



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

96th AGM

29th October 2022.



Our centenary year fast approaching

WESSA comes a long way. Under four years, we will be one hundred years. That is a significant achievement which we will appropriately celebrate at the right time. Our founders would be pleased to know that WESSA has stayed the course and continue to perform splendidly against the main environmental concerns of the time (e.g., conservation). They will however be concerned that the environmental crises that we face today have become significantly complex and more threatening/deadly. More worryingly, the environmental challenges that we face are directly the result of how humans live on this planet. Realising this, among many environmental management choices, WESSA deliberately chose to work towards meaningful and sustainable capacity building solutions. These solutions include our flagship and award-winning schools programme and volunteer initiatives which we will showcase later.

It is disheartening to see the environmental crisis worsening despite our and fraternal organisations' efforts. For this reason and to ensure that WESSA continues to be relevant post its centenary year and in an attempt to double our efforts to effectively address the environmental challenges that we face, we have completed the review of our strategy. As will be mentioned below, to ensure that our strategy is not wide ranging and is focussed, we have selected the focus areas which we believe are among the most pressing environmental challenges.

Adaptability

WESSA started out as a nature conservation and over the years, WESSA has played an enormously important role in biodiversity conservation in South Africa. As the environmental challenges were rising and getting complex, WESSA kept true to the theme of constant improvement, continuous innovation, and deepening impact.

In more recent times, our adaptability and quest to deepen our impact has manifested itself through our recently approved strategy. We spent few months this year sharpening our strategy. The making of this strategy was very inclusive and thoroughgoing. We have now reached the implementation phase, but it is worth mentioning the salient features of our strategy. Flowing from research, consultation and debates, our strategy is founded on three thematic areas namely:

- Climate action
- Biodiversity and habitat integrity
- Pollution reduction

Each of the above thematic areas have sub-elements.

Education and training, advocacy and action will drive our strategy. Governance, people and financial resources will make or break our strategy. To avoid failing, we will increase our communication and collaboration with volunteers and members.

Leadership changes

During the year, we have reported on various leadership changes that we have experienced. The notable changes were those of Andrew Baxter who resigned as the CEO but agreed to join us as a non-executive director. His co-option and election to the board stands to be approved by the AGM. Helena Atkinson stepped down as the non-executive director and taken up the position of the CEO on a 5-year contract. We look forward to your executive leadership Helena. Unlike, in some of recent times, all the changes that have occurred in the last few months were very orderly. The transition was smooth because of the maturing nature of our governance structure. We are working towards succession planning both at management and board level.

We currently have few vacancies on the Board but wanted to first bed down our strategy such that the size and shape of the board supports our strategic direction. To this end, we will be coming back to members with nomination requests.

Wandisile Mandlana
WESSA Chairman