



President's Report 2020: Time to reimagine the future

At the 72nd Annual General Meeting on August 6, 2020, SAIW president, Morris Maroga, presented the President's Report for the unprecedented COVID-19-affected 2019 to 2020 period. Following this "battle for survival" Maroga urged the Institute to reimagine its future.

"The past year has certainly been difficult, especially with the March 2020 hard lockdown to mitigate the contagion of the COVID-19 pandemic. On one hand, the pandemic is a battle for survival, but on the other, it presents an opportunity to reimagine the future of the SAIW," began Maroga.

After introducing and thanking the SAIW Board – Johan Pieterse, Robin Williamson, Morris Maroga, Joseph Zinyana, Gert Joubert, Dawie Olivier, Ben Beetge, John Tarboton, Louis Breckenridge, Tony Paterson and Tom Rice – he moved swiftly on to the core purpose of his presentation, the SAIW's finances.

The SAIW's Audited Financial Accounts for 2019 continued to reflect an operating loss. "Income was down by around 22.72% compared with 2018, whereas expenses were reduced by 13%. Whilst the Institute is largely self-funding, sponsorship from SAISI amounted to R1.5-million, about 3.9% of total income. "We thank SAISI for its continued support and hope that this will continue in the years to come," he reported.

Addressing the effects of COVID-19, Maroga said the June 2020 income scenario assumed only 10% income after 0% income in May. Compared to 2019, this scenario predicted a 44% drop in income, with an expenditure reduction

of 33%, projecting a YTD operating deficit of R4 366 227. Actual YTD income was 8% higher than predicted, whilst the actual YTD expenditure was 5% lower. This meant that the YTD operating deficit was significantly lower than that projected in the scenario plan and current reserve levels now represent 15.6-months of current monthly expenditure.

While the pace and extent of the recovery is not known, a two-year recovery period is included. While the financial performance against the scenario planning is promising, the scenario could be negatively affected if, for example, there were an escalation in the COVID-19 crisis.

"The Board members and the management team will be working hard to turn the ship around and get the Institute back to a healthy situation," assured Maroga.

Growing SAIW membership

For the SAIW to achieve non-profit status from SARS, 80% of Institute income must be derived from member companies. It is, therefore, of utmost importance to grow the SAIW member base. "Every member can help in growing membership, so I encourage all your contacts to come along and join. SAIW is a prestigious and respected Institute and being a member is something to be proud of," he said.

To grow its membership base, a Membership Committee has been established with the intention of embedding SAIW into the minds of its members and industry at large with respect to all things related to welding. "I am pleased to report that a kick-off Membership Committee meeting took place on the 10th of July and the first full meeting took place shortly thereafter on the 24th of July 2020."

While currently difficult due to COVID-19, Maroga believes that SAIW can introduce new services, and com-

municate and engage far better with stakeholders. "A member acquisition, retention and engagement strategy works on the premise that we can broaden the offerings of the SAIW and increase engagement of members, who will then be far more likely to use the Institute for all their training, company auditing and technical requirements," he said.

And while challenged by a relatively small pool of paying member companies, SAIW Certification has a very loyal ISO 3834 clientele who would certainly benefit from SAIW membership and its associated comprehensive range of incentives, products and services.

Some newly introduced SAIW member benefits now include:

Free first-year membership: Worth R6 400 and a further blanket 10% discount, this incentive applies when a new Corporate Member takes up of one or more of the Institute's training and certification products.

Marketing: Originally focused on face-to-face consultations with potential members to explore the benefits of membership and the full suite of SAIW products and services, COVID-19 has led to a broadening of this approach and a longer-term view towards highlighting and customising SAIW benefits for new members.

SAIW emailers: The latest execution in our new marketing strategy is the distribution of Sales emailers to targeted databases, such as ISO 3834 clients, technical services clients and others, which offer incentives such as free membership and discounted training. Clear 'call to action' buttons are included within each emailer allowing easy access to the offer. This allows us to track exactly how many people have taken up a particular offer, capture their details and follow up with them on a one-on-one basis.

Lapsed member campaign: This campaign was designed to reach out to our lapsed members and bring them back into the fold. Member engagement is only possible if an institute can add value to members' lives. The SAIW management team have thus created an effective value proposition and a great package of offerings that make membership more compelling.



Willie Williams demonstrates submerged-arc welding in SAIW's Welding Technology Centre.



A student practices his pipe welding skills in the Practical Welding School.



SAIW Training School.

The next emailer will be to current members emphasising the value of membership and highlighting upcoming events and plans. The Laboratory emailer will go out after this, followed by an emailer aimed at metals fabricators who are members of other metals associations such as ISF, SAISC, Sassda and AFSA.

Prospectus 2021: A complete campaign will also be designed when the 2021 prospectus is launched. The prospectus will be modernised by being electronic, interactive and cell phone compatible. The development of an App is currently also underway. The savings in printing will be used to develop the App.

Social media platforms: There has been a renewed focus on the strategy and the quality of the content on three key social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, with a resultant increase in followers and engagement. The next step will be utilising these platforms for lead and revenue generation.

Ask the experts: The SAIW's technical know-how and industry networks and connections are two of its greatest strengths. The LinkedIn campaign will combine those two strengths into a series called 'Ask the Experts'. SAIW will generate core pieces of content to be used as 'Expert Columns', (website articles and press releases) based on three key topics, one per month plus a webinar for each. Then emailers and additional posts will be used to offer exclusive deals and a virtual tour of the facility. The key targets of these posts are company leaders and decision makers who are able to greenlight investment into SAIW membership, products and services.

Sports Days: As membership numbers and membership engagement start to grow, the SAIW will relaunch SAIW Sports Days. The Institute will also look to

sponsor holes at other association's Sports Days to promote SAIW membership and our offerings.

Annual dinner and awards

The 2019 annual dinner was a wonderful celebration of 71 years of the Institute's existence. The function was held at Emperors Palace in October 2019. It was hosted by the Institute's newly appointed executive director, John Tarboton and he was joined by several former SAIW stalwarts and well-known people from industry who have played a part in the history of the Institute. "We celebrate our award winners for their achievements," continued Maroga.

- Sasol Secunda Inspection Authority, winner of the SAIW Gold Medal.
- Quintin Ayres, who won the Phil Santilhana Memorial Award for the best student on the Welding Co-ordination or Welding Inspectors training courses and the SAIW Presidents' Award for the best NDT student.
- Hi-Tech Pressure Engineering, which won the Best IIW Manufacturing Certification Company Award in recognition of its excellent ISO 3834 Certification Manufacturing scheme.

Due to the severe economic downturn, this year's annual dinner to celebrate the 72nd birthday of SAIW will not take place. COVID-19 permitting, a combined annual seminar and gala dinner will introduced in its place.

SAIW service area reports

Training: Training figures for 2019 illustrate a dramatic decline in students



Augmented, virtual and live welder training technologies can now be effectively used to train and screen welders.

attending SAIW courses in all categories, due to a range of complex factors, of which, the ones under SAIW control are currently being addressed. We are working on 2021 levels being 10% below 2019, but student numbers are unlikely to recover fully until 2022.

Technical services: The loss of ISO 17025 accreditation for the testing laboratory was damaging, causing a loss of clients and an associated impact on technical services. But SAIW has now regained ISO 17025 accreditation and is in a much better position. We are better communicating SAIW's highly competitive pricing compared to other laboratories and responsibility for growing this important part of the business has been given to Shelton Zichawo and his team.

Non Destructive Testing (NDT): NDT is a critical area in both manufacturing and plant maintenance. NDT, conducted correctly, saves plant owners millions of Rands and countless lives over a plant's operating lifetime. This said, it is imperative that extensive training for this extremely important method of inspection is of the highest calibre.

To ensure that NDT training numbers recover, NDT's short term training goals will include blended learning in the six NDT methods across Level 1, Level 2



NDT is a critical area in both manufacturing and plant maintenance.



The SAIW Testing Laboratory has now regained ISO 17025 accreditation. The Testing Laboratory team consists of, from left: KG Letlole, Nicoline Kgoedi, Confidence Lekoane and Riaan Loots.

and Level 3; on-line Level 3 workshop targeting regional SAIW branched and Cameroon; presenting one NDT Webinars per quarter; one online NDT for Engineers course; on-line theory formative and summative assessments; as well as an on-line theory qualification examinations.

Welding technology: Shelton Zichawo noted that the SAIW Welding and Fabricator Inspector Level 1 course has been upgraded and further improvements are ongoing, with tests being added to the end of each topic. SAIW Welding and Fabricator Inspector Level 2 will also need more time to refine from its current state, though this work was started during the Lockdown period.

The IWP course notes are being overhauled prior to delivering the course in Ethiopia and the International Welder course notes will also be reviewed and revised to give the Liberia project students an enhanced learning experience.

The Training, Technology, Health and Safety Committee has suggested developing refresher sessions for a range of SAIW courses via webinars, which may be offered as an additional membership

benefit. Currently, virtual training is being successfully offered and two audio visual systems have now been acquired. Not only does it assist with extending learning from the three SAIW branches, but it also allows the number of lower demand courses to be offered at the Durban and Cape Town branches, live streamed from Johannesburg. This increases class sizes and stimulates interactions between the students and lecturers.

For blended learning, Zichawo has identified Google Education Suite as a possible means by which the SAIW can offer classes online. Virtual classes can be run off this platform where livestreamed lecture sessions can take place. This technology will be tested with a group of learners in West Africa using the International Welder theory coursework and a full project looks set to go ahead, possibly this year, also via online learning, as previously discussed.

Practical Welding School: Etienne Nell holds that the practical welding school is the 'shop window' of the SAIW. Fabrication project work often starts with practical welding, so it is important to revitalise this key department of the SAIW. Augmented, virtual and live welder training technologies can now be effectively used to train and screen welders. Simulation welding equipment saves fabricators money by minimising training time; reducing consumable costs; and ensuring welders are well trained.

The current key focus of the Welding School is on engaging fabricators to use SAIW to train apprentices to the QCTO curriculum.

Client Services: Michelle Warmback reported that at the beginning of June 2020, administration had been restructured to improve the Institute's communication with students. A committed Front of House Student Liaison Officer will carry out all the direct student/client enquiries and queries, thereafter all administration will be completed by the administrator. This ought to improve the handling of student bookings which, in turn, will allow the training managers to make firm decisions on the viability of running scheduled courses.

The student surveys will be used to monitor improvements and the existing Student Management System (SMS) has been redeveloped to incorporate exam rewrites, which will be available online from September 2020.

Qualification and Certification: Whilst

ISO 3834 activities fall within the remit of SAIW Certification, it is pleasing to report that the ISO 3834 scheme continues to grow, with 250 companies certified and 50 more companies currently in various stages of the certification process. A total of 863 persons received qualifications in 2019 and the total number of certified persons was 3037, a figure that includes people with multiple certifications.

International affairs and external relationships

IIW: Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the 2020 IIW Annual Assembly and International Conference was held online between the 15th and 28th of July. Herman Potgieter attended meetings online as a delegate.

ICNDT: SAIW provides international recognition to certified NDT individuals. The ICNDT Accreditation is still valid and ongoing with regards to the NDT Certification of Personnel.

AFRA/IAEA: AFRA/IAEA has funded a contract between SAIW and Hydrac (Cameroon) for re-establishing an Approved Training, Authorised Qualification and Certification Body. COVID-19 travel restriction has put this project on hold, however.

University relationships: SAIW continues its close relationship with both Wits and Pretoria Universities where each university continues to make good progress on its respective welding engineer and research and development programmes in the field of welding.

Concluding his report, Maroga said: "We need every single member of staff to do his or her utmost to ensure that SAIW is seen to be a competent and professional organisation. People should want to come here knowing they are getting the best training possible and the best support and consultancy services available anywhere in the country and continent.

"I would personally like to thank all SAIW staff members for their hard work and contribution over the past year. The coming year will certainly be the most challenging of years in living memory, but the Institute has faced difficulties in the past and overcome them. I am sure that for the next couple of years, we will all put our shoulders to the wheel and work dynamically towards the recovery of the SAIW," he said, before also thanking the loyal and hardworking board members for their ongoing commitment. ■