Report by Treasurer on Financials of JAA
(July 2019 – June 2020)

The financial status of the JAA has been challenged this year and as can be seen from the Annual Financial Statements, it is now in a precarious financial situation.

The Association lost its annual grant from the now defunct Gauteng Law Council, which has not been replaced by any contribution from the Legal Practice Council. There is a current application for funds being compiled to submit to the LPC.

The suspension of all High Court trials in late 2019 and the subsequent introduction of Caselines has resulted in a substantial decline in attendance at our High Court office and the necessity for copies, which was the major source of revenue for the Association.

The COVID-19 pandemic at the end of the financial year to end of June 2020 resulted in almost no revenue generated in any of the offices.

Other contributing factors were the fact that the Johannesburg Magistrates Court office was closed due to the loss of income as a result of the Court jurisdiction restructuring. The Association was allocated an office in the new Booysen's court, which office has now been renovated and is ready to open, but now does not appear to be a viable option.

A donation was made to the Judge's conference room and various legal fees where covered in respect of APRAV and other challenges faced by the profession.

Through all of this the expenses for the Association have not declined, with the major costing being the rental agreements in respect of the photocopier machines which still have another year to run before expiry.

There has been a major drive to collect outstanding subscriptions and facility accounts from members, which is proving to be successful, but extremely time consuming and a slow process. There has also been a drive to attract members, which is evident from the increase in subscription income, however at R460,00 a year (including VAT), this income is not sufficient to cover the expenses.

Going forward the Association is investigating ways in which to make the photocopier machines viable, even to the extent of renting them to third parties to cover the rentals.

The Association is also in the process of restructuring its offices and staff complement in order to reduce the costs.

The Association has entered into a monthly lease agreement in respect of the Jhb Deeds Office linking office, for the purpose of assisting conveyancers using the Jhb Deeds Office. It is understood that without this office a large number of firms would not have been able to generate any income and continue with their practices. At present there has been no recovery in respect of this expense and all conveyancers and their prep clerks are able to use this office at their convenience. The Association is not in a financial position to be able to sustain this for much longer, if at all, and is going to be approaching its members and the conveyancers utilizing the offices for a contribution to these costs.

The Johannesburg Attorneys Association is a non-profit organization and the failure to generate profits is of little concern. However, the failure to generate sufficient income to be able to maintain the structures that provide the assistance to the profession is of enormous concern.

The Johannesburg Attorneys Association provides more assistance than just a facility account at the various courts. There is the continuous update of information on the website, including the court rolls and information to practitioners, as well as the mail drops and newsletters. The annual membership fee of R460,00 is not sufficient to maintain these ever escalating costs and may need to be reviewed in the near future.

I feel it is important that I acknowledge the amount of time, energy and effort that my colleagues on the EXCO expend at NO cost to the Association and I believe that the profession owes them an enormous debt of gratitude in respect of their efforts.

I hope to be able to present a more encouraging set of Annual Financial Statements next year.

KATHERINE GASCOIGNE
Treasurer