

2024 President's Address



As my term as IMESA president comes to an end, I reflect on how quickly the two years have passed and look back at what I set out to achieve during my term.

One objective was to encourage all engineering personnel working at South Africa's 257 municipalities to join IMESA. Although we have not been able to reach out to every municipality, it was good to record the highest number of new member applications received in one year for the 2023/2024 subscription year. IMESA's membership is growing, and it is good to see more and more young engineers taking up roles in the infrastructure engineering space.



There is still work to do to support professional registration of all graduate engineers, technologists, and technicians but good progress is being made with mentorship and registration programs. This was discussed at my meeting with ECSA president, Refilwe Buthelezi, in Durban in August this year and IMESA is working closely with ECSA to identify more ways to support this.

It has been an honour to represent IMESA throughout the year at various events and to interact with high level stakeholders on the crucial

issues that continue to challenge all our local municipalities.

Highlights of this year include attendance of:

- DWS Blue Drop and Green Drop Summit: 18-19 January 2024
- WRC, DWS and IMESA Collaboration, Sol Plaatje University: 12 March 2024
- The National Local Government Service Delivery Indaba: 19-20 March 2024
- ECSA Voluntary Associations President's Forum: 26 June 2024

IMESA Projects and Strategic Liaisons

Best Practice Guideline for Design Flood Estimation in Municipal Areas in South Africa

This guideline, compiled jointly by WRC and IMESA with input from other stakeholders, was completed last year and launched at our 2023 Conference in Gqeberha. Workshops were run at main centres around the country in April/May this year to disseminate the content and encourage municipalities to take note of the practices outlined in the guideline.

Based on the success of this and previous projects, WRC have called on IMESA to continue to identify technical and management skills needs and shortages in municipalities with specific focus on implementation of capacity building activities to strengthen technical capabilities within South African municipalities in the water and sanitation sectors. A memorandum of agreement has been signed for partnership on a number of training interventions over the next 5-years.

CIDB National Stakeholder Forum

Vuyani Gxagxama and Thabo Hlabela attended the CIDB National Shareholders Forum on behalf of IMESA in March 2024 and gave feedback to the executive committee on the CIDB registration of consultants and concerns raised about potential infringements on mandates of ECSA voluntary associations and professional bodies. They continue to engage with the forum.



IFME board meeting in Melbourne, Australia



Civil Engineers South Africa (CESA)

One of the winning projects from Excellence Awards presented jointly by CESA and IMESA last year was submitted to the Excellence Awards of IFME (International Federation of Municipal Engineering) which were presented at their congress in Utrecht, Netherlands in September 2024.



Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA)

IMESA continues to participate in the VA Presidents Forum to address issues such as candidacy conversion, VA framework and fees discounts, and various engagements. The establishment of a Young Professionals Portfolio (YP2) in the KwaZulu-Natal Branch has proved very successful in reaching out to young engineers. We look forward to extending this portfolio to other branches to creating a positive and motivated mindset in young engineers and aspiring engineers to expand their knowledge, to support their professional career development and to encourage registration with ECSA



National Treasury

While there has been less direct interaction with National Treasury this year, IMESA has continued to support municipal engineering by raising crucial issues related to service delivery. It is encouraging to have representatives at this conference for a panel discussion on the changes to the Public Procurement Bill.

IMESA was invited to the National Local Government Service Delivery Indaba in March 2024. It was attended mainly by politicians, mayors and councillors with only a few municipal officials. Dr Michael Sutcliffe presented and emphasised the need for municipalities to prioritise budget for asset management. The challenge is getting support from the financial and management decision-makers. Engineers often get blamed for projects not being completed or poor workmanship, but most projects are administered by non-technical or unqualified people. It is hoped that from 2025 only professionally registered people with skills in the relevant field will be appointed as gazetted by CBE and ECSA.



South African Local Government Association (SALGA)

It is appreciated that SALGA continues to endorse the IMESA conference and interact with the members and delegates on a range of interventions.



Water Research Commission (WRC)

Thabo Hlabela and I attended the WRC Northern Cape Provincial Partnership Support briefing held with various stakeholders at Sol Plaatje University in Kimberley in

March 2024. The objective was to set a framework to address local challenges in water & sanitation. A letter of intent was presented for a partnership with IMESA to work together on specific programmes and projects. Subsequently, a formal Memorandum of Agreement was signed which commits the parties to a 5-year programme to implement capacity building activities to strengthen technical capabilities within SA municipalities in the water and sanitation sector.



International Federation of Municipal Engineers (IFME)

I attended the IFME board meeting in Melbourne, Australia held in conjunction with the International Public Works conference from 29 April 2024 to 3 May 2024. Just about everything was covered from landfill optimisation to street lighting, greener roads, geographic information systems, public transport and transportation, as well as how digitalisation can and will enhance future construction projects by harnessing better information modelling, the logical evolution of Building Information Modelling (BIM). The central theme throughout tied in with a major emphasis on integrated infrastructure asset management.

A major takeaway for IFME delegates – spread across diverse geographic regions that include members from Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East and North America – is that all countries need to invest more in asset management at local government level. In this respect, Australia is a shining example.

The IFME 21st Congress under the theme of Future Green City took place in September 2024 at the Beatrix Theatre, Utrecht, Netherlands. The focus was to connect the worlds of construction, greenery, infrastructure and water. With more and more people coming to the cities to live and work and increasing pressure on urban infrastructure, what civil engineering solutions are needed for cities to become more sustainable, green and climate neutral?

At the congress, the IFME presidency was handed over by Sanne Hieltjes (Netherlands) to Ville Alatyppö (Finland) and Priyani de Silva-Currie (New Zealand) was appointed vice president.





Before the congress, IFME members were asked to submit two entries from each country for excellence awards based on projects that meet United Nations strategic development goals, one entry in the Construction Project Category and one in the Development Project (non-Construction) Category.

For South Africa, IMESA submitted the project that was awarded best paper at the 2022 IMESA Conference and the project that won in the civils category at the 2023 IMESA/CESA excellence awards. We were very proud that the winner in the Development Projects Category was the IMESA submission on "Transformative Riverine Management Program" entered by Geoff Tooley, eThekweni Municipality.

Membership and Branches

It is encouraging to see that IMESA membership numbers continue to grow. The additional branch activities like our August Woman's Day celebrations have attracted good attendance and feedback on the opportunities to network and learn from each other has been very positive. It was a pleasure for me to meet the ECSA president, Refilwe Buthelezi before she was a keynote speaker at our Kwazulu-Natal Branch Woman's Day Breakfast held at the Oyster Box Hotel on 8 August 2024.



From left: Standard Bank Sponsor, ECSA President, IMESA Deputy President, KZN Branch Vice Chair at IMESA Woman's Day Breakfast in August 2024

Please get involved at the branches and let us know how we can provide more technical development opportunities.

IMESA has branches covering the following regions:

- Northern Provinces (Gauteng)
- Free State/Northern Cape (Bloemfontein/Kimberley)
- KwaZulu-Natal (Durban)
- Border (East London)
- Eastern Cape (Port Elizabeth)
- Southern Cape/Karoo (George/Mossel Bay)
- Western Cape (Cape Town)
- SADC Countries

EXCO and Council

My thanks go to our management team of 14 executive committee members and 37 regional council representatives for their support and input during my term. I know they will continue to drive all IMESA operations and initiatives for the institute to meet its objectives.

Finances and Investments

Our Operations Director Finance, with the support of Council, has managed finances carefully and thanks to the conferences of 2022 and 2023, the institute continues to maintain a secure financial position.

IMIESA Publication

The purchase of the IMIESA magazine trademark and published rights has proved to be a good decision. The magazine is now successfully published by IMESA (Pty) Ltd thanks to the dedicated team of Alastair Currie, Joanne Lawrie and Asha Pursotham supported by additional resources who ensure that our magazine continues to be the official business-to-business communication platform for the Institute and its stakeholders in industry.

Obituary

The recent passing of Graham Keppie, IMESA president from 1988 to 1989, was a sad loss. He will be remembered for establishing the Border Branch in East London and for being an active member of IMESA for more than 40 years. He and other members will be commemorated at our AGM on Wednesday, 6 November 2024.

In Summary:

In handing over the president's portfolio, I would like to assure you that IMESA continues to be in good hands with Geoff Tooley taking over the baton as President for the 2024-2026 term. I shall continue to assist him as his Deputy President together with the newly elected EXCO/Council and the Head Office Staff.

With that, kindly allow me to thank you all for believing in me to lead this great organization during 2022-2024.

Thank you to my employer, uMngeni-uThukela Water for continuously supporting me during my presidency and allowing me to take time away from the office. This is showing uMngeni-uThukela Water's commitment to professionalizing the engineering industry and their caring about the Southern African citizens.

A very special thank you to my family for the support, allowing me to be away from home and to work during family time. You have been very supportive and proud - Nompumelelo, Ntokozo, Sabusiswa and Zibusiso Mjwara.