

National Forum meets for third time to continue Legal Practice Act work

Compiled by Barbara Whittle

The National Forum on the Legal Profession (NF) held its third meeting for the year in Centurion on 19 September. In terms of s 105(1) of the Legal Practice Act 28 of 2014, the NF must hold at least four meetings a year. The September meeting was its third meeting including the launch of the NF in March this year. The NF will hold its fourth meeting on 23 January 2016. Kgomotso Moroka SC and Max Boqwana – the NF chairperson and deputy chairperson respectively – drafted a first report on the NF's activities and submitted the report to Justice Minister, Michael Masutha, as required by the Act. They then met with the Minister on 21 September to report to the Minister on developments and on the work undertaken by the NF to pave the way for 'the effective and efficient implementation of the Act' by the Legal Practice Council (LPC) once it comes into effect.

At the NF meeting in September, the General Council of the Bar recorded the replacement of one of its member, Ismail Jamie SC, with Durban advocate Anna Annandale SC from the KwaZulu-Natal Bar. Also, the four working committees set up at its meeting in July (see 2015 (Sept) *DR* 18) reported on their activities to date, which included drafting terms of reference, work plans and initial discussions on critical issues.

The four NF committees are –

- Admin and Human Resources Committee;
- Governance Committee;
- Rules and Code of Conduct Committee; and
- Education, Standards and Accreditation Committee.

The Admin and Human Resources Committee shortlisted and interviewed candidates for the position of Executive Officer of the NF. An announcement was due at the time of this issue going to print. The committee is also focusing on developing a strategy and plan for the transfer of the staff and assets of the statutory provincial law societies to the LPC. The transfer will also include all records, databases and work in progress relating to both the attorneys' and advocates' professions. Welkom attorney, Martha Mbhele, had been appointed chairperson of this committee, but as Ms Mbhele has been nominated by the Judicial Service Commission for a

position on the Free State High Court Bench, she will need to be replaced on the NF as one of the Law Society of South Africa's (LSSA) nominees nominated by the Black Lawyers Association.

Polokwane attorney, Jan Stemmett, has been appointed chairperson of both the Governance and Rules and Code of Conduct committees. The first committee is dealing with the structure and functions of the LPC and the provincial councils, as well as their areas of jurisdiction and delegation of powers from national to provincial level. The second committee is tackling the rules and code of conduct that will regulate all legal practitioners under the new dispensation.

The Education, Standards and Accreditation Committee is chaired by Bloemfontein attorney, Jan Maree, and is dealing with a range of issues relating to vocational training, examinations and legal education service providers.

As at the September meeting, the work of the committees is being carried by the committee members – who are all legal practitioners – as the NF was yet to appoint staff and researchers.

Although the full NF will meet again only in January 2016, the above working committees have meetings scheduled throughout October and November – mostly on Saturdays – to ensure progress is made within the tight timeframes prescribed in the Act.

Once firm position papers emerge from the working committees, these will be communicated to practitioners and input will be invited at the appropriate stages. Also, at the most appropriate time, the LSSA will undertake road shows across the country to inform practitioners of developments.

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