



## President's address to the Branch AGM's – 2018

Thank you in for the opportunity to address you once again.

During the course of this year we finalised the design and production of the Society's medal. Members will recall the original motivation for this was our belief that Government did not recognise the achievements of South African mariners involved in the salvage of the Costa Concordia – something the international community lauded and recognised.

Our medal has now been struck and can be awarded as and when opportunity arises. The 2017 National AGM agreed to call the medal "The Society of Master Mariners SA Medal" and defined the criteria for awarding as follows:

*Certificated Master Mariner or Deck Officer who, by an exceptional action, has brought the highest honour to our profession by him or her exercising the pinnacle of marine skills acquired as a result of their qualifications and experience.*

Awards will be considered by EXCO upon receipt of a written motivation by any member of SOMMSA. The EXCO decision would be by a simple majority.

The future of maritime training in South Africa has become a concern.

Both the CPUT and DUT have stated their intensions to follow a degree route in the future. Recent developments however have cast a cloud over these plans – particularly as they relate to merchant seafarers who want to follow a career at sea.

It may well transpire that Government subsidised marine education may eventually disappear completely leaving private institutions as the sole providers of this education and training.

I am also concerned that political interference and instability in the working of SAMSA at the highest levels will further hamper the early progress we saw when this institution took an active lead in maritime training and education matters.

One of the key roles of the Society is to ensure our Certificates of Competency remain internationally recognised and respected around the world. We must remain vigilant in this regard.

Over the last few years, we have discussed the role of the Executive Committee in light of its member's distribution around South Africa and the use of internet communications to keep committee members in touch. Essentially the Society works increasingly within the Branches – in the case of Cape Town and Richards Bay branches particularly. Exco members and the Cape Town Branch particularly are made up of the same members to a large extent. This reality needs to be recognised and we as a Society need to modernise our organisation both in practice and constitutionally. This is a matter for the National AGM and I would urge Branches and other members of Exco to seriously debate this issue and bring their ideas to the National AGM in August

Once again I would like to thank my committee for their support and assistance during the year as well as our Branch Masters, Port Representatives and those members who take an active role in the work of the Society. I would like to especially thank Simon Pearson for continuing to represent the Society on the Syllabus Working Committee.

Rob Whitehead

President