JOHANNESBURG ATTORNEYS' ASSOCIATION

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JOHANNESBURG ATTORNEYS' ASSOCIATION

MINUTES OF THE 83RD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Date: 8 October 2025

Time: 18h30

Venue: JCCI House, Empire Road, Milpark (in person and virtually)

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1. Welcome and Opening

The Chairperson, Azhar Aziz Ismail, opened the meeting by welcoming all attendees, both in person and online. He expressed appreciation to all members for their continued dedication to the Association and to the Johannesburg legal fraternity.

A special welcome was extended to the keynote speaker, Dr Ferial Adam, Executive Director of WaterCAN, who delivered an insightful address on Johannesburg's water crisis, drawing attention to the intersection between infrastructure failures, civic accountability, and the role of the legal profession in championing constitutional rights.

In opening remarks, the Chairperson reflected on the significance of Johannesburg as a city of resilience and opportunity, expressing appreciation for the keynote address delivered earlier in the evening. The address had focused on the civic and professional role of attorneys in supporting and uplifting their communities, including engagement in local issues such as the ongoing water crisis in Johannesburg. The Chairperson observed that, as practitioners, lawyers often become absorbed in the demands of the profession and reminded members of the importance of balancing professional obligations with community service. The

Chairperson's remarks set a tone of reflection and inspiration, underscoring the Association's commitment to professional excellence and civic responsibility.

1.1 Keynote Address on Johannesburg Water Crisis

Dr Ferial Adam's presentation, titled "The Roots and Realities of Johannesburg's Water Crisis," explored critical challenges and opportunities for advocacy:

She outlined how Rand Water sells to Joburg Water, which then supplies the city, but approximately 44% of the water is lost through leaks, illegal connections, and theft. She highlighted that 42 out of 87 reservoirs are leaking, and some cannot be filled due to structural cracks, leading to extensive outages.

Dr Adam illustrated the impact on families and essential institutions, describing communities forced to queue at tankers, elderly residents paying for water collection, and hospitals and schools left without running water. She referenced areas such as Claremont and Orlando West, where persistent sewage blockages have affected residents for years.

She criticized the lack of accountability among city entities, citing budget mismanagement and shifting blame among departments. She called this a breakdown in governance and urged legal professionals to demand transparency and uphold the right to water under Section 27 of the Constitution.

Dr Adam outlined initiatives by WaterCAN and residents to document failures, conduct independent testing, and hold authorities accountable. She announced a planned protest for 1 November, inviting participation and legal support from members of the profession.

In closing, she encouraged lawyers to lend their expertise to advocacy efforts, assist affected communities, and use the law as an instrument for civic empowerment and environmental justice.

1.**2** **Performance by Mzansi Ballet's Private Presley Ballet (choroegraphed by Shaun Bovim)**

Members were treated to a snippet of the show by cast members Mathlatse, Kiana and Jorge, to whom the JAA's thanks and gratitude are extended.

2. Attendance and apologies

Attendance was duly recorded for both in-person and virtual participants.

The Chairperson reminded members who arrived late to confirm their attendance before leaving, to ensure accurate record-keeping.

Apologies were formally noted from Ms. Dominique Aricum.

The following Executive Committee ("Exco") members were recorded as present:
The Chairperson (Azhar Aziz-Ismail)
Chantelle Gladwin-Wood (Vice-Chairperson)
Katherine Gascoigne (Treasurer, attending online)
Roxanne Barnard (Secretary, attending online)
Yusuf Wadee (in person)
Nakka de Klerk (online)
Bruce Shipalana (in person)
Karla Strydom (co-opted member, online)
Hannah Hilson (online)

Bongani Luthuli (online)
Nicole Naidu-Roopnarian, in person and
Naledi Makaba (online)

The Chairperson expressed gratitude to all members of the Exco for their attendance and continued commitment to the Association's objectives.

3. Confirmation of previous minutes

The minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting (AGM) were circulated to members via email.

The minutes were proposed for adoption: accepted and seconded without objection. The minutes were accordingly adopted as a true and correct record.

4. Financial Report

The Treasurer presented the annual financial statements, which were circulated in advance. Members confirmed receipt and perusal. No objections or queries were raised.

The financial statements were duly adopted. Members who had not received copies were invited to request them via email.

5. Chairperson's report

The Chairperson delivered a comprehensive report outlining the progress, initiatives, and achievements of the Association during the reporting period. The report emphasized the Association's ongoing transformation and modernization, while continuing to honour its 83-year history of service to the legal profession.

5.1 Transformation and Rebranding

The transformation and rebranding of the Association were noted as pivotal achievements. The Association had modernized its identity and operational systems, embracing digital platforms and innovative practices that enhanced efficiency and accessibility.

5.2 Digital Transformation

In the sphere of digital transformation, the Association's website was undergoing a major redevelopment to improve the member experience, while exclusive WhatsApp communities were launched to promote professional networking, collaboration, and information sharing among members.

5.3 Education and Professional Development

In respect of education and training, the Association continued to offer free 'Lunch and Learn' sessions and established 'Learning Labs' in collaboration with other regional associations. These programmes aim to promote continuous professional development and to prepare attorneys for a rapidly changing legal environment. Further emphasis was placed on responsible and ethical use of legal technology, artificial intelligence, and digital tools within practice management.

5.4 Advocacy and Stakeholder Engagement

Engagements were held with the judiciary, OCJ, SITA, and other legal stakeholders regarding Court Online challenges, fraudulent court orders, and inconsistencies in procedures. Collaboration with the Law Society of South Africa, the Legal Practice Council, and the South African Attorneys Federation was highlighted.

5.5 Subcommittee and Sectoral Reports

5.5.1 Property Committee

The Property Committee successfully advocated for the relocation of the Deeds Registry to safer premises and continued to address issues relating to property law and infrastructure.

5.5.2 Road Accident Fund Committee

The Road Accident Fund Committee engaged extensively with the RAF Board to resolve backlog and payment challenges while opposing amendments that could undermine claimants' rights.

The Chairperson further acknowledged advancements in mediation and dispute resolution, noting that mandatory mediation had shown promising results in reducing trial backlogs.

5.5.3 Legal Technology Committee

The JAA has worked towards the advancement of responsible adoption of AI, organized Court Online workshops, and contributed to national discussions on legal tech policy

5.5.4 Criminal Law Subcommittee

Reported a stable environment with no significant issues raised by or against members or court officials.

5.6 Social and Community Engagement

Events such as ballet evenings, the "Rackets and Rulings" (Padel Showdown), and wine & cheese gatherings promoted camaraderie and member wellness. The Chairperson encouraged continued participation in these initiatives.

5.7 External Relations and Recognition

The Chairperson extended special recognition to the judiciary, celebrating the appointment of Judge Dunstan Mlambo as Deputy Chief Justice of South Africa, and reaffirmed the Association's appreciation for his longstanding collaboration with the Johannesburg legal fraternity.

The Chairperson concluded by expressing gratitude to the Executive Committee, staff, and sponsors—including the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Lamna Pledging Finance, and Nzansi Pele—for their continued support of the Association's initiatives.

The Association continued to collaborate with Gauteng Attorneys Association, NADEL, BLA, and ProBono.org, strengthening inter-association advocacy. The Chairperson, Azhar, was recognised in the *Mail & Guardian 200 Young South Africans* for his contributions to justice.

5.8 Future Plans and Events

The Chairperson announced that the Association's annual Judges' Function would take place on 19 November at Melrose Arch, under the theme 'A Night in Bollywood'. Members were encouraged to attend and participate in what promises to be a distinguished networking occasion. Plans were also announced for several educational tours in 2026, including visits to the High Court, Magistrates' Court, and Constitutional Court. These initiatives will offer

candidate attorneys and junior practitioners an opportunity to gain practical insights into court operations and etiquette.

5.9 General

Under general business, the Chairperson recorded condolences on behalf of the Association for the loss of members of the legal profession, including judges, magistrates, and attorneys, who passed away during the year. Their contributions to the legal community were acknowledged with sincere gratitude and respect.

5.10 Questions and Closure

The Chairperson opened the floor for questions. One query was raised by a virtual attendee, Ms. Sibongile, whose question could not be heard due to technical difficulties and was accordingly deferred for written response via email. No further questions were raised from the floor.

The Chairperson expressed appreciation to all members for their attendance and engagement, and formally declared the meeting closed.

Members were thereafter invited to proceed to the adjoining room for refreshments. The Chairperson noted that the catering was fully halaal and included vegetarian options.

Confirmed as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

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Chairperson

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Secretary