

'MRS SAPMA' LEAVES AFTER TWO DECADES OF DEDICATION

Mandy Linossi, for 20 years passionately devoted to furthering the SAPMA cause, is leaving the Association to move to Scotland. Here the respected and much-loved SAPMA Administrator looks back on a career that earned her the nickname "Mrs SAPMA":

Q: When and how did your career at SAPMA start?

A: I started working for SAPMA in January 1999. The administration office had moved from Durban to Johannesburg and I took over from John Bryce of the Chamber of Commerce, Durban, who had performed the secretarial duties for SAPMA. At my first official meeting were Terry Ashmore, Mike Russell and Reg Hoddinott. I felt an immediate rapport with all three gents, little knowing that they would play important parts – and become close friends - throughout my entire career at SAPMA.

Jan de Jong, retired Technical Director of Dulux was the first SAPMA Director and then Mike Hayes - with a chemical background from Engen Chemicals - was appointed to succeed him. During his five years of leading SAPMA, the development of the lead-free paint legislation was promulgated in 2009.

I ran SAPMA for 18 months thereafter until Deryck Spence was appointed as executive director in 2009. Although a corporate veteran, Deryck is highly motivated and has the energy of a young man, which I have never seen in a SAPMA director. I had a motto in my office "Time to turn the ship around" - and that's exactly what Deryck has done. He introduced a new belief system, new traditions, new constitution, new membership benefits, new management committee and changed the perception of an Old Boys' club to a fully-fledged industry association. The rest is history.

Q: How did SAPMA back then compare with the SAPMA you are now leaving?

A: Initially, the industry was dominated by the three largest producers but from about 2008, SAPMA membership was more diverse and representative of the entire industry. There was far more membership participation interest in and commitment to SAPMA objectives in the old days but in the last 10 years or so members have grown increasingly disinterested, probably because of increasing work pressure, lower staff numbers and the struggle to maintain profitability as the country's economic woes started to escalate. Collecting SAPMA membership subscriptions, for a start, is now a major challenge.

Q: How did the training provision start and what role did you personally play in its development?

A: In 1999, the SAPMA Paint Technology course was already well established and well supported by the industry. The course was delivered by 'Distance Learning' with one tutor per region giving two lectures in a four-month timeframe, supported by an in-house 'Counsellor' or 'Mentor' for practical demonstrations to students. From about 2005, mergers and international acquisitions started, and the calibre of staff in the industry was changing. There was a slow but sure migration towards classroom teaching. Both employers and employees loved the personal interactions and the industry became converted to this method of teaching but the high costs involved forced us to revert to 'distance learning' through the British Coatings Federation.

Official accreditation of the surface coatings qualification started in 2000. It was a very long and painful process, with CHIETA forever changing the goal posts. In 2009, CHIETA appointed SAPITI for the accreditation of the surface coatings technology qualification as a pilot project. The qualification was eventually accredited by the QCTO in 2015, with SAPMA accredited and the Assessment Quality Partner (AQP). I was intimately involved in these processes and progress was painstakingly slow and frustrating. Reg Hoddinott played a pivotal role in the development and realisation of the accreditation. As with all

the challenges we have had with government enterprises, we got there in the end - but it was a draining experience both physically and mentally.

Q: Roughly how many students did you help train and eventually see receive their certificates?

A: Between 1999 to 2018, over 4 300 modules had been taught to employees in the industry. I was heavily involved with the operations of the course and in 2013 we started to employ additional staff to help me cope with the administrative demands. I thoroughly enjoyed the financial and marketing aspect, liaising with the employers for registration of their staff, operational duties, presenting the induction of the course, monitoring the students' progress and encouraging them along the way. I got to know our students personally and knew which module they had studied. The cherry on top was the training awards presented at functions at our major cities. I was so proud of each person receiving their certificate and in some cases, top achievers receiving trophy awards, because I knew how much hard work and dedication went into their achievement.

Q: What are your future plans?

A: I realised I wanted to do something else with my life, so decided to go to my Motherland in Scotland to settle in Edinburgh, where I hope to start a new career. I want to learn new skills, make new friends, have some fun and travel as much as my work allows. I would also like to catch up with relatives and visit historical places.

Q: Some closing thoughts about the challenges facing the coatings sector and SAPMA in future?

A: The industry faces many challenges.

The first is general **APATHY**, which I believe stems from uncertainty, fear, nervousness and unfair red-tape created by our Government, preventing business from flourishing and creating more jobs. I believe **BBEE** and **TARIFF PARITY** do not promote local manufacturing growth and international investment, which probably contributes to high unemployment and transgression.

STATISTICS AND DETERMINING THE SCOPE OF THE INDUSTRY is another challenge. SAPMA is inundated with enquiries about the size and statistical data relating to the industry and it is frustrating we are unable to provide meaningful information because of members' lack of cooperation. Those paranoid about disclosure should learn to trust professionals and the strict confidentiality measures in place. SAPMA needs input to collate valuable market and business confidence trends.

Trying to work with the **SETAs**, especially our CHIETA is another challenge – the constant moving of the goal posts, staff changes, disorganised administration and processes and denial of training funding are crippling the industry. SETAs were put in place to serve the industry – not the other way around.

SAPMA also has to constantly chase membership subscriptions and training fees to add to our chores of lobbying with Government and the daily demands of the Industry.

In closing, I wish SAPMA could become a professional body in the near future, so the organisation can offer more benefits to members. However, this means more committed participation from member companies, which is the main reason why SAPMA has been unable to make application as a professional body. Members should remember that SAPMA is not owned by management or the executive committee nor the chairperson or executive director. SAPMA is a branch of your business - would you ignore your branch?

Instead of relying on 20% participation to get the work done, let's have 80% participation, which spreads the load more evenly. So, when you receive a request to participate on a certain chamber or committee or statistical scheme etc., try to comply. I believe in the old adage "United we stand, divided we fall" - this is how we can overcome challenges.

I am leaving SAPMA, SAPITI and the Surface Coatings Employers Association at the end of October 2018, leaving part of my life behind. I made a personal investment into SAPMA and saw myself as a guardian of the industry. I wish to thank SAPMA management, staff, and chairpersons of the various committees and you, dear member, for your support over all the years.

I value the experience, knowledge and memories gained over the past two decades. But I have learnt one can't control everything. Sometimes one just needs to relax and have faith that things will work out. Let go a little and just let life happen. This is what I'm trying to do in taking a very big leap in faith. I trust that the new chapter in my life will be good and hopefully have some fun along the way, and I will face any adversities, bravely.

I'm sure our paths may cross sometime in the future - and then we can look back fondly of times gone by. Take care all of you. I shall follow your progress and hope that SAPMA and the coatings industry will have only happy times ahead.

And lots of blessings,

MANDY LINOSSI.