

# The Water Institute of Southern Africa

Comprising Southern African water sector professionals, interested parties, companies, local authorities, research and educational institutions, and associated professional organisations; the Water Institute of Southern Africa (WISA) is a voluntary association. WISA is registered as both a Section 21 company and a non-profit organisation.

WISA originated in South Africa and has been in existence and serving professionals in the southern African water sector under its various transformations since 1937, and as WISA since 1987. It provides a sector-wide platform for the promotion, integration and application of scientific, engineering and management knowledge, and skills in the natural and controlled water cycle in all areas including:

- the provision of water and treatment of effluent
- water infrastructure management
- water conservation
- skills development.

In short, WISA's purpose is to strengthen the fabric of the South Africa's water sector.

As the organisation is made up of volunteers, WISA prides itself on its independence and the fact that it serves the South African water sector in its entirety, irrespective of race, beliefs or any other parameter. In this spirit, WISA has built up an enviable reputation as an 'honest broker' over the years and while zealously protective of its independence, WISA enjoys the trust of all major industry players. This is evidenced, for example, by the regular requests received by WISA to brief the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee or to arrange briefings for them.

WISA maintains sound working relationships with all the major water associations worldwide and as such, is a full member of the international Water Environmental Forum (WEF) and the International Water Association (IWA), and is an affiliate of the American Water Works Association (AWWA). WISA also offers free WISA membership to and cooperates with like-minded South African and international professional associations, including the South African Institute of Civil Engineers (SAICE), the South African Association of Consulting Engineers (SAACE), The Institute for Municipal Engineering of Southern Africa (IMESA) and the Institute of Waste Management of Southern Africa (IWMSA), in an attempt to integrate the water sector where possible.

## **Mission**

- building expertise
- sharing knowledge
- improving quality of life.

## **Ethos**

WISA sees itself as an objective and professional body. Its members:

- regard water as a primary need for the health of the nation
- are committed to working towards the equitable and beneficial use of water for all

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- will not wilfully cause or permit the discharge of matter into the natural water cycle which would impair the quality of the water for its beneficial use by others
- will strive during the course of their normal activities to prevent the abuse or misuse of water occurring in any manner that would endanger public health
- will work towards enhancing the environment
- will endeavour to cooperate with other members in the advancement of knowledge and technology in the field of water.

### Membership

WISA's membership comprises individuals who need to comply with certain standards for promotion in membership grade, interested parties, commercial companies, municipalities, most water utilities and water boards, research institutions, professional associations and educational institutions – the last two categories enjoying free membership privileges, as do student members. In addition, the Institute has 30 patron members consisting of the major water stakeholders in South Africa. WISA currently has a membership of 2 183.

During the '90s, the institute was starting to lose members and measures were taken to counter this trend. A permanent chief executive was appointed, who was tasked with reversing the negative trend in membership numbers at the time.

This bold decision bore fruit, and over the last five years, the institute has:

- attracted more delegates to its biennial conference
- reversed the ageing membership demographics
- attracted more previously disadvantaged individuals as members (and delegates)
- managed to provide more services for its members and
- established a well-functioning administrative structure.

Its growth in membership runs counter to worldwide trends, where the majority of water associations are experiencing nett losses in membership. WISA actively invites people to join the institute and keeps its membership fees low to increase the representation of WISA, as well as its sphere of influence.

### Structure

Through its national office in Midrand, five regional branches and eleven technical divisions, WISA is able to serve the interests of its members and the water sector across southern Africa. WISA is run on democratic principles that enable a high degree of autonomy for its branches and divisions, while at the same time ensuring that the interests of its members are represented directly at council level.

A member belonging to one particular division has the opportunity to air opinions via three different channels:

- voting for the branch chairperson
- voting for the chairperson of that particular division
- velecting council members.

The council is the highest authority of WISA. Executive board members

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### **Funding**

WISA is funded by a number of sources including membership fees, conference surpluses, investments and advertising revenue (WISA websites and members directory).

### **Branches**

In addition to its national office in Gauteng, WISA has five regional branches: KwaZulu-Natal, East London, Eastern Cape, Western Cape, and Free State.

### **Technical divisions**

The following technical divisions allow for specialised facets of water-related sciences, practical work problems and socio-economic operating environments to be focussed on by practitioners. These are adjusted as the demand increases and/or decreases in different technologies, including: anaerobic sludge processes; community water supply and sanitation; SA industrial water; management and institutional; membrane technology; mine water; nutrient management removal; disinfection/oxidation; water care/scientists; water-related health aspects; and water distribution.

### **Patron members**

- ABS Wastewater Technology
- Alldos
- Amatola Water
- Bewater SA

- Bloem Water
- City of Cape Town
- CSIR
- Dept Water Affairs & Forestry
- Development Bank of SA
- ERWAT
- ESKOM
- eThekweni Municipality
- Golder Associates Africa
- Johannesburg Water
- Keyplan
- Magalies Water
- Mhlathuze Water
- NCP Chlorchem
- Rand Water
- SALGA
- SAME Water
- Sappi Limited
- Sedibeng Water
- Siemens
- Süd-Chemie Water & Process Technologies
- Umgeni Water
- VWS Envig
- Water and Sanitation Services SA
- Water Research Commission
- Zetachem