## CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Edmund Lee said: "*You must surround yourself with the dreamers and the doers, the believers and the thinkers, but most of all surround yourself with those who see the greatness within you even when you don't see it in yourself*."

It has been said many times "2021 has been a hell of a year". This was a year which brought surprises none of us had ever imagined of, and although trials and tribulations took a major share of 2021, many of us have managed to discover opportunity amid adverse times.

We have witnessed a significant global challenge, and the past few months have been a constant barrage of new COVID-19 developments, information, and regulations, which have turned our worlds as we knew it, upside down.

I am proud to be part of the legal fraternity and of all the milestones we have been able to achieve this past year. I have come to realise that we are all united by a common culture of discipline, flexibility and co-operation which makes us unstoppable in the face of events like this – in the face of adversity.

We have all come to realise that for us to overcome the difficulties of the moment, we will only be able to do so by empowering others, co-operating responsibly and in solidarity with the authorities and key role players.

It is no secret that the legal fraternity has faced many challenges, not only from the impact of COVID-19 and the associated lockdown restrictions, but also many governmental restrictions affecting the way we practice.

Despite this the *West Rand Attorneys* have been relatively fortunate. A fair proportion of us have been able to continue practicing mostly unaffected apart from having to adapt to appearances by video conference and phone. For the criminal attorneys it has been harder, but the grapevine tells me that predominately we have survived and thrived. I am therefore pleased to deliver this Chair's report, reflecting, and reminiscing on the past year.

Firstly, I want to thank my fellow executive Committee members who have carried this load together. This has really been a team and for all our frustrations, I can confirm the executive Committee has been able to work together and build the WAA firmly going forward. The organisation has particularly benefited from the work of Lindie Lombard. She carried quite a lot of secretarial responsibilities and oversaw the communication with our members. Her innovation and commitment ensured that this year, unlike any other, is yet another year of resounding success.

It is worth noting some of our work since our last meeting:

We regularly participate in consultation across the justice system throughout the year and in the year ahead, the WAA will be involved in the following:

Provincial Efficiency Enhancement Committee Meetings

Gauteng Local Division Efficiency Enhancement Committee Meetings

Gauteng Provincial Division Efficiency Enhancement Committee Meetings

Quarterly meetings with other Attorney Associations

Meetings with Chief Registrars

Meetings with Magistrates (Magistrate Efficiency Enhancement meetings)

Meetings with the Master

Since the pandemic began, our efforts have been focussed on assisting members with the various challenges they have faced throughout this difficult time. We sought to keep members informed of changes to court and day to day arrangements through regular WhatsApp messages.

I would also like to draw attention to the creation of a new committee dealing with problems experienced in the Gauteng High Court (Pretoria). It focusses on the attorneys' associations' continuing to deliver the most effective response possible to ongoing issues.

We also liaised with the Master's office and a follow up meeting with the Deputy Minister relating to problems experienced in the Master's office. Apart from the ransomware attack that occurred in September 2021, the report received was that the software used is old and outdated and is no longer vendor supported which resulted in delays and downtime experienced in the network.

All the minutes with the various stakeholders are available and I invite you to take some time to read through it.

I really hope, and I know that it is all our exco member's desire, that all of you will feel engaged and involved in that, this is your organisation as well and it will be an opportunity for everybody to be involved and to play an active role in making a change. This year has taught us to passionately play our part no matter how bad things might get. When the going gets tough, the tough get going. We are all significant, and we are here not for our own glory ultimately, but to lead and serve everybody else, and through doing that, we encourage other to do the same and play their part too. I am looking forward to seeing more of you in the future.