessons, especially in the way we work. I do not expect that we will fully return to how we did things up to 2019, some hybrid of working from the office and from home is likely to become the

norm. And perhaps we will think twice about flying to attend just a meeting. All of this is likely to have a great impact on the environment and work life balance, so at least some good may have come from this epidemic.

However, our thoughts remain with those who lost family members, friends or colleagues. Covid had a devastating impact on our lives, our mental health and our finances. It is going to take some time for us to recover from that. Please be mindful that you need to take care of yourself and reach out for help if you feel you are not coping.

Council did a bit of a strategic review at the February Council meeting. We did not do a complete overhaul of it but assessed what have been achieved and what still needs to be done.



Tjaart Esterhuyse
ASSA President, 2021-2022

The following 4 pillars define our strategic intent:

- A** Attract and retain the best talent
- S** Support our members, especially students to ensure exam throughput
- S** Stretch ourselves by being leaders in context-based solutions
- A** Assure our stakeholders of our professional intent

A lot of actions have been taken, such as the establishment of a **Member Engagement Board** and an **Executive tasked at improving ASSA's relationship with members, and manage education support**. The Research Committee together with Lusani in his role as Public Actuary have kicked off and delivered a number of research projects, such as the **Medical Malpractice in the South African Public Sector** paper by Gregory Whittaker. More of that to come.

As you know, we started the **Wim Els Diversity Fund** as a way to honour Wim for what he has done for ASSA over the years, and in particular his drive for transforming the Society. This Fund aims to continue that. But we are disappointed about the lack of support coming from our members. Hence my appeal to each of you, to **please support this initiative by making generous donations to the Fund**, it will be used wisely and will further ASSA's transformation aims.

As you may remember, my main aim for the next two years is to **enable meaningful and respectful debate**. We need to continue to be curious and question what may appear to be the reality. Investigating differing points of view enriches our thinking and will lead better decision making. Perhaps some of you can remember the debates that sometimes took place at the convention many years ago, where feedback on papers were given at length. That was helpful at the time as it gave a potentially different perspective

on what the author was saying. We want to ensure that we can keep those kind of conversations going. Hence we will look to provide a platform for such debates in the coming year, please look out for these opportunities to be curious!

Our **ASSA pillar** is there to remind us of the importance of valuing and respecting our profession. Having meaningful and respectful discussions will strengthen that. We should refresh ourselves continually as to what the **Code of Conduct says about how we should behave as actuaries**. And that includes ensuring we clearly communicate in what capacity we are acting, what our credentials are and why we feel we are appropriately skilled to accept the opportunity. You may want to read **APN901** which deals with a lot of that!

And finally the planning for the **2022 Convention** has been started. Let's hope we can meet up in person for that event!

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ACTUARIAL SOCIETY 2022 CONVENTION
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