

A message from sassda's chairman, Charles Cammell

"It is my privilege to welcome you to our 2017 AGM," begins Cammell, before announcing that John Tarboton would be reporting on sassda's activities, the financial position and the plans ahead.

"I thought I would dwell on a couple of our pet subjects, though," he said.

"If we cast our minds back ten years and think about where we are today it is quite terrifying. In 2007/2008 the RSA market was flying along with the rest of the world. Oops! And along came the sub-prime crisis in 2008, which led to a global economic meltdown. We felt the effects through 2008 and 2009 in South Africa, but then bounced back for three really good years – from 2010 and the Soccer World Cup through to the first half of 2013.

"Then we experienced, until 2016, a tough economy with relatively poor demand for stainless steel and a large number of business closures," he recalled.

"Welcome to the back end of 2016 and 2017," Cammell continued, before noting some key issues disrupting the world and its economies: Trump; Brexit; rating agency downgrades; the national metal industry strike; Zuma and his cabinet reshuffle; softening global commodity demand; unpredictable exchange rates; etc, etc.

"Considering where we as an industry and association are today, I believe we have largely weathered the storm," Cammell suggested.

Despite the challenges, Cammell believes that sassda is well placed for the future. "Our financial reserves are secure and the team is in place to support members. But those of us who have weathered the storm have had to change," he noted.

"About three weeks ago, we held a one-day strategy session at these offices. The intent was to review our relevance and the pillars that support this. I am happy to tell you that consensus was achieved that we are largely on the correct path. We will, as an association, be looking at sassda's role relative to transformation and market development projects. On the latter point, we will be putting focus on two critical areas, namely power and water," he reported.

"Transformation of our industry is critical and, if we are to achieve our goals of growing the demand for locally fabricated stainless steel, this will require significant focus," Cammell predicted. "We may choose to ignore this, but it will have serious challenges for those who don't embrace the change so needed in this country. We need to improve our BBBEE scores; encourage management- and family-owned businesses; and our industry needs to attract black investors and black industrialists," he said.

"Finally, to the board, main committee and the sassda team, well done and thank you for your support and focus over the last year. I look forward to working with you again during this next year as we face more opportunities and challenges," he concluded.

As well as being sassda's chairman, Charles Cammell is the general manager of Macsteel VRN Stainless. □

