



# CEO REPORT

FOR THE WESSA AGM

3<sup>rd</sup> OCTOBER 2020

JT Burger



This is my last report as CEO to the WESSA AGM since I joined in August 2012. I am leaving WESSA with the comfort that I have achieved the key elements of my executive brief since I joined. I would have enjoyed staying to assist ExCo through the wild waters of what remains of the pandemic, but that was not meant to be for now.

I am thankful to my ExCo team, we have come a long way and the last 2 years overall macro-economic situation in South Africa did not make it easy to grind forward during periods of an economy in junk status and commensurate severe curtailment on spending by most organisations.

I salute the Chairpersons under whose leadership I had the privilege to serve, Dr Richard Lewis, Professor Michael Kidd and Mr Ossie Carstens. I have nothing less than respect for those Non-Executive Board members who travelled the road with WESSA, some many years and for repeated terms, some for just their two-year term. Ignoring for a minute the Board conflict since the beginning of this year, the Board has always been a united front of very accountable Directors who served WESSA well indeed.

It will be incumbent on the incoming Board to do its level best as part of one of its first fiduciary responsibilities to WESSA, to fully understand and come to terms with the background, motivation and rationale of the tumultuous situation at the Board, which has led to the resignation of 3 key executives and several Non-Executive Board members. It will be the challenge of the new Board to retain the ExCo executives and other key managers, by quickly giving clear leadership and direction and allow them to do what they do best, creating impactful interventions along the lines of our key areas of operation.

When the COVID pandemic hit our shores, the Board and ExCo responded quickly and pro-actively, realising that, in a situation where the business and projects will cease to exist for a couple of months, which forced us into a holding business pattern where swift actions were required to safeguard the cash flow of the organisation and to ensure the ability to ride the storm so to speak. There were only two primary actions to take, namely, to limit cash outflows and to retain relations with customers and funders, whose cash for funding has also dried up. Simultaneously, the ExCo also had to develop COVID related new projects to keep a presence in the hearts and minds of our stakeholders and to respond to the immediate requirements.

In my opinion and the opinion of ExCo and the outgoing Board, our plans for the holding pattern during the crisis were well thought through given the realities of extreme uncertainty worldwide and business drying up. It is a well-known fact that no business and/or NPO had the certainty of how to deal with the unknown, the new normal and the extreme organisational crisis of immediate reduction in business with commensurate losses piling up, which hit every individual and every organisation.

Amidst this global crisis, the membership Regional Representatives thought it appropriate to declare a crisis of confidence in the WESSA strategies as implemented by Board and ExCo, a declaration of a crisis which we assume carries the full mandate of WESSA membership, given that it was such a material declaration requiring, in my opinion, nothing less than a full membership mandate from the 900 paid up WESSA members.

When this crisis was declared at the Board meeting on 27 June 2020, the Board requested the Regional Representatives to develop their own strategy document, now known as the reimagined WESSA Project, a new strategy to be developed by membership for membership. It is my sincere hope that this new strategy to be formulated by membership for consideration and approval by the incoming Board, will take WESSA to new heights of impact and contribution and that it will happen rather sooner than later.

I invite everybody to read our 2020 Annual Review and decide for yourselves whether the high-level overview of activities gives you confidence in what your Board and Executive have achieved for the period under review. I, for one, am extremely proud of how our projects and interventions are creating social impact on a grand scale, as reflected by the satisfaction and stories of change amongst our youth, the future leaders of this country; as reflected by the feedback of funders and customers, nationally and internationally, and, most importantly, as reflected in the passion and dedication of all the WESSA employees.

I am closing my message by repeating what I said in my June 2020 CEO report to the WESSA Board:

The world, South Africa and indeed WESSA, have all been part of a pandemic that has challenged everything we thought we know, on all fronts of economics, psychology, social fabric and individual wellbeing. As Winston Churchill was working to form the United Nations after WWII, he famously said: “Never let a good crisis go to waste”. In another context, Churchill’s insight on human nature can also be applied to the global pandemic of COVID-19 we face today.

Human nature in WESSA during the crisis has also been tested and tested again. Character was showed in most respects, in some respects a bit lacking, but the views of our funding stakeholders primarily remains positive. Everyone was and is learning, the customer from the service provider, the service provider from the customer, Board of Directors are learning afresh what good governance means, as well as what it means if it is not in place, but truthfully, there is not one person, group, volunteer or shareholder that can claim to be experts.

The WESSA family must unite for the good of all.

I sincerely hope that we will be able to do that, sooner, rather than later.



**JT BURGER**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

3 October 2020