JOHANNESBURG ATTORNEYS' ASSOCIATION

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Johannesburg Attorneys' Association (JAA)
@Johannesburg Attorneys Association

Room 028, High Court Building
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Dear Honoured Guests, Members & Colleagues

07 October 2026

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT PRESENTED AT THE 84TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM) OF THE JOHANNESBURG ATTORNEYS' ASSOCIATION (JAA)

1. It is my privilege to present this Chairperson's Report at the 84th Annual General Meeting of the Johannesburg Attorneys' Association (JAA). Last year, I spoke about adding colour to our legacy. This year has been about turning that colour into lasting impact: consolidating our renewed identity, strengthening the relationships that allow us to serve our members, and laying the foundations for the JAA's growth for decades to come.
2. The executive committee who served this year are: Azhar Aziz-Ismail (Chairperson), Chantelle Gladwin-Wood (Vice Chairperson), Yusuf Wadee (Treasurer), Roxanne Barnard (Secretary), Katherine Gascoigne, Nakka de Klerk, Brucely Shipalana, Dominique Aricum, Petro Verster, Naledi Makaba, Bongani Luthuli, Nicole Naidu-Roopnarian and Karla Strydom.

From Identity to Impact: A Year of Consolidation and Growth

3. When we unveiled our new identity ahead of last year's AGM, we said that it was not simply a change in appearance, but an affirmation of our values and our vision for the future. This year, we have worked to honour that promise. Throughout the year, we asked ourselves one simple question: does this make practice easier, safer and more sustainable for the attorneys of Johannesburg, and does it widen access to justice for the public we serve?
4. That question has shaped our advocacy with the courts, the Master's Office, the Deeds Registry, the Road Accident Fund and the Legal Practice Council; our investment in member benefits, education and digital platforms; our expansion into the East Rand; and, importantly, the work we have done to modernise the JAA's own membership structure, so that the JAA remains relevant, representative and sustainable.
5. Most importantly, this has been a year in which our members have shown up for one another. Some of our most meaningful gains this year, from the taxation backlog to Court Online, began as issues raised by members on our WhatsApp communities, and were carried by volunteers through months of meetings,

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correspondence, follow-ups and escalation. That is the JAA at its best: a community that turns shared frustration into collective solutions.

Our Keynote Speakers: Jozi My Jozi and the Johannesburg High Court Precinct

6. We are honoured to welcome Professor Maurice Radebe, Chairman of Jozi My Jozi, as our keynote speaker this evening, together with Mr Innocent Mabusela, Chief Executive Officer of Jozi My Jozi. Their address on the revitalisation of the Johannesburg High Court precinct speaks directly to the daily experience of every practitioner in this room.
7. Jozi My Jozi is a citizen-led, business-supported and government-enabled initiative dedicated to revitalising the Johannesburg inner city. Its Johannesburg High Court Revitalisation Project, "Delivering Justice with Dignity", rests on a tripartite agreement between the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, and Jozi My Jozi, with the support and involvement of the Judiciary, the legal profession, business and civil society.
8. The Johannesburg High Court is the busiest court in the country. Since its completion in 1911, it has stood as a tangible symbol of the rule of law in our city. Yet, as our members know all too well from the lifts, air-conditioning, ablutions and security, the building has not kept pace with the court. The project comprises two related initiatives: the rehabilitation of the High Court building itself, and the rejuvenation of the precinct and streets surrounding it, with a longer-term vision of a connected Justice Precinct that is safer and more accessible for judges, practitioners, witnesses and members of the public.
9. The technical groundwork has been done. A full needs analysis and condition assessment, informed by consultation with judges, registrars, legal practitioners and court staff, has organised the required work into six independently scoped and costed priorities: improved access, services compliance, ablutions, the look and feel of public and courtroom spaces, roof repairs, and safety and security. A professional delivery team has been appointed, with independent cost control and a transparent audit trail throughout.
10. The deteriorating condition of the High Court and its precinct has been raised by the JAA repeatedly over the years. This project represents an important shift from repeatedly identifying problems towards solving them together. It is about considerably more than improving the working environment of judges and practitioners. It is about restoring dignity to one of the country's most important courts, and to the members of the public who depend on it for access to justice.

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11. Funding is now the final piece of the puzzle. The project will be driven primarily through private sector support, whether financial or in kind, and contributions are eligible for Section 18A tax certificates. I encourage our member firms, and the partners who work alongside us, to consider how they might contribute. A profession that depends on this court every single day should be visible among those who help restore it.

Strengthening the JAA: Modernising Our Membership Structure

12. One of the most significant pieces of work undertaken by the Executive Committee this year has been a comprehensive review of the JAA's membership structure. Significant research went into this review, which was informed by an assessment of our current Constitution and membership model, benchmarking against South African and international legal associations, and comparison with the membership models of voluntary associations across other professions and industries.
13. The review confirmed what many of us have sensed for some time. Our current membership model has served the JAA well for many years, but it was designed for a narrower conception of the profession than the one the JAA now convenes and represents. It does not adequately cater for law students, advocates, non-practising and retired practitioners, or for firms that wish to bring more of their people into the JAA. Nor does it recognise the specialist roles that increasingly define modern legal practice.
14. The proposed constitutional amendments contained in the Special Resolution before you this evening are therefore not a fee exercise. They are a growth and sustainability strategy, designed to:
    a. make membership more accessible across the legal career path, by creating clear entry points and a structured pathway from law student, to candidate attorney, to practising member, alongside recognised categories for pupil advocates, advocates, non-practising legal practitioners, and retired and honorary members;
    b. create a practical route for law firms to bring more of their people into the JAA through Firm Membership, increasing engagement, scale and the JAA's institutional relevance;
    c. recognise the broader legal ecosystem, including conveyancers, notaries, and knowledge, innovation and legal tech practitioners, without diluting the JAA's identity as an attorneys' association; and
    d. strengthen the JAA's long-term sustainability, representation and influence on behalf of the profession.

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15. The Special Resolution also includes several governance refinements, including clearer provisions on Committee eligibility and co-opted members, the election of office-bearers, subscriptions in arrears, and resignations. Should the amendments be adopted, the revised structure will be introduced in an orderly manner with a transition period, with existing members in good standing continuing to enjoy uninterrupted membership and benefits.
16. I thank the members of the Executive Committee who contributed to this work. I encourage every member to consider the Special Resolution carefully, and to support a JAA that is more accessible, more representative and better equipped for the future, while firmly preserving attorney-led governance.

Member Benefits, Wellness and Digital Platforms

17. Our new website and visual identity have now settled in. The website, launched earlier this year, gives members easy access to court rolls, directives, notices and updates on the JAA's work. It also features JAA on the Go, making the website easy to access and navigate on your phone, wherever practice takes you.
18. We are in the process of transferring the website to a more secure web provider. This move will strengthen the security of the platform, enable new features, and improve the stability of the website for our members.
19. Our WhatsApp communities, exclusive to JAA members, remain one of the most valuable services we offer. Our High Court, Magistrates Court, Deeds, Criminal, Master's Office and, now, East Rand groups enable members to share practical information quickly, assist one another, and alert our sub-committees to recurring difficulties that require escalation.
20. We believe that a sustainable legal career is built on balance. This year, we launched "Fit to Practice", our partnership with Virgin Active South Africa, through which JAA members enjoy 10% off 12-month memberships at Virgin Active in South Africa, reduced joining fees and no card fees, as well as complimentary access to ad hoc wellness classes curated specifically for JAA members. This is the first of several new member benefits, and more will be announced in the year ahead.

Communications and Our Growing Voice

21. With our identity now established, our focus this year shifted from crafting the JAA's brand to scaling and growing it. We extend our sincere thanks to Laura Gladwin, who did a phenomenal job in setting the foundation for the JAA's new visual identity. Laura has moved on, and we wish her well in her future journeys. We welcome Incorporate Digital Solutions as our new media and marketing team.

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22. The JAA now maintains a steady, weekly presence across Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn. We share court directives, Legal Practice Council updates, court lead times and the outcomes of our liaison work with the courts, so that members can see the value of the JAA every week. We ran full campaigns for our events, supported the JAA's media appearance on INX Prime.
23. Our audience is growing. Since June, the JAA has gained almost 2,000 new followers across our channels, and our LinkedIn following, where we speak most directly to legal professionals, has grown by half.
24. In the year ahead, we will introduce regular updates, share more of our advocacy outcomes, showing members what the JAA raised and what came of it, and build the JAA's profile in the media through expert comment from our Executive Committee. I encourage every member to follow the JAA on all of our channels, so that you stay informed and connected.

Events and Educational Initiatives

25. This year, our calendar balanced collegiality with professional development, creating spaces for members to connect, learn and celebrate the profession.
26. Our Judges Function, themed "The Great Gatsby", was once again the flagship event of our year. ADJP Mudau delivered the keynote address on behalf of JP Ledwaba, setting the tone for an evening of camaraderie and professional pride, and underscoring the JAA's role in fostering strong ties between the Judiciary and the legal profession.
27. Our second Rackets & Rulings: JAA Padel Showdown continued to grow in popularity, providing a fun and competitive environment for members to network while enjoying the sport. We thank our sponsors, Legal Serve and Anchor Capital.
28. Our Cheese & Wine Evening, hosted with Lamna, offered members a relaxed evening of networking and collegiality, and our intimate three-course Wine Pairing Dinner, sponsored by Anchor Capital, combined fine dining with professional networking.
29. Together with the Gauteng Attorneys Association (GAA), we again invited members to enjoy an evening at the ballet with Mzansi Ballet, this year at the Michael Jackson "Heal The World" ballet, continuing our commitment to arts appreciation and work-life balance within the profession.
30. Our inaugural Women's High Tea in Boksburg launched the JAA's East Rand chapter. The guest speaker inspired attendees through the theme "The Woman You Are, The Woman You Were and The Woman You

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Are Becoming". We thank our sponsors, Rodel Bridging Finance Co, C Van Dyk Attorneys, Karla Strydom Attorneys, Neil Stuart Attorneys, FicaFit and Incorporate Digital Solutions.

31. Knowledge sharing remained at the heart of our programme. We launched "Mastering the Business of Law", a series designed to equip members to be the best lawyers while mastering the business side of practice. This included a complimentary session with Echo Advisory on practical strategies to improve profitability and growth, aimed particularly at sole practitioners and small firms, and a complimentary webinar with Clio on driving efficiencies in your firm through legal technology. Further sessions covered mediation and its growing role in practice, and legal innovation and technology adoption.
32. The JAA was proud to be a Community Partner for "Arbitration Cost Recovery Is Broken – How Do We Fix It?", an interactive workshop hosted by BriefCo and the Arbitration Foundation of Southern Africa (AFSA). The session examined why legal cost recoveries in AFSA arbitrations are often substantially lower than expected, covering the interpretation of the AFSA rules, the correct drafting of cost awards, what should be addressed in arbitration agreements and pre-arbitration minutes, and the taxation process following an award. BriefCo and AFSA also presented proposed amendments to the rules and began gathering public comment.
33. The JAA was formally represented at the sold-out RAF Damages Conference: Earnings Under Scrutiny, hosted by Munro Forensic Actuaries. Our Treasurer and RAF Sub-Committee Lead, Yusuf Wadee, introduced the work of the JAA in the RAF space and engaged directly with practitioners and an expert panel of an industrial psychologist, forensic accountant and actuary on building a more integrated and defensible approach to earnings evidence.
34. In November 2025, the JAA joined Innovative Entrepreneurs NPC, BMW South Africa, the Law Society of South Africa (LSSA), SAWLA, the South African Human Rights Commission, the GAA, AFSA and other partners at the Trade Law, Contracts & Regional Supply Chain Activation. Yusuf Wadee moderated the panel "Connected Corridors: Building Africa's Transport Future", and the JAA was represented by myself and Executive Committee members Nicole Naidu-Roopnarian and Brucely Shipalana.

Subcommittee Reports and Activities

High Court (Including Court Online)

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35. The work of the High Court Sub-Committee continues largely behind the scenes, but remains one of the most important parts of the JAA's representation of its members. Throughout the year, the Sub-Committee engaged regularly with the Judiciary, the Office of the Chief Justice (OCJ), the Registrars and other stakeholders through the Johannesburg Gauteng Efficiency Enhancement Committee and various dedicated working groups. Issues raised by members were collated, escalated and followed up, including taxations, delays and communication difficulties in the Appeals Office, court rolls and lead times, Court Online and CaseLines, the Practice Directive, delays in issuing court orders and distributing judgments, interpreter services, court infrastructure and the functioning of the Registrars' offices.
36. Court Online and CaseLines again occupied a considerable amount of the Sub-Committee's time. Members continue to experience login and bundling problems, disappearing documents, case files and dates, and access being removed. A significant development this year has been the establishment of a smaller working group of representatives of the legal profession, the OCJ and SITA, which meets regularly to deal directly with technical and operational issues. Rather than merely recording complaints, this group has considered specific enhancements, including the earlier opening of the CaseLines bundling functionality, so that practitioners are not required to prepare documents such as heads of argument before a paginated bundle is available.
37. Taxations received sustained attention. Following serious delays and the effective halt in taxations from late 2025, the JAA engaged with the Senior Registrar from February 2026, escalated the matter to the Acting Deputy Judge President, and called for a dedicated stakeholder meeting and proper statistics on the backlog and turnaround times. By August, significant inroads had been made in addressing the backlog, with further operational reforms being introduced. This is a good example of the value of persistent engagement on issues first raised by our members.
38. The Sub-Committee also raised difficulties concerning the Practice Directive, court procedure and inconsistencies in its practical application. The JAA has not merely identified these difficulties, but has proposed specific amendments and practical solutions for consideration by the Judiciary and the Registrars. These discussions are ongoing. The Sub-Committee has continued to engage on the less visible, but equally important, operational issues of lifts, air-conditioning, security, accessibility, interpreter services, staffing and court lead times. Individually, these may appear mundane, but collectively they have a significant impact on practitioners, their clients and the administration of justice.

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39. I encourage members to continue using our High Court WhatsApp group and, importantly, to report systemic difficulties to us, so that they can be taken forward through the appropriate structures.

Magistrates' and Regional Courts

40. Civil liaison meetings with the Johannesburg Regional Court and Magistrates' Courts are held regularly, attended by the judiciary and court administration of both courts, as well as the Sheriffs servicing their jurisdictions. Key practice points from this year's engagements include:
    a. Trials and motions: the roll call for trial matters commences at 08h30 in Court 25, pre-trials are enrolled and commence at 09h00 and are no longer heard in the afternoons, and the Motion Court commences at 09h00 in Court 28. Practitioners must attend court to apply for postponements of trial matters before the Magistrate, rather than agreeing to postponements and not appearing, in line with the Chief Justice's Directive requiring trial matters to be finalised within nine months.
    b. Debt review: dates for enrolment can now be provided at the time of issuing, provided that Form A and Form B are completed at issue, after which the application and notice of set down may be served on credit providers electronically.
    c. Regional Courts: Ms Linda Makgado has been appointed as the Registrar for Gauteng, supervising the Registrars across the province, and practitioners experiencing difficulty with the issuing of pleadings may approach her for assistance. Divorce summonses are issued immediately, bulk issuing is managed through a register and collection process, and writs of execution are re-issued in the same manner as in the Magistrates' Court.
    d. Fraudulent court orders: any concern regarding the authenticity of a court order must be escalated directly to Magistrate Beharie.
    e. Sheriffs and service: Sheriffs have requested that practitioners provide a cellphone number when instructing service, particularly after hours, and settle their accounts timeously. Service at domicilium addresses remains problematic and must comply with Rule 9(3)(d). Sheriffs must do what the Rules require, not what attorneys direct them to do, as confirmed in Nedbank v Conco and Barens & Another v Lottering.
41. Members are encouraged to communicate concerns to us regularly, so that they can be raised with the relevant stakeholders at these meetings.

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Master's Office and Estates

42. The Master's Office Committee has had a very busy year. Members have faced numerous challenges arising from the implementation of the online registration platforms for deceased estates and trusts, poor network connectivity, the relocation of offices and staffing constraints within the Master's Offices.
43. The Committee has met with the Office of the Chief Master to present requests for directives to be considered and issued, and has held various meetings to clarify the details of these requirements. The JAA continues to keep the pressure on until these directives are issued. We have also maintained close relationships with other stakeholders in the Master's Office environment, including other attorneys' associations, SARIPA, BASA, FISA and SAICA, who share the same or similar concerns and with whom we collaborate closely to achieve the best results for our members.
44. Our relationship with the Office of the Chief Master remains respectful. However, the lack of communication and engagement from that Office has been a source of real frustration, and has required the JAA to voice the difficulties faced by our members in the public domain, both to bring about change that is so desperately needed and to bring these challenges to the attention of the public who ultimately bear their cost.
45. In particular, the JAA, together with FISA and SARIPA, raised the alarm publicly in February 2026 about the prolonged reliance on acting appointments in the Johannesburg and Pretoria Master's Offices. In September 2026, with the Johannesburg Master's Office again without a head of office, the JAA wrote to the Acting Chief Master calling for an acting Master to be appointed within seven days, failing which we would approach the Minister of Justice. These engagements received coverage in GroundUp, Moneyweb and The Citizen.
46. The Master's Office WhatsApp group has again proved to be an extremely effective channel of communication, enabling members to engage with one another, request assistance and share views and developments. The Committee sincerely appreciates the support of our members and is always grateful to hear of the positive resolution of challenges.

Property and Deeds Office

47. Fortunately, 2026 has been a less eventful year for the property sector than 2025. The Property Sub-Committee continues to meet monthly with the Registrar and Deputy Registrars of the South Gauteng

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Deeds Registry in Johannesburg. These engagements give the profession a voice at the highest levels and build a reciprocal understanding of the challenges faced by both the profession and the State. Written feedback from these meetings is published on the JAA Deeds WhatsApp group.

48. Two information tours of the Johannesburg Deeds Registry were conducted this year to expose prospective conveyancers to the workings of the Deeds Office. Both tours were well attended and well received, and will be repeated next year.
49. The JAA was also invited to attend the LSSA Property Committee meetings as guests, to discuss proposed property-related legislation, representation on the Deeds Registries Regulations Board and the Sectional Titles Regulation Board, and agenda items for the upcoming Registrars' Conference. This is a valuable step towards a more proactive role for the profession. In the past, practitioners were too often presented with decisions already taken, without meaningful input. We are also working with associations in other provinces in this regard.

Personal Injury (Including RAF)

50. Victims of road accidents have continued to face attacks on their basic rights, including attempts to limit rights secured by legislation and guaranteed by the Constitution. The legal practitioners who assist them have faced equally significant challenges. The JAA's RAF Sub-Committee, supported by HBGSchindlers as the JAA's attorneys of record, has kept a considered watch over these developments and provided members with sound guidance throughout the year.
51. Working closely with the Pretoria Attorneys Association (PAA), the West Rand Legal Practitioners Association (WRLPA), the Gauteng Attorneys Association (GAA) and other institutions, the profession mounted strong opposition to the RAF's application to extend its payment period by a further 180 days, which resulted in the RAF withdrawing the application.
52. The attempt to amend the RAF Act without following due legislative process, through Board Notice 271, further victimised road accident victims. Following a sustained fight by the profession, the Supreme Court of Appeal reviewed and set aside Board Notice 271, and afforded claimants a further opportunity to relodge rejected claims by 30 September 2026. The profession was again called upon to challenge the RAF's internal directive suspending payments in so-called "foreign claimant" matters, despite court orders, to ensure that basic constitutional principles are upheld.

53. Despite these victories, the central problem remains: victims of road accidents are still not being paid compensation due under court orders, settlement agreements and taxed bills of costs, even after the 180-day period has passed.
54. On 15 September 2026, the JAA, together with the GAA, PAA, Black Lawyers Association (BLA) and National Association of Democratic Lawyers (NADEL), participated in a stakeholder engagement with the RAF on the litigation and payment crisis. In its subsequent letter to the profession, the RAF acknowledged the seriousness of our concerns regarding payment delays, writs of execution, sheriff auctions, default judgments, undertakings and court-order compliance, and their impact on the administration of justice and, most critically, on the constitutional rights of road accident victims.
55. The RAF and the leadership of the profession resolved that the systemic litigation and payment backlog constitutes an urgent institutional crisis requiring immediate, joint intervention, and that valid, executable court orders and settlement agreements are constitutionally binding instruments that must be honoured. Arising from that engagement, the RAF has committed to:
    a. a data validation and reconciliation process covering writs of execution, pending sheriff sales, unpaid capital and court orders, outstanding section 17(4)(a) undertakings, rescission applications and default judgments, with practitioners and associations invited to submit consolidated schedules of matured, unpaid orders and pending writs to a dedicated intake registry;
    b. a joint workstream to evaluate a transparent and auditable payment management framework, including an automated first-in, first-out payment queue based on objective criteria such as the date of a valid court order or settlement, with payment scheduling reconciled against monthly fuel levy allocations to provide predictable payment dates;
    c. investigating a secure practitioner portal through which practitioners may submit information, monitor the status of matters, view payment schedules and log payment disputes through a traceable escalation desk;
    d. reviewing its internal claims-blocking mechanisms, including the "Requested Not Yet Paid" codes, with administrative holds applied unilaterally to valid court orders to be audited and lifted where no legitimate, documented legal challenge exists, and a 14-day inter-party notice protocol before any administrative block is applied post-order; and

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e. establishing a Joint Technical Committee, including executive heads of Claims Operations, Legal Services and Finance and representatives of the participating associations, supported by themed engagements on court-order payments, writs, default judgments, undertakings, relodged claims, backlogs and payment-framework reform.

56. The RAF has also undertaken to consider proposals intended to reduce avoidable enforcement proceedings, including a structured pre-enforcement engagement process. The JAA welcomes this engagement, but we are clear-eyed about it. Much of what has been offered remains a commitment to consider, investigate and review, subject to the RAF's own governance approvals. The JAA will participate constructively in these workstreams, but we will measure progress by one standard only: whether victims are paid what courts have ordered. We will not support any arrangement that dilutes the rights of claimants, existing attorney mandates or the enforceability of court orders.
57. Several important legislative developments lie ahead. The South African Law Reform Commission released its final report on 29 September 2026, proposing significant changes to the framework for compensating road accident victims, including measures aimed at reducing prolonged litigation and changes to how damages are paid. Two draft bills accompany the Commission's recommendations. I call on all members to consider these carefully, as they will need to be scrutinised and, where necessary, challenged as the parliamentary process commences. Members are similarly encouraged to consider the proposed amendments to the Gauteng mediation directive circulated by the courts, particularly regarding non-compliance with the time frames for responding to mediation notices.
58. We call upon all practitioners within the JAA's jurisdiction to join the RAF and Personal Injury Sub-Committee and help us find solutions in this critical area of law. We again thank HBGSchindlers for their invaluable support.

Knowledge, Innovation and Legal Tech

59. I was appointed as Chairperson of the LSSA AI Committee, which is developing responsible AI use guidelines and a practical toolkit for the South African legal profession, to be published by the LSSA later this year. We will share these with our members as soon as they are released.
60. The JAA became a Community Partner to the Legal Innovation Summit and the inaugural Legal Innovation & Impact Awards 2026, securing exclusive discounts for our members. We were also a Community Partner

of the 2026 LexInformatica CyberLaw Conference, where I co-delivered a session with Microsoft. We have now become a non-commercial Community Partner of the Legal Innovation & Tech Fest, taking place in Johannesburg in November, and will soon be offering JAA members discounted access.

61. Throughout the year, I carried the JAA's message on the responsible use of AI to a range of audiences. At the 16th Annual FISA Conference, I urged professionals to understand AI before trusting it, stressing the need for human oversight, verification and sound governance. I also spoke at a University of Johannesburg alumni event on "Navigating the Future with Integrity and Intelligence", and participated in the LSSA Annual Conference panel "Law in the age of transformation: AI influence on South African legal practice". Our message has been consistent: technology must strengthen, not undermine, professional ethics, client protection and human-centred lawyering.

East Rand Attorneys

62. This year, the JAA made a deliberate effort to expand its reach into the East Rand, and to encourage East Rand attorneys to take up the benefits of JAA membership. Our Women's High Tea in Boksburg in August was attended by 50 women from across Johannesburg, the majority from the East Rand, and a number of attendees who were not yet members have expressed interest in joining. Our office is following up with each of them.
63. A WhatsApp group for East Rand attorneys has been established and already has numerous members. We are encouraging these attorneys to volunteer on sub-committees for the courts and councils in the region, so that regular liaison meetings can be established to address the many challenges they face. This is still in its early stages, but we look forward to welcoming more East Rand practitioners into the JAA.

Office

64. Our High Court office remains the JAA's front door for many members, and this year we invested in upgrading it. New computer equipment, a new printer and new Wi-Fi have been installed, supported by a service contract with Co-operative Computing to keep the office running reliably.
65. Members who print at our High Court office should note the new dedicated print email address, printer1@jaa.org.za. Emails sent to the previous address are being redirected.

Access to Justice and Our Community

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66. The JAA hosted Wills Week from 14 to 18 September 2026 at the Johannesburg Master's Office, offering free basic will drafting assistance to members of the public. I thank every volunteer who gave their time.
67. When the Springs Children's Court was damaged in a hailstorm and its toys for children were destroyed, the JAA ran a toy drive to replenish them. Thank you to every member who donated. Small acts like these make a frightening experience a little gentler for the children who pass through our courts.
68. We celebrated alongside the Emeris Community Law Clinic on its official launch and first year of service in Johannesburg. The clinic's mission to provide students with practical experience while promoting a community-service-oriented approach to law is exactly what our profession needs. We thank Soretha Venter for the invitation, and Advocate Mohamed Shafie Ameermia, National Director of ProBono.Org, for reminding us of the national importance of supporting law clinics in bridging the justice gap.
69. Together with the GAA, PAA and WRLPA, the JAA attended a special screening of One Humanity, hosted by ProBono.Org for delegates from Ohio University. The film tells how the world rallied against apartheid, and Nelson Mandela's thanks to the world for "choosing to care" is a call that our profession must continue to answer, through pro bono work and by using our voices for those who are unheard.

The Safety of Legal Practitioners

70. In March 2026, the profession was shaken by the fatal shooting of legal practitioner Chinette Gallichan near the CCMA in the Johannesburg CBD. Together with the GAA, PAA and WRLPA, the JAA issued a joint statement extending our condolences, and calling for urgent, collaborative engagement between the legal profession, the Department of Justice and the relevant security authorities, including access control, visible security, monitoring systems and proper risk assessments in and around our justice institutions.
71. The safety of practitioners was also a core concern at this year's LSSA Annual Conference, where the growing trend of attorneys being targeted and threatened was raised. Through our engagement in the High Court precinct working group, the JAA has continued to raise safety and security in and around the court, and we welcome the inclusion of safety and security as one of the six priorities of the High Court Revitalisation Project. The safety of attorneys is inseparable from the public's ability to access independent legal representation, and the JAA will continue to be vocal on this issue.

Associations, Collaborations and the Regulator

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72. The JAA, as one of the founding associations, remains an active member of the Gauteng Attorneys Association (GAA), on whose Executive Committee I serve as Co-Vice Chairperson. Our close collaboration with the GAA, PAA and WRLPA has allowed the profession in Gauteng to speak with one voice on matters of shared concern this year, from the safety of practitioners to the fees levied by the Legal Practice Council. JAA members remain automatically members of the GAA, at no additional cost. We also continue to collaborate with local associations across South Africa, through the South African Attorneys Federation (SAAF), which we are a Founding Member of.
73. Our relationship with the Legal Practice Council (LPC) has grown considerably this year, and the JAA is increasingly recognised as a credible and constructive voice of the profession. In April 2026, the JAA, GAA, PAA and WRLPA addressed a joint letter to the LPC regarding its 2026 annual fee increase and newly tiered fee structure. We raised the cumulative financial burden of successive increases, particularly for sole practitioners and small and medium-sized practices; the short notice given over the festive period; the absence of meaningful consultation and detailed justification; the rationale for disproportionately higher increases for more senior practitioners; and the absence of an accessible hardship relief mechanism. We requested a detailed breakdown of the basis for the increases, comprehensive financial disclosure, and meaningful engagement with the profession before future increases.
74. The letter was well received by the LPC, and we subsequently met with the LPC to raise these issues directly. We look forward to working more closely with the LPC in future, so that the regulatory framework governing our profession remains transparent, rational and accountable.
75. The JAA also made written submissions to the Judicial Service Commission (JSC) in respect of its selection process this year, reflecting our commitment to a strong, independent and capable Judiciary.
76. I was honoured to represent the JAA at the LSSA Annual Conference and AGM in Cape Town, themed "Advocating for Tomorrow: Ethical Practice, Accountability and Societal Confidence", a theme that resonates deeply with the JAA's commitment to meaningful and practical access to justice. We extend our warm congratulations to the elected LSSA leadership, President Machini Motloung, and Vice Presidents Umesh Jivan and Nkosana Mvundlela, and we look forward to working with them.
77. In November 2025, I represented the JAA at the B20 Summit at the Sandton Convention Centre, held as part of South Africa's historic G20 and B20 Presidency, the first on African soil. Engaging with delegates from across the G20, I highlighted the role that the JAA and GAA play in supporting the Judiciary,

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strengthening the rule of law and championing access to justice. Moments like these show how local professional associations can contribute to global conversations while staying rooted in their core mission.

Celebrating Judicial Leadership

78. The JAA congratulates Judge President Aubrey Ledwaba on his appointment as Judge President of the Gauteng Division of the High Court. His appointment comes at a pivotal time for our courts, and the JAA looks forward to continued engagement and collaboration with the Office of the Judge President in strengthening the administration of justice.
79. We also reflect on the immense contribution of Deputy Judge President Roland Sutherland to the Judiciary and the Gauteng Division of the High Court upon his retirement. In his farewell letter to the JAA, DJP Sutherland thanked the profession for its support and reiterated his belief that "this court belongs to the lawyers who practice here". He urged all practitioners to continue striving for the institutional autonomy of the Judiciary. We thank him for his years of service and wish him well.

Financial Position

80. The JAA remains in a sound financial position. The JAA receives no financial assistance from the Legal Practice Council or any other institution, and relies on membership fees, the services we provide and the events we host. The JAA ended the financial year on 31 May 2026 with a surplus and an improved cash position, and the annual financial statements have been independently reviewed by MW Accounting Services.
81. The annual financial statements and the Treasurer's Report, which address the JAA's finances in more detail, are presented separately at this meeting for consideration and adoption. I thank our Treasurer, Yusuf Wadee, and our accountants for their careful stewardship of the JAA finances this year.
82. Every subscription matters to a voluntary association. I encourage all members to ensure that their subscriptions are up to date, so that the JAA can continue to invest in the services, advocacy and benefits that our members rely on.

Gratitude and Acknowledgements

83. We extend our deepest gratitude to Baker McKenzie for hosting this evening's AGM, Legal Serve for sponsoring the catering this evening, and to Professor Radebe and Mr Mabusela of Jozi My Jozi for joining

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us. We thank all our sponsors and partners this year, including Anchor Capital, Legal Serve, Lamna, C Van Dyk Attorneys, Karla Strydom Attorneys, Neil Stuart Attorneys, FicaFit, Rodel, LexisNexis, Juta, Sabinet, Incorporate Digital Solutions, Mzansi Ballet, Virgin Active, Merhaba Legal Innovation Consultants, Venomized Media, Clio and Echo Advisory, as well as HBGSchindlers for their continued support of our RAF advocacy.

84. Thank you to the Executive Committee for the countless hours of pro bono work dedicated to elevating access to justice and making a difference in the profession, and to every sub-committee member and volunteer who gave freely of their time to attend the numerous meetings, working groups and engagements required to ensure that the voice of Johannesburg practitioners is heard.
85. A special thank you to Roxanne Barnard and Bongani Luthuli, who are not standing for re-election, for their dedicated service to the JAA and its members.
86. Thank you to our staff, Viv Joubert, Farai Kaneta, Regret Mazwezwe and Bridget Hlope, as well as our Social Media & Marketing Team, Incorporate Digital Solutions, for your unwavering support and commitment. Your dedication is deeply appreciated by me, the Executive Committee and all of our members.

Conclusion

87. This year, the JAA has shown what a voluntary association can achieve when it combines persistence with partnership. We have not merely identified the problems our members face. We have proposed solutions, built coalitions, and kept showing up until progress was made.
88. Together with our umbrella body and partners, we will continue to play an active role in ensuring the proper functioning of our courts, promoting access to justice, upholding constitutional rights, supporting candidate attorneys and young practitioners, and ensuring that the JAA remains a strong and trusted voice for the profession.
89. The JAA is a community, and we grow and uplift one another. We welcome every member interested in actively participating in our sub-committees, and I encourage colleagues to join us in building a JAA that is stronger, more inclusive and ready for the future.

Kind regards,

Azhar Aziz-Ismail

Chairperson of the Johannesburg Attorneys' Association (JAA)