



Notice for the SASA WC AGM - SASA WC Financial arrangements changing with the times:

Dear SASACWB member

A lot has changed with respect to the activities and the finances of the SASA WC branch since I joined the branch in 1998. 25 years ago the branch had less than R30 000 in its bank account. The branch meetings were limited to monthly Tuesday evening meetings where 30 people attending was regarded as a good turnout, and all the branch administration was performed by the volunteer office bearers. The relationship with SASA national was distant, with the only real meaningful involvement taking place when it was the branch's turn to host the annual SASA national congress.

In 2005 the brave choice was made to change the structure of branch meetings to bi-annual Saturday morning meetings. This was accepted by membership and trade alike and the numbers of delegates increased to about 150 a meeting with the trade involvement increasing along with that. The bank balance of the SASA WC was transformed, but so was the administrative load on the volunteer office bearers.

The decision was then made to use a professional congress organiser (PCO) to facilitate the running of each individual event. This allowed better handling of registration and trade involvement, as well as providing the opportunity to now also include nurses at the Saturday morning meetings. The increased funds also allowed for new and exciting standalone courses and seminars to be rolled out like regional ultrasound, history of anaesthesia and ethics courses. The increase funds also allowed the branch to sponsor more and more educational activities and assist those in need.

And so, in 2023, we at SASACWB now have over R1,7 million in our bank account. We were able to sponsor over R150 000 towards educational and academic activities in the past year, in addition to hosting two outstanding updates meetings that had turnovers of close to R400 000 per event with meaningful surpluses. The last May 2023 meeting had the lowest registration costs for delegates of any of the meetings in the last 17 years, yet it was the most profitable – thanks to a record trade involvement (who have bought into our brand), and the most amount of delegates attending (over 350 in one day!).

Success also comes with its own set of challenges and one of them is that we are obliged to start charging VAT from the next financial year and that poses a few issues to consider. VAT compliance is non-negotiable – even for a volunteer, tax exempt entity.

SASA National has also transformed its activities and its finances in the last 25 years! We have moved from a situation where all the administration was done by volunteer office bearers to a situation in 2023 where SASA National now employs a full time CEO, an Operations Manager, a Communications Manager and a recently appointed full time Finance Manager. This increase in capacity, organization and corporate skill sets have improved the institution and also allowed for the first time oversight, administration and financial services from SASA national to be available and accessible to Special interest Groups (SIGS) and branches alike.

SASA national and SASACWB are currently engaging on the best way forward for the future management of branch funds and accounts. Staying on the right side of SARS with respect to VAT compliance and Tax Exempt status are a priority of both SASA national and SASA WC, as we have a legacy that was built up over many years that we want to preserve for future generations.

One proposal is for SASA WC to close its bank account and transfer all funds to the main SASA national account and to have these funds ring-fenced for SASACWB use. The branch will still retain autonomy with regard to distribution, but the management, tax compliance, auditing and fiduciary duties will be undertaken by the SASA Finance manager. There is already a precedent for the ring-fencing of funds for specific entities within SASA - the SASA PPBU fund (that has been ring-fenced since 2007) is a prime example of that.

Advantages of such a proposal would be a reduction in bank charges, no audit fees for the branch account, shared interest in investments, quarterly reports on funds, VAT processing and payments done by the SASA Financial Manager, and an easier transition of branch treasurer duties when office bearers change.

Changes such as these take a lot of “behind the scenes” work and the use of accounting and legal experts in the field of tax exempt and non –profit entities. It will require changes to the SASACWB constitution, changes to the rules by which branches interact with SASA national and vice versa, and a memorandum of understanding to be signed between the branch and SASA national with respect to the autonomy of future branch payments and sponsorships, and changes in the way our PCO runs the finances of the biannual meetings.

All parties have a deadline of the end of this financial year, but we hope to have some concrete proposals that we can share with members prior to the SASACWB AGM on the 21st October 2023.

All the best

Dirk van Zijl

Honorary treasurer: SASA WC branch

20th September 2023