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02 November 2026

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT
REPORT FOR THE YEAR UNDER REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

It is both an honour and a privilege to report on the work of the Gauteng Attorneys Association ("GAA") during the past year.

As I reflect on the year that has passed, I do so with an overwhelming sense of gratitude, pride and appreciation. It has been an extraordinary privilege to serve as Chairperson of the GAA. It has been a year filled with opportunities, challenges, difficult conversations, important engagements and, above all, a shared commitment to making a meaningful difference in our profession.

I would like to begin by expressing my sincere gratitude to every member of the Executive, our constituent associations, our committees and every practitioner who, in big and small ways, contributed to the work of the GAA throughout the year.

To those who have been my hands, my ears and, quite literally, my eyes and ears on the ground — thank you. To those who attended meetings, raised concerns, reported developments, challenged decisions, offered solutions, made representations, followed up on issues and ensured that the voice of practitioners was heard, your contribution has been invaluable. Much of the work of an association happens away from the spotlight. It happens in conversations, in meetings, in correspondence, in the corridors of our courts and, often, in the willingness of individuals to give their time and energy without expecting recognition. I have been fortunate to be surrounded by people who understand that service to the profession is not merely a title or a position, but a responsibility.

This year has also reminded me that leadership is not always comfortable, nor is it always popular. There are times when difficult issues must be confronted, when uncomfortable conversations cannot be avoided and when standing up for what one believes to be right may invite criticism or resistance. But I have always

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believed that the greater failure would be to remain silent, to look the other way or to do nothing simply because taking a position may be unpopular.

Martin Luther King Jr. once said:

"The time is always right to do what is right."

Those words resonate deeply with me. An association cannot fulfil its purpose by simply observing what is happening around it. It must be prepared to engage, to question, to challenge where necessary, to advocate and, where the circumstances demand it, to stand firm. We may not always get everything right, and we will not always agree, but we must never lose sight of why we are here and whom we serve.

The GAA is far bigger than any one individual, any one association or any one Executive. Its strength lies in its collective voice, its diversity, its willingness to work together and its ability to bring the concerns of practitioners to the appropriate platforms. Our responsibility is to ensure that this voice remains relevant, independent, constructive and, when necessary, courageous.

I am particularly grateful for the trust placed in me to lead the Association during this year. It has been a privilege I do not take lightly. I leave this term with immense appreciation for the friendships forged, the lessons learnt, the battles fought, the progress made and, perhaps most importantly, the people who stood alongside me throughout the journey.

To every person who picked up the telephone, sent a message, attended a meeting, raised an issue, offered assistance or simply asked, "What can I do to help?" — thank you. You have made this year what it was.

We may not have agreed on everything, we may not have pleased everyone, and we may not have resolved every issue, but we have remained engaged, we have spoken up, we have advocated and we have continued to show up for our profession.

As I bring this chapter of my tenure to a close, I do so with a grateful heart and a deep appreciation for everyone who walked this journey with me. Whatever progress has been made during this year belongs not to one person, but to every individual who contributed their time, energy, commitment and voice to the work of the Association.

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I am reminded that positions are temporary, but the relationships we build, the causes we champion and the contributions we make to the profession endure beyond our term of office. If this year has taught me anything, it is that there is tremendous strength in people who are prepared to stand together, to speak up for what matters and to give of themselves for something bigger than their individual interests.

I thank you for your trust, your support, your honesty and, above all, for standing alongside me. It has been a privilege to serve this Association, and I remain immensely proud of what we have collectively achieved.

1. THE GAA'S MANDATE AND COMMITMENT TO THE PROFESSION

The fundamental purpose of the Gauteng Attorneys Association (GAA) is to serve as a strong, unified and representative voice for legal practitioners across Gauteng. As an umbrella organisation representing its constituent associations, namely the Pretoria Attorneys Association (PAA), Johannesburg Attorneys Association (JAA), West Rand Legal Practitioners Association (WRLPA) and Soweto Legal Fraternity, the GAA provides a collective platform through which the interests, concerns and aspirations of practitioners can be advanced and protected.

The GAA recognises that its strength lies in the collective voice of its members and that its responsibility extends beyond merely representing its constituent associations. It must ensure that the realities faced by practising attorneys are heard, acknowledged and meaningfully addressed by the institutions and stakeholders that shape the legal profession and the administration of justice.

Throughout the year under review, the GAA continued to fulfil this mandate through direct engagement and representation with the Legal Practice Council, the Judiciary, the Office of the Chief Justice, the Road Accident Fund, the Master's Offices and various other regulatory and administrative bodies.

These engagements were driven by matters affecting the day-to-day practice of attorneys and the efficient administration of justice, including delays within our courts, procedural and technological challenges, regulatory concerns, operational inefficiencies and the increasing financial and administrative pressures confronting legal practices.

The GAA remains steadfast in its commitment to being an independent, credible and united voice for the profession. It will continue to raise difficult issues, challenge inefficiencies where necessary and ensure that the concerns of practising attorneys are brought directly to those in a position to address them.

The GAA's responsibility is not merely to represent the profession, but to ensure that the voice of the practising attorney is heard, respected and considered in decisions that affect the future of the legal profession.

2. ENGAGEMENTS AND REPRESENTATIONS DURING THE YEAR UNDER REVIEW

In carrying out its mandate, the GAA engaged with various institutions, regulatory bodies and stakeholders on matters affecting the legal profession and the administration of justice. These engagements were undertaken with the objective of ensuring that practitioners' concerns were brought to the attention of the relevant decision-makers, that practical difficulties experienced by attorneys were addressed, and that meaningful progress was pursued.

The following sections set out the GAA's principal engagements, representations and initiatives during the year under review, highlighting the matters raised, the representations made and, where applicable, the progress achieved.

2.1 *Relationship with the Legal Practice Council (LPC)*

A significant milestone during the period under review was the first-ever formal engagement between the Gauteng Attorneys Association (GAA) and the Legal Practice Council (LPC), which took place on 9 May 2026. The meeting was attended by representatives of the LPC together with the executive members of the GAA's constituent and sister associations.

The engagement was particularly important given the growing concern amongst legal practitioners that, as the regulatory body governing the profession, the LPC does not always sufficiently consult with, or involve practitioners before taking decisions that have a direct impact on their daily practices. Practitioners have expressed the view that decisions affecting the profession should not be taken without meaningful engagement with those who are ultimately required to implement and comply with them.

Several important issues were raised, including the annual practising fees and subscriptions, legal education and the funding thereof, as well as the financial and administrative pressures experienced by practitioners across different sectors and geographical areas. It was emphasised that practitioners do not all operate under the same financial circumstances and that the realities of a sole practitioner or a small legal practice differ considerably from those of larger firms.

The GAA further highlighted the increasing regulatory and compliance burden placed on smaller practices, particularly in relation to FICA requirements, the Legal

Sector Code and the various obligations imposed on legal practitioners. These requirements carry both financial and administrative implications.

Against this background, the announcement of fee increases without prior meaningful consultation has understandably caused concern amongst practitioners, many of whom are already struggling to sustain their practices while meeting their regulatory obligations.

The GAA made it clear that the profession needs a regulatory environment in which practitioners are not merely expected to comply with decisions but are afforded an opportunity to participate in the discussions and processes leading to those decisions.

Importantly, the meeting concluded with a commitment that the LPC would engage with the GAA and the other legal practitioner associations on matters affecting the profession. This was a welcome development and an important step towards establishing a more constructive and collaborative relationship between the regulator and the practitioners it serves.

The GAA regards this first engagement as an important milestone. It provides an opportunity for the collective concerns of practitioners, through their respective associations, to be heard at regulatory level. We remain committed to ensuring that the GAA fulfils its role as a representative voice for practitioners and that the concerns of sole practitioners, small firms and larger practices alike are brought to the attention of the LPC.

Our expectation is that this engagement will not be a once-off exercise, but the beginning of an ongoing relationship characterised by meaningful consultation, transparency and mutual respect.

2.2 *Judiciary and Court Engagements: High Court Efficiency Enhancement Committees (EEC)*

During the period under review, the Gauteng Attorneys Association continued to participate in the High Court Efficiency Enhancement Committee meetings held during each court term at both the Johannesburg and Pretoria High Courts.

These meetings provide an important forum for engagement between the Judiciary and the various stakeholders involved in the administration of justice, including the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), Legal Aid South Africa, the Road Accident Fund (RAF), the Department of Correctional Services, the Office of

the Family Advocate, the State Attorney, the Chief Registrar, Taxing Masters, representatives of the legal profession and other relevant role players.

The purpose of these engagements is to identify and address operational challenges affecting the efficient administration of justice, to improve communication between the various stakeholders and to find practical solutions to issues impacting on practitioners, litigants and the functioning of the courts.

The GAA, through its participation in these meetings, ensures that the concerns raised by attorneys and their clients are brought directly to the attention of the Judiciary and the relevant administrative authorities. The discussions are not limited to matters affecting the legal profession but extend to broader systemic challenges, including court administration, delays in the allocation of hearing dates, Court Online and CaseLines functionality, the management of court rolls, the availability of court records and transcripts, taxation delays, RAF litigation and mediation processes, criminal trial backlogs and the management of awaiting-trial detainees.

Of particular importance is that these meetings allow stakeholders to engage directly with one another, identify the causes of delays and inefficiencies and, where possible, agree on resolutions and allocate responsibility for implementing corrective measures.

The GAA's participation in both the Johannesburg and Pretoria High Court Efficiency Enhancement Committees remains an important part of its mandate to represent the interests of practitioners and to contribute constructively towards improving the administration of justice in Gauteng. The Association will continue to raise matters of concern, monitor resolutions taken at these meetings and ensure that issues affecting its members are appropriately ventilated at the relevant stakeholder level.

2.3 *Provincial Efficiency Enhancement Committee (PEEC)*

The Gauteng Attorneys Association (GAA) continued to participate actively in the Gauteng Provincial Efficiency Enhancement Committee (PEEC), representing the interests of the legal profession and contributing to provincial-level discussions aimed at improving the administration of justice, court efficiency and the functioning of the criminal justice system. The PEEC provides an important platform for engagement between the Judiciary, court administration, government departments and representatives of the legal profession, enabling the GAA to raise operational challenges and advocate for practical solutions affecting practitioners and court users across the province.

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At these meetings, the GAA raised a number of matters directly affecting the profession and the efficient functioning of the courts. These included the ongoing technical difficulties experienced by practitioners using Court Online, particularly duplicate notifications, documents disappearing from electronic case files and difficulties accessing documents required for court proceedings. The need for improved system functionality, reliable connectivity, appropriate training and effective technical support was emphasised.

The Association also raised concerns regarding the Road Accident Fund (RAF), particularly its lack of responsiveness to mediation notices, pleadings and court orders. The resulting increase in interlocutory applications, unnecessary litigation, additional legal costs and pressure on judicial resources was highlighted. The GAA supported renewed engagement between the RAF, the Judiciary and the legal profession to improve compliance, meaningful participation in mediation and the resolution of outstanding matters.

The significant backlog in the Pretoria Special Interlocutory Court (SIC) was also addressed, with particular concern regarding the continued reliance on manual processes, physical submissions and interim spreadsheets for the allocation of hearing dates. The need for a sustainable electronic solution and intervention by the Office of the Chief Justice was supported.

Further matters raised included communication and handover procedures when sheriffs are removed or replaced, outstanding appeals and transcripts affecting Legal Aid South Africa, court infrastructure constraints and shortages of court orderlies.

The September 2026 report of the Judicial Inspectorate for Correctional Services (JICS), presented to the PEEC, painted a concerning picture of the conditions prevailing within Gauteng's correctional facilities. The statistics reflected substantial overcrowding, with inmate populations considerably exceeding approved accommodation capacity at a number of facilities. Certain correctional centres were operating at more than double their intended capacity.

The report also highlighted the significant proportion of foreign nationals accommodated in Gauteng's correctional facilities, with delays relating to documentation and repatriation contributing to the pressure on available capacity. The shortage of psychiatric hospital beds for state patients awaiting placement was another matter of concern.

Of particular relevance to the legal profession were the complaints relating to access to legal representation, as well as concerns regarding transfers, communication with family members and access to social workers. These issues

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have a direct bearing on the constitutional rights of persons in detention and the ability of practitioners to discharge their professional responsibilities.

The PEEC's September 2026 reporting further reflected ongoing challenges within the criminal justice system, including case finalisation, withdrawals, matters struck from the roll and lengthy court processes.

The Department of Correctional Services similarly reported significant overcrowding across Gauteng's correctional facilities, with particular pressure in the Johannesburg, Krugersdorp and Modderbee management areas. The statistics relating to remand detainees were equally concerning, particularly the number of individuals who had remained in custody for prolonged periods, in some instances exceeding two years.

The continued detention of persons awaiting trial, particularly where delays are prolonged or bail remains unaffordable, places substantial pressure on correctional facilities and raises important access-to-justice concerns. The PEEC noted the use of Section 63A bail review applications and Section 49G referrals as mechanisms to address unnecessary and prolonged detention. The implementation of Audio Visual Remand (AVR) technology was also noted as a positive development, although greater utilisation remains necessary. The Department further reported a high level of compliance in conducting Continuous Risk Assessments of remand detainees.

These statistics are more than administrative indicators. They reflect the human consequences of delays within the criminal justice system and reinforce the need for continued engagement between the Judiciary, correctional services, prosecutors, legal practitioners and other stakeholders.

These engagements highlighted several interrelated challenges requiring continued attention, including correctional centre overcrowding, the expedited finalisation of long-outstanding criminal matters, the reduction of prolonged remand detention, improved utilisation of technology such as AVR and Court Online, and stronger coordination between the various stakeholders in the justice system.

The GAA regards its participation in the Provincial Efficiency Enhancement Committee as an important component of its provincial advocacy and liaison responsibilities. Through this forum, the Association is able to bring practical difficulties experienced by practitioners to the attention of the relevant decision-makers, contribute to discussions on systemic challenges and advocate for improvements that benefit both the profession and the public.

The GAA will continue to participate actively in the PEEC, monitor outstanding matters and engage constructively with the Judiciary, court administration and other justice sector stakeholders to promote an efficient, accessible and effective administration of justice throughout Gauteng Province.

2.4 *Taxations – Johannesburg High Court*

Taxations remain an ongoing concern in the Johannesburg High Court, with practitioners experiencing persistent difficulties and delays in the allocation and finalisation of taxation matters.

Following various concerns raised by members, a dedicated subcommittee was established to address taxation-related issues. An engagement was subsequently held with the Acting Deputy Judge President, together with the relevant administrative representatives, to discuss the challenges experienced by practitioners and to identify possible solutions.

As a result of this engagement, regular meetings are now held with the relevant stakeholders ahead of the High Court Efficiency Enhancement Committee (EEC) meetings. These engagements provide an opportunity to raise outstanding concerns, monitor progress and seek practical solutions to the difficulties experienced by practitioners.

The issues currently receiving attention include:

- Delays and difficulties in the allocation and reallocation of taxation dates.
- Matters previously enrolled not reflecting on the taxation rolls, while matters already settled or removed continue to appear.
- Ongoing challenges with Court Online, particularly access for legal cost consultants and the processing of applications for taxation dates.
- Delays in the uploading of endorsed allocaturs following the finalisation of taxations.
- The availability and attendance of Taxing Masters at scheduled virtual taxations.
- A lack of communication regarding postponed taxations and the unavailability of Taxing Masters.
- The need for clear and consistent procedures, including the allocation of urgent taxation dates.

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The subcommittee will continue to engage with the relevant stakeholders, with the objective of improving the administration of taxations, addressing unnecessary delays and ensuring a more efficient and predictable process for practitioners and their clients.

2.5 *Magistrates' Courts – Gauteng*

The GAA, through its constituent associations, continues to engage with the various Magistrates' Courts across Gauteng on matters affecting the daily practice of legal practitioners and the efficient administration of justice. Similar to the engagements held through the High Court Efficiency Enhancement Committees, regular stakeholder meetings are held with representatives of the Judiciary, court administration, the State Attorney, Legal Aid South Africa and the sheriffs' profession.

These meetings provide an important platform for practitioners to raise operational challenges, address recurring difficulties and engage directly with the relevant stakeholders in an effort to find practical solutions.

Among the matters discussed and addressed at these meetings are:

LPC Digital Cards: Concerns have been raised regarding instances where presiding officers and court officials are reluctant to accept the digital LPC card as confirmation that a legal practitioner is entitled to practise and appear in court. The GAA continues to emphasise the importance of uniform recognition of the digital card as proof of a practitioner's status.

Missing Court Files and Court Administration: The continued problem of missing or unavailable court files remains a concern, often resulting in unnecessary postponements and delays. The need for an effective digital court management system, which would allow for the electronic tracking and accessibility of court files, has accordingly been highlighted.

Sheriffs and Service of Process: Various issues relating to the service of court processes have been discussed, including compliance with the Magistrates' Court Rules, service at *domicilium* addresses and the correct procedures to be followed where personal service cannot be effected. The importance of sheriffs acting in accordance with the applicable Rules, rather than simply following instructions that may be inconsistent with those Rules, has also been emphasised.

Outstanding Sheriffs' Accounts: Concerns regarding the non-payment of sheriffs' accounts by legal practitioners, while still requiring sheriffs to attend to further processes, have been raised. The constituent associations have undertaken to

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address this with their members, while sheriffs have been encouraged to utilise the appropriate formal collection procedures.

Payment of Sheriffs by the Department: Delays in payments due to sheriffs by the Department of Justice have also received attention. The importance of addressing outstanding accounts directly with the relevant departmental officials and the Accounts Department has been emphasised.

State Attorney Attendances: The challenges experienced with attendances by State Attorneys, particularly as a result of staff shortages, have been discussed. Proposals to address the capacity constraints, including the possible outsourcing of certain work and the briefing of private practitioners, have been raised.

Court Facilities and Accessibility: Concerns regarding the physical state of court facilities and accessibility for practitioners and members of the public with disabilities have been discussed. Particular attention has been given to inadequate lift facilities, wheelchair access and the arrangements required to accommodate visually impaired persons and persons requiring assistance.

Court Dress Code: Queries relating to appropriate court attire, particularly the wearing of traditional attire, have also been raised to ensure clarity and consistency in the application of the relevant professional conduct requirements.

Fraudulent Court Orders: The appropriate procedure for escalating concerns relating to the authenticity of court orders has also been discussed to ensure that any suspected irregularities are brought to the attention of the appropriate judicial authorities.

These engagements are important in ensuring that the GAA remains accessible to practitioners and that concerns arising from the daily functioning of the Magistrates' Courts are addressed directly with those responsible for court administration and the administration of justice.

The GAA will continue to participate in these engagements and to work with the Judiciary and other stakeholders towards resolving the practical difficulties experienced by legal practitioners and improving the overall functioning of the Magistrates' Courts throughout Gauteng.

2.6 ***Roodepoort Magistrates' Court – Court Beautification Initiative***

During the period under review, the GAA, through its constituent associations and in collaboration with the Judiciary, court management and other stakeholders in

the legal profession, supported the Court Beautification Initiative at the Roodepoort Magistrates' Court.

The initiative was aimed at contributing towards a clean, safe and dignified court environment for all who work in and make use of the courts. It brought together members of the Judiciary, magistracy, court personnel, the NPA, SAPS, members of the legal profession and other stakeholders in a collective effort to improve the court precinct.

The activities included gardening and planting, cleaning of court precincts, painting and general maintenance, removal of litter and the organisation of public and staff spaces. Beyond the physical improvements, the initiative provided an opportunity for stakeholders across the justice system to work together towards a shared objective and to demonstrate their collective commitment to the institutions in which they serve.

The response to the initiative has been particularly encouraging. Following the Roodepoort initiative, other courts have expressed an interest in having similar projects undertaken at their respective court facilities. This is a positive indication that the initiative has the potential to grow beyond a once-off project and become a broader programme of support for our courts.

The next initiative is anticipated to take place at the Krugersdorp Magistrates' Court, with the intention of extending the project to other courts as interest and capacity allow.

The GAA recognises that the administration of justice depends not only on the efficient functioning of our courts but also on maintaining an environment that reflects the dignity, accessibility and respect that the justice system deserves. The initiative is therefore an important example of practical collaboration between the legal profession and its justice-sector partners.

2.7 ***Road Accident Fund (RAF) Matters***

The Road Accident Fund remains one of the most significant challenges facing legal practitioners and, more importantly, the members of the public who depend on the Fund for compensation following motor vehicle accidents. The ongoing payment crisis, delays in the settlement of claims, non-compliance with court orders and various administrative challenges continue to place considerable strain on practitioners and their clients.

During the year under review, the GAA, together with its constituent associations, as well as other legal organisations and stakeholders, continued to engage on

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matters affecting the RAF and the broader administration of claims. The RAF Committee, convened by Mr Conrad van der Vyver, has continued to monitor developments and address issues of particular concern to practitioners.

Some of the significant matters dealt with during the year include:

RAF Payment Crisis and the Proposed Extension of the 180-Day Payment Moratorium: The GAA participated in engagements with the RAF and other stakeholders following the RAF's attempt to obtain an extension of the payment moratorium. Particular attention was given to the substantial backlog of unpaid court orders, outstanding capital, costs and interest. A list of outstanding payments affecting practitioners was compiled and submitted to the RAF, resulting in direct engagements with its representatives regarding the payment of these amounts and the reforms being undertaken within the Fund.

PIPLA Litigation Concerning the Mandatory Mediation Practice Directive: The GAA was cited as a respondent in the application challenging the constitutionality of the Mandatory Mediation Practice Directive. The matter was heard in June 2026, and judgment was delivered on 23 July 2026. The application was dismissed with costs after the Court upheld the jurisdictional objection relating to the failure to obtain the requisite consent of the Chief Justice in terms of section 47 of the Superior Courts Act.

Foreign Nationals and Entitlement to RAF Compensation: The Supreme Court of Appeal handed down an important judgment confirming that section 17(1) of the RAF Act does not exclude illegal foreign nationals from claiming compensation under the Act. The RAF's appeals were dismissed with costs. The RAF has since sought leave to appeal to the Constitutional Court, and the profession continues to monitor this development.

Validity of the Amended RAF 1 Claim Form: The GAA, through its constituent associations, followed the litigation concerning the amendments to the RAF 1 claim form. In its judgment delivered on 30 April 2026, the Supreme Court of Appeal found that the Minister's decision to prescribe the amended form constituted administrative action and that the mandatory consultation requirements had not been complied with. The decision was set aside, with the consequential invalidity of Board Notice 271.

Interest on Capital Payments and Enforcement of Court Orders: The GAA continued to raise concerns regarding the RAF's approach to the payment of interest on capital amounts, as well as the practical difficulties experienced by practitioners in enforcing valid court orders. The position remains that court orders

must be honoured and that administrative processes within the RAF cannot be permitted to undermine the rights of successful claimants.

These matters illustrate the extent to which RAF-related challenges extend beyond the litigation of individual claims and affect the administration of justice as a whole. The GAA has consistently maintained that the financial and administrative difficulties experienced by the RAF cannot be allowed to prejudice innocent road accident victims or place an unreasonable burden on practitioners who have successfully obtained judgments on behalf of their clients.

The GAA will continue to engage with the RAF, the Judiciary and other relevant stakeholders in seeking practical solutions to the ongoing payment difficulties and systemic challenges. Our position remains clear: court orders must be respected and complied with, and claimants who have established their entitlement to compensation must not be left waiting indefinitely for payment.

2.8 *Master's Offices, Estates and Trusts*

The operational challenges experienced at the Master's Offices, particularly in Johannesburg and Pretoria, remained a significant concern during the reporting period. The difficulties encountered by practitioners are not isolated administrative inconveniences but reflect broader systemic challenges which have a direct impact on the administration of deceased estates, trusts, insolvencies and the protection of vulnerable beneficiaries.

The concerns raised by practitioners have also featured prominently in the media throughout 2026. Reports published by GroundUp and Moneyweb have highlighted persistent backlogs, staff shortages, delays in the appointment of executors and trustees, difficulties in accessing estate files, unreliable electronic systems and inconsistent service delivery. Of particular concern are reports that practitioners are sometimes left waiting months for documents and appointments which are essential to the administration and finalisation of estates.

The Johannesburg and Pretoria offices have also experienced challenges relating to leadership stability, with both offices operating under acting appointments. Industry stakeholders, including the Johannesburg Attorneys' Association (JAA), the Fiduciary Institute of Southern Africa (FISA) and the South African Restructuring and Insolvency Practitioners Association (SARIPA), have publicly raised concerns regarding the prolonged absence of permanent appointments and the impact this has on the effective functioning of these offices.

Of further concern has been the implementation of the digitisation project and the ongoing difficulties experienced with the electronic systems. Media reports in

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August 2026 revealed that the Minister of Justice had referred the R415 million digitisation project to the Special Investigating Unit and the Hawks for investigation following serious service disruptions and concerns regarding access to departmental records. The very systems intended to improve efficiencies and reduce administrative delays have, in certain instances, contributed to further disruption and delays.

The GAA recognises that these challenges have far-reaching consequences. Delays in issuing Letters of Executorship, approving estate accounts, registering trusts and attending to insolvency-related matters can leave beneficiaries without access to funds, delay the winding-up of estates and place additional financial and administrative burdens on practitioners and their clients. Ultimately, it is often ordinary members of the public, including surviving spouses, minor children, elderly beneficiaries and financially vulnerable families, who bear the consequences of these inefficiencies.

During the year, the GAA continued to work alongside its constituent associations and other representative organisations, including FISA, SARIPA, SAICA and BASA, in raising concerns and advocating for meaningful intervention, improved efficiencies, uniformity in the application of directives and greater consultation with stakeholders. The GAA remains of the view that practitioners who interact with the Master's Offices daily are an important source of insight into the practical challenges experienced and should be meaningfully included in the development and implementation of solutions.

The GAA will continue to engage with the Department of Justice, the Chief Master's Office and other relevant stakeholders to advocate for improved staffing and capacity, stable leadership, reliable electronic systems, accessible records, consistent procedures and, most importantly, a service-oriented approach to the administration of these offices.

The effective functioning of the Master's Offices is fundamental to the administration of justice. It cannot be regarded merely as an internal administrative matter of the Department of Justice, but as an essential public service upon which practitioners and thousands of members of the public depend.

2.9 *Property Law and Conveyancing*

Property Law and Conveyancing remained an important focus area for the GAA during the year, particularly considering the ongoing changes to the deeds registration environment, the implementation of electronic systems and the operational challenges experienced by conveyancing practitioners.

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The implementation of the Electronic Deeds Registration System (eDRS), which commenced on 1 April 2025, represents a significant development in the modernisation of the deeds registration process. While the GAA supports the digitisation of deeds registration and the efficiencies it is intended to achieve, the transition must be accompanied by proper consultation with the profession, adequate testing, clear guidelines and practical support for practitioners. The subsequent developments, including proposed amendments to the electronic registration legislation during 2026, further demonstrate that the system remains an evolving process.

In addition, the GAA continued to monitor the various circulars, directives and notices issued by the Chief Registrar of Deeds and the individual Deeds Registries, many of which have a direct impact on the day-to-day practices of conveyancers. Engagements and feedback from the Johannesburg and Pretoria Deeds Registries highlighted a number of recurring operational concerns, including:

- Delays in the availability of registered deeds and documents following registration;
- Difficulties in obtaining access to sectional title files and historical documentation;
- Inconsistencies in the interpretation and application of circulars, regulations and examination requirements;
- Delays in consultations with examiners and the resolution of preparation and rejection notes;
- Administrative and technical difficulties relating to deeds office accounts, invoices and document retrieval; and
- Infrastructure and IT challenges, particularly at the South Gauteng Deeds Registry, which have affected the efficient delivery of services.

These concerns have featured in various notices and reports published during the year and reinforce the importance of continued communication between the profession and Deeds Registry management.

The GAA recognises that an efficient and accessible deeds registration system is fundamental to the property industry and the legal profession. The Association will therefore continue to engage with the relevant authorities and conveyancing committees, raise matters brought to its attention by practitioners and advocate

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for consistency, transparency and improved service delivery across the Gauteng Deeds Registries.

A further important development was the Electronic Deeds Registration and Recordal Systems Amendment Bill of 2026, which seeks to address, amongst other things, the validity of client copies of electronically registered deeds and the transition to electronic registration for subsequent transactions. This remains an important area for the profession to monitor.

2.10 *Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC)*

The GAA continued to monitor developments at the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC), particularly in relation to the implementation of its electronic platforms and the impact these have on legal practitioners and other professional service providers.

Of particular concern during the year was the implementation of the new Director Amendment and Verification Platform, which gave rise to a number of practical difficulties for attorneys, company secretarial firms, accountants and other authorised third-party representatives who conduct statutory filings on behalf of their clients.

A number of concerns were raised with CIPC regarding the practical operation of the platform, including:

- Difficulties experienced where directors and authorised filers share contact details, resulting in legitimate filings being rejected.
- Challenges with the verification of foreign directors, particularly where international mobile numbers and SMS one-time passwords are not supported or received.
- The inability to process certain director removals, particularly where directors are uncontactable, refuse to cooperate or have been removed pursuant to a court order, notwithstanding compliance with section 71 of the Companies Act.
- Uncertainty regarding the continued role and authority of attorneys and other authorised third-party representatives to attend to statutory filings on behalf of companies.

- Limitations in the company name search functionality, which adversely affect comprehensive searches required for company registrations, due diligence investigations, trade mark assessments and corporate structuring.

Whilst the GAA supports CIPC's efforts to modernise its systems, strengthen corporate governance and improve the integrity of company records, the implementation of new technology must take into account the practical realities faced by legal and corporate services practitioners. Electronic platforms should facilitate statutory compliance rather than create additional administrative obstacles or prevent practitioners from carrying out legitimate filings on behalf of their clients.

The GAA will continue to monitor these developments and support constructive engagement with CIPC, with the objective of improving service delivery, ensuring functional and accessible electronic systems and protecting the ability of practitioners to provide effective services to their clients.

2.11 *Youth Initiatives*

The development and support of the next generation of legal practitioners remained an important focus during the year. The GAA, through its constituent associations and Youth Committee, continued to support initiatives aimed at promoting student engagement, assisting candidate attorneys and creating opportunities for young practitioners to develop professionally and assume future leadership roles within the profession.

The Youth Committee continued its successful collaboration with the University of Johannesburg through its partnership with the Student Legal Council and the Student Representative Council. This initiative provides law students with practical exposure to the legal profession while equipping members of the Student Legal Council with a greater understanding of disciplinary processes and the principles of procedural fairness. Workshops presented during the year promoted practical legal skills, mentorship and professional development, further strengthening the relationship between the profession and future practitioners.

Other initiatives supported through the constituent associations included student participation in international moot court competitions, winter placement programmes, bursary initiatives and mentorship opportunities. Particular attention was also given to candidate attorneys through admission examination preparation and support initiatives, educational workshops and practical workplace exposure. The GAA recognises that meaningful engagement with law students and candidate attorneys is essential to the sustainability and transformation of the profession. The work undertaken by the Youth Committee and constituent

associations demonstrates a collective commitment to broadening access to the profession, developing young talent and ensuring that future generations of legal practitioners are adequately supported and equipped to contribute meaningfully to the profession.

2.12 *Events, Professional Development and Collegiality*

Whilst much of the GAA's work during the year centred on advocacy, stakeholder engagement and addressing the operational challenges confronting legal practitioners, it was equally important to create opportunities for professional development, networking, collegiality and engagement within the profession.

The year included a number of particularly worthwhile events, which provided practitioners with opportunities not only to acquire knowledge and engage with developments in the law, but also to connect with colleagues and enjoy the camaraderie that forms such an important part of our profession.

The Civil Law Update Conference, hosted by the Pretoria Attorneys Association (PAA), was an exceptionally worthwhile initiative. The conference provided an important opportunity for practitioners to engage with developments in civil law, broaden their knowledge and remain abreast of issues affecting their practices. Initiatives of this nature are essential in promoting continued professional development and maintaining the high standards expected of the profession.

The GAA also had the pleasure of attending an evening with the Mzansi Ballet, which proved to be a great success. It was an opportunity for members and colleagues to enjoy an evening of culture and entertainment outside the usual demands of legal practice.

Of course, one of the highlights of the year was the GAA Golf Day, hosted by the West Rand Legal Practitioners Association. With the weather playing along beautifully, approximately 120 players took to the course for a day of golf, laughter, friendly competition and, most importantly, the opportunity to spend time with colleagues away from the pressures of their daily practices. The event was a tremendous success and demonstrated the value of bringing members of the profession together in a relaxed and enjoyable environment.

These events serve an important purpose. They remind us that, beyond our respective practices, professional responsibilities and daily challenges, we are part of a broader legal community. Building relationships, sharing knowledge and creating opportunities for practitioners to interact strengthen the associations and, ultimately, the profession as a whole.

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The GAA remains committed to supporting initiatives that promote professional development, encourage participation and foster a sense of belonging and collegiality amongst practitioners.

2.13 *Pro Bono, Community Engagement and Access to Justice*

The GAA recognises that the legal profession has a responsibility that extends beyond the provision of legal services to paying clients. Access to justice, community involvement and the provision of assistance to those who cannot afford legal representation remain fundamental aspects of our profession.

During the year, the GAA and its constituent associations supported and participated in initiatives which highlighted the importance of pro bono work, legal education and the role of law clinics in addressing the justice gap.
An important occasion was the celebration of the official launch and first year of service of the Emeris Community Law Clinic in Johannesburg. The initiative is particularly commendable in that it provides law students with practical exposure to the legal profession while instilling a strong sense of community responsibility and service. The clinic's commitment to combining practical legal education with meaningful assistance to members of the public is an example of the positive contribution that academic institutions and the legal profession can make towards improving access to justice.

The GAA extends its appreciation to Soretha Venter for the invitation to participate in this occasion, as well as to Advocate Mohamed Shafie Ameermia, National Director of ProBono.Org, whose address served as a reminder of the important role played by law clinics and pro bono initiatives in bridging the justice gap across the country.

The GAA, together with representatives of the PAA and WRLPA, also attended a special screening of *One Humanity*, hosted by ProBono.Org for delegates from Ohio University. The film reflects on the international solidarity shown in the struggle against apartheid and the collective response of people across the world who chose to stand against injustice.

The message conveyed through the film, including Nelson Mandela's expression of gratitude to those who chose to care, was particularly meaningful. It serves as a reminder that the legal profession has both the ability and the responsibility to make a difference, whether through pro bono legal work, community initiatives or by using its collective voice to advocate for those who are often unheard.

These initiatives reinforce the importance of ensuring that the profession remains connected to the communities it serves. The GAA encourages continued

participation in pro bono programmes, support for community law clinics and collaboration with organisations dedicated to improving access to justice.

The Association remains committed to supporting initiatives that promote a culture of service, mentorship and social responsibility within the legal profession.

2.14 *Court Online System*

The continued implementation and operation of the Court Online system remained an important area of focus for the GAA during the year. While the transition towards an electronic court administration system is welcomed as an important step towards modernising the administration of justice, its effectiveness remains dependent on the reliability, accessibility and efficient functioning of the system.
The GAA, together with the Johannesburg Attorneys Association (JAA), Pretoria Attorneys Association (PAA) and West Rand Legal Practitioners Association (WRLPA), continued to engage with the Office of the Chief Justice (OCJ), the South African State Information Technology Agency (SITA) and other relevant stakeholders regarding operational challenges experienced by practitioners.

Following the establishment of a dedicated technical working group, regular engagements have taken place between representatives of the OCJ, SITA and the various attorneys' associations. These engagements provide an ongoing platform to address recurring difficulties with the system, identify areas requiring improvement and monitor progress in resolving outstanding issues.

Among the issues receiving attention are the continued slowness of the system, particularly when uploading and downloading documents, duplicate email notifications, matters intermittently disappearing from practitioners' dashboards and the inconsistent delivery of notifications when documents are uploaded by judges' secretaries.

The technical working group, comprising representatives of the OCJ, SITA and the various attorneys' associations, provides a structured mechanism for identifying and escalating technical difficulties, monitoring outstanding issues and facilitating practical solutions. The GAA is represented in these engagements by members of the legal profession who ensure that practitioners' experiences and concerns are brought to the attention of the relevant stakeholders.

The existing communication channels between registrars and the organised legal profession, including the established WhatsApp groups, remain important in identifying and escalating operational difficulties. Practitioners are also

encouraged to ensure that unresolved technical issues are logged on the appropriate reporting platforms so that they can be investigated by SITA.

The GAA acknowledges the ongoing engagement and support of the Deputy Chief Justice and the OCJ in addressing these challenges. However, it remains important that the development and expansion of Court Online keep pace with the demands placed on the system. The effective administration of justice cannot be compromised by persistent technical difficulties, particularly where these affect practitioners' ability to upload documents, access court files, receive notices and progress matters.

The GAA will continue to participate actively in these engagements and advocate for a Court Online system that is stable, responsive, user-friendly and capable of supporting the day-to-day demands of legal practitioners and the courts.

2.15 *Legal Technology and Innovation*

Technology continues to transform the legal profession.

Across Gauteng, associations have actively engaged with developments relating to artificial intelligence, legal innovation, digital court systems and emerging technologies affecting legal practice.

The GAA supports the responsible adoption of technology that improves efficiency and access to justice while preserving professional ethics, client confidentiality and the integrity of legal services.

As technological transformation accelerates, the GAA will continue to participate in discussions shaping the future of legal practice.

2.16 *Security Measures Around Courts*

The safety and security of legal practitioners, particularly in and around court precincts, emerged as an area of serious concern during the year.

A number of disturbing incidents were reported involving practitioners being shot in the vicinity of courts. These included an incident near the Booysens Magistrates' Court, fortunately not resulting in a fatality, as well as the tragic shooting of Chinette Gallichan, who was shot in broad daylight while on her way to attend a CCMA hearing. These incidents serve as a stark reminder of the risks faced by practitioners in the ordinary course of performing their professional duties.

The GAA recognises that the safety of legal practitioners cannot be taken for granted and that a more proactive and coordinated approach is required. Following these incidents, a WhatsApp group was established to facilitate communication and the sharing of safety-related information, and a committee was formed at the Johannesburg High Court precinct to address security concerns.

While these initiatives are positive steps, much more needs to be done. The GAA must continue to engage with the relevant stakeholders and court authorities to identify practical measures to improve security around court precincts. Practitioners are also encouraged to remain vigilant, report suspicious activity and actively participate in discussions aimed at improving their safety.

The protection of legal practitioners should not be regarded as an incidental concern. Their ability to perform their professional duties without fear for their personal safety is fundamental to the administration of justice. This is an issue that requires continued attention, engagement and decisive action.

2.17 ***Sheriff's Banking Forum and Annual Fee Adjustments***

The GAA continued its participation in the Sheriff's Banking Forum, which provides a platform for engagement between the banking sector, legal practitioners and representatives of the sheriff profession on matters affecting the administration and implementation of sheriff-related services and tariffs.

A key matter considered during the year was the proposed annual adjustment of sheriff fees, with an intended implementation date of 1 October 2026. Two proposals were placed before the Forum:

- A CPI-based adjustment of 3.2%; and
- An alternative proposal comprising an adjustment of 4.3%, together with an additional 3%, resulting in an effective increase of 7.3%.

The proposals gave rise to further discussions regarding the motivation for the respective increases, including the additional 3% adjustment and proposed amendments to the storage provisions. The relevant stakeholders were requested to provide their final written positions to facilitate the conclusion of the annual fee-adjustment process.

It was further agreed that certain proposals relating to the introduction of caps and amendments to the existing arrangements would be considered separately from the annual fee adjustment.

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The GAA continued to participate in these discussions with the objective of ensuring that any adjustments to sheriff fees are properly motivated, transparent and considered in consultation with the relevant stakeholders. The importance of reaching a balanced outcome, taking into account the operational requirements of the sheriff profession as well as the financial implications for the banking sector, attorneys and their clients, remains central to the Forum's work.

CONCLUSION

The year under review has demonstrated the importance of an active, engaged and representative association. The matters addressed in this report reflect the breadth of issues confronting legal practitioners, from regulatory and administrative challenges to the efficient functioning of our courts, the sustainability of legal practices and the broader question of access to justice.

The GAA's work would not have been possible without the continued commitment and participation of its constituent associations, Executive members, committees and practitioners who gave their time and expertise to advance the interests of the profession.

As the Association looks ahead, it must continue to build on the relationships established, strengthen its engagement with the relevant institutions and remain responsive to the concerns of its members. The challenges facing the profession are considerable, but a united and constructive voice remains one of the most effective ways in which those challenges can be addressed.

I wish to once again express my sincere appreciation to everyone who contributed to the work of the GAA during my term of office. Thank you for your confidence, your support, your willingness to engage and, above all, your commitment to the profession.

It has been an honour and a privilege to serve as Chairperson of the Gauteng Attorneys Association. I do so with immense gratitude for the opportunity and with every confidence that the Association will continue to serve the profession with dedication, integrity and purpose.

Thank you.

Chairperson
Marianne Pretorius