

Message

Message from the Incoming NACA President

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The recent World Air Quality Report that is published through IQ Global's Air Quality monitoring platform, paints a very bleak picture on the state of clean air quality across the globe with no signs of immediate abatement. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), air pollution still accounts for one in every nine deaths globally with many people suffering from the effects of fine particulate matter which results in several acute and chronic respiratory diseases such as lung cancer, strokes, and heart diseases. The WHO reports that poor air quality is responsible for over seven million premature deaths worldwide. The hardest hit by these impacts are low to middle income countries. There is much still to be done to improve ambient air quality for ordinary citizens throughout the world.

Between 4-6 September 2024, NACA hosted its 55th Annual Conference with the theme primed as "*Air Quality Evolution: Reflecting on 20 Years of Progress and Charting Future Paths*". The theme was informed by the progress that has been made in South Africa since the birth of the National Environmental Management: Air Quality Act 39 of 2004 (NEMAQA), which repealed or replaced the Atmospheric Pollution Prevention Act 45 of 1965 (APPA). The 55th Conference was unique and educational with standout presentations from all the speakers, including five keynote addresses, and illuminating three-minute research presentations from several university students and

professionals who are advocating for clean air quality through their respective roles in society.

Since its inception in 2004, NEMAQA has seen the promulgation of twenty sub-ordinate pieces of legislation which have been aimed at regulating and improving the standards of air quality across South Africa, and this is compared to just six notices and regulations that were published during the twenty-nine-year operation of APPA. As Winston Churchill wisely observed, "the further you look back at your history the further you can see the future", the evolution of air quality legislation and standards in the past twenty years combined with the robust collaboration between academia, industry and government leaders provides hope that future generations can still breathe clear air for generations to come.

One of the highlights of the 55th Conference was the topics which were covered by each of the five keynote speakers in reflection of the theme of the Conference. Dr Peter Lukey from the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment presented about the birth of NEMAQA and the transition to objectives-based air quality governance in South Africa. Dr Patience Gwaze, who is the National Air Quality Officer, presented about the future direction of air quality management in South Africa. Dr Hanlie Liebenberg-Enslin from Airshed Planning Professionals spoke of the constant journey in air quality evolution in South Africa for the past twenty years. Prof Jesse van Griensven from Lakes Environmental Software, gave a virtual presentation from the United States on artificial intelligence in atmospheric science and how it is transforming environmental modelling and forecasting. As one of the keynote speakers, I had to stay true to my legal profession by delivering a presentation on the intersection between the Climate Change Act and the existing suite of air quality legislation in South Africa.

As we look into the future, it is becoming more and more evident that the rapid impacts of anthropogenic activities which result in the significant release of pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions to the Earth's atmosphere continue to pose a serial threat to the universal aspirations of clean air quality and climate change resilience for all countries including South Africa. NACA will continue with its quest and objectives for clean air quality in South Africa by ensuring that it promotes clean air initiatives and provides a collaborative platform for industry, government, and academia to develop unique solutions to combat air pollution and the resultant effects.

The Clean Air Journal (CAJ) provides a professional platform for the publication of world class researched and peer reviewed papers on clean air quality. The journal continues to expand its reader footprint beyond South Africa, and its research papers and publications are making a significant contribution to the global effort to reduce atmospheric pollutants and to educate the public about the adverse impacts of air pollution. On behalf of NACA and our council members, we thank you for your faithful support of the CAJ and we look forward to our joint efforts to achieve clean air quality for all.

Siya Mkhize
Incoming NACA President