

Members' Banquet



THE ANNUAL Members' Banquet was held in Midrand on 24 February.

At the event the SAICE President for 2006, Sam Amod, was inaugurated and delivered his presidential address to an appreciative audience.

Several awards were also made: the 2005 SAICE Gold Medal Award went to Allyson Lawless, the Honorary Fellowship for 2006 to Professor Will Alexander, and the 2005 SAICE Award for Meritorious Research to Dr Kevin Wall.

▶ Left: Dawie and Rita Botha, Michèle and Mike Deeks

Opposite page in the usual order:

Sam Amod (incoming president), Mike Deeks (2005 president)

Mike Deeks, Sam's wife, Lekha, Mike's wife, Michèle

Jones Moloisane, Zina Giraldo (SAICE National Office)

Awards

The following awards were made:



Allyson Lawless, Sam Amod

2005 SAICE GOLD MEDAL AWARD: Allyson Lawless

The SAICE's Gold Medal was awarded to Allyson Lawless, who has become very well known in the South African civil engineering environment, as well as in national and local government circles.

Allyson was born in Durban and attended Maritzburg Girls High School, where, at a crucial point in her life, she was advised to 'not become an engineer', since that was deemed to be a man's world. Fortunately Allyson did not listen to this advice and graduated from Natal University in 1973. She became a student member of SAICE in 1972, a graduate

member in 1974, a member in 1980, a fellow in 1999, and then, in 2000, the first SAICE lady president.

Her versatility ranges from structural engineering to municipal services, from leader in SAICE professional matters to a deep-seated drive to assist and help others in many ways. Her testimony is there for all to see:

- SAICE president 2000, focusing on 'Making a difference', for which she became known as the MAD president

- Leading a delegation to the 150th Anniversary ASCE Convention in Washington and chairing a session on 'Why the world needs Africa'

- Reaching out to government ministers and government structures and leading many delegations in this regard

- Reaching out far and wide during the 2003 SAICE Centenary Celebrations

- Directing the SAICE Brochure of 2003

- Receiving one of the nine prestigious awards of the SAICE Projects of the Century in 2003. Allyson Lawless's pioneering civil engineering software had made her an engineering household name over the years

- Featuring as a role model in the SAICE book *Foundation for the future*

- She has been and still is the pro-

motor, driver, facilitator and manager of numerous capacity-building programmes

- Researching *Numbers and needs*.

This well-received civil engineering research and recommendation project was one of the biggest projects she had ever handled

Allyson Lawless: a worthy recipient.



Professor Will Alexander, Sam Amod

HONORARY FELLOWSHIP 2006: Professor Will Alexander

SAICE conferred an honorary fellowship on William J R Alexander, fondly known to most of us as Prof Will.

Will Alexander decided to become a civil engineer while still at school, but his tertiary education was interrupted by World War II, during which time he served in North Africa and Italy as a member of the South African Engineering Corps, gaining invaluable experience in practical engineering, particularly the use of explosives.

After the war he resumed his studies and graduated from the University of the Witwatersrand in 1949. He joined the Department of Irrigation, where he displayed not only a practical aptitude for dam building and canal construction, but also an increasing awareness of the need for research as he developed better hydrological methods to replace traditional empirical formulae.

Eventually his experience and expertise led to his appointment as resident engineer in charge of the construction of the enormously complex Orange-Fish Tunnel, which diverts water from the Orange River to various dams and irrigation schemes in the Eastern Cape. This is still the longest continuous tunnel in the world, and its construction required the coordination of several consulting engineering firms and three major contracting consortiums, as well as extremely detailed decisions on construction techniques. Will Alexander performed this task with distinction, and included several of his own innovative features.

He was then promoted to Chief of the Division of Hydrology, where, after further studies, he established a vibrant research team that sought improved knowledge of rainfall patterns, river flow and climate change, often questioning existing beliefs.

When he retired from the

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In his address, Sam Amod focused on the 'Ecology of Construction' after giving a fascinating account of the history of the metre, currently the world's (almost) universal standard of measure.

Ecological sustainability

Sam pointed out that, as an industry, we must strive for continuous improvement, while understanding that our role in society cannot continue to be purely as purveyors of technology.

'As the boundaries between professions become increasingly blurred and the public better informed, engineering professionals are

required to interact at a human, not technical, level and to persuade, not simply specify. It is no longer sufficient for the technical expert to explain by saying 'because it is so ...'.

Sam asked how, if poverty and prosperity were both properties of an ecological system, we would characterise a healthy and sustainable construction ecology.

'We are obliged to fundamentally review our patterns of work and organisation to address the challenges of poverty and inequity. Procurement, transformation, human and organisational development must turn away from a purely competitive and compliant mindset to the paradigm of ecological sustainability characterised by

cooperation and mutual development.'

In closing, Sam paraphrased the words of his holiness Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama: 'Just as the world of business has been paying renewed attention to ethics, the world of (engineering) would benefit from more deeply considering the implications of its own work. [Engineers] should be more than technically adept; they should be mindful of their own motivation and the larger goal of what they do: the betterment of humanity.'

The full text of **Sam Amod's presidential address** can be found on the SAICE website: www.civils.org.za/pa2006.pdf



Department of Water Affairs and Forestry in 1984, he was immediately invited to join the Engineering Faculty at the University of Pretoria. Here scores of undergraduate and postgraduate students passed through his hands, as well as numerous practitioners whom he updated on modern hydrological methods. Prof Will retired from the university in 1999 as professor emeritus, but continued his research in the field of flood and water resources.

In his time Prof Will has published two books, delivered some 200 papers at conferences throughout the world, was appointed to United Nations scientific committees, and served as expert witness at international court cases. He has striven tirelessly to ensure that scientific evidence is used as the basis for theories on climate change and related hydraulic calculations. His analysis of the 1981 Laingsburg flood attracted national attention, while his investigations into the 2000 Mozambique floods have led to a re-assessment of the design parameters for such extreme events.

Prof Will is that rare combination of a practical engineer who understands the value of research and an academic whose teaching and research relate directly and usefully to the wider profession. He has been a role model and inspiration

for hundreds of young engineers, an ambassador for his country, and an innovator whose ideas will continue to enrich the widespread beneficiaries of his knowledge.

Prof Will Alexander has undoubtedly brought a unique distinction to, and made a noticeable impact on, the civil engineering profession.



Kevin Wall, Sam Amod

2005 SAICE AWARD FOR MERITORIOUS RESEARCH: Dr Kevin Wall for 'water services infrastructure operation through franchising'

The capacity of many local governments in South Africa to adequately operate even basic levels of water services for all their citizens on a sustainable basis is in question. There is a great need for institutional innovations aimed at improving access to basic services, and sustaining that improvement. The challenge of exploring a range of provider

options represents an opportunity to selectively incubate innovations on an experimental basis, including innovative public sector-driven partnerships with the private sector, for heightened development impact.

An alternative service provision option or method, but one that is little known or understood, is franchising the operation of water services.

The research for which the SAICE Meritorious Research Award was made reviewed current water services provision mandates and methods in South Africa. It found that there is a great need to investigate new water services operator institutions as alternatives to those currently in use.

The characteristics of franchising, the process, success and failure factors, and the extent to which franchising can achieve its delivery objectives profitably, but without excess profit being taken, were explored by the research, as was the well-developed consumer product franchising industry in South Africa, and its highly creditable track record in the creation of jobs and in small, medium and micro enterprise (SMME) development.

A literature survey revealed that the World Bank is the only other institution that has worked on developing the concept of water services franchising.

A review of local economic development in South Africa concluded that the strong need for the creation and nurturing of SMMEs is further motivation for the development of franchising as an institutional model for water services operation in addition and complementary to the current models.

The research found that a franchise model for water services infrastructure operation should be developed and made available to emerging entrepreneurs as the basis of a viable business, and to water services authorities as a viable alternative water services provider. The franchising would involve components of the water services value chain that are suitable for small business in that they can be readily systematised.

The concept of water services infrastructure operation through franchising is both innovative and appealing. The research by the CSIR, with the support of the Water Research Commission, has been thoroughly and competently done, extensively published, and recognised by professional peers as being of outstanding merit. It is now being extended to a developmental stage. It is therefore fitting that the researcher, Dr Kevin Wall of CSIR Knowledge Services, should be granted the SAICE Award for Meritorious Research for 2005.