

MEDIA STATEMENT / STAKEHOLDER CLARIFICATION

20th ASOCSA Built Environment Conference: Clarification on Conference Continuity under the ASOCSA (Pty) Ltd structure

For immediate release

04 July 2026

The Built Environment Conference of the Association of Construction Schools of Southern Africa also known within the industry as ASOCSA has, for many years, served an important academic and professional purpose: to provide a dedicated scholarly platform for construction schools, built environment academics, researchers, students, practitioners, institutional leaders and industry stakeholders across Southern Africa. The conference was established to address a genuine need within the construction education and built environment academic sector. That vision was spearheaded and advanced by senior academic leaders and founding members Mr. Ferdinand Fester, Professor Theodore C. Haupt and Professor John Smallwood who championed the evolution of the platform into a recognised forum for peer-reviewed research, academic exchange, institutional collaboration and publication development.

To realise this vision, a NPO structure was established and named "*The Association of Schools of Construction of Southern Africa*" which was officially launched on 20 June 2006 at the culmination of the First Built Environment Conference, with objectives including the advancement of construction education, curricula development, research and graduate quality. As the conference platform grew, its reach expanded beyond its original South African base. Increasing interest from academics, institutions, reviewers and authors beyond South Africa's borders, required a more inclusive and practically recognisable identity for the conference platform. In practice, stakeholders increasingly referred to the platform by the acronym ASOCSA rather than by the full historic name. However, governance and compliance concerns subsequently arose regarding the administration of the NPO structure. These concerns include, among others, access to financial records, financial mismanagement, reporting, governance authority, administrative control, and the handling of conference-related matters and publications. In response to these concerns, a compliance review was undertaken. That review identified material governance and alignment issues with the CIPC and also various other fiduciary duties. In addition to this, notably, the historical ASOCSA constitutional framework also referred to a Pty Ltd structure, whereas the conference had become associated with an NPO structure. This misalignment required corrective action especially since the Non-profit Organisations Act 71 of 1997 places statutory obligations on registered NPOs, including duties relating to accounting records, financial statements, accounting officer reports, preservation of records and reporting to the NPO Directorate. In circumstances where governance and financial-compliance concerns remain unresolved, it is necessary to ensure that conference funds, stakeholder communications, paper submissions and academic processes are administered through a structure that is transparent, accountable and properly disclosed. This is further reinforced through the Companies Act 71 of 2008 that provides the governance framework applicable to companies, including provisions dealing with directors' personal financial interests, standards of conduct, fiduciary duties, governance and liability.

For these reasons and based on the outcome of the compliance review at the behest of Professor Theodore Haupt, the move to a disclosed Pty Ltd structure in line with the existing constitution of ASOCSA is therefore not a move away from accountability. It is a move toward a clear, identifiable and legally accountable structure for the administration of all ASOCSA outputs such as the conference and for that of academic integrity. In recognition of these developments and following an interim board-level discussion and approval which included the NPO CIPC registered sitting directors in attendance, the conference platform transitioned toward the acronym ASOCSA, under the disclosed Pty Ltd structure

as per the stationary of the (Pty) Ltd. branding and also invoices that has been sent, to better reflect the broader academic and regional participation now associated with the conference. This was also done to separate the business and activities of the NPO and the (Pty) Ltd. This acronym transition does not alter the academic purpose, scholarly continuity or conference history. It is a practical and governance-aligned development intended to preserve continuity while accommodating the growth of the platform and its wider stakeholder base. Accordingly, the conference will proceed under the disclosed (Pty) Ltd. structure for purposes of compliance, transparency, financial traceability, governance oversight, and preservation of academic continuity. For the avoidance of doubt, the (Pty) Ltd. structure is not a vehicle to take over the NPO. The NPO remains a separate structure and entity, and any decisions taken by the NPO regarding its own governance, operations or future activities are matters for that structure and must be addressed through its own governance channels as per the Board meeting decision taken in light of the compliance review findings. The present statement concerns the administration and continuation of the Built Environment Conference and all academic publications only.

The disclosed (Pty) Ltd. structure is administered under new leadership and its own board and governance arrangements which have been established specifically for the lawful, transparent and accountable administration of the conference. Professor Theodore Haupt remains involved in an advisory capacity to support academic continuity, institutional relationships he has built to the exclusion of the NPO, peer-review integrity, conference history and scholarly standards. His role is directed toward preserving the academic purpose and integrity of the conference, not toward assuming personal control of the NPO or conflating the (Pty) Ltd. structure with the NPO. Furthermore, it must be noted that the current conference administration does not invoice as the NPO, does not request payment into an NPO bank account, and does not represent the NPO as the contracting or invoicing entity. The (Pty) Ltd. structure is clearly identified on its letterheads, invoices, banking information, website and official conference communications.

We would like to make the academic community aware that it has come to our attention that Ms Ferial Lombardo and/or communications circulated through a Madison Media email address bearing the letter head of the ASOCSA NPO and the unverified signature of Mr. Ferdinand Fester have been sent to Heads of Department and institutional stakeholders in an attempt to sabotage the forthcoming conference and to create confusion. It must be noted that those communications do not come from official ASOCSA communication channels and does not adequately distinguish between the unresolved NPO-related governance investigations underway against individuals involved in the NPO, and the separately disclosed (Pty) Ltd. Handling the current conference administration for reasons stated earlier. We further note with concern that certain communications including those of Ms Ferial Lombardo have introduced private personal matters, including references to divorce proceedings and personal disputes as well as such communications to cause impairment to the dignity and reputation of Professor Theodore C. Haupt. These matters are irrelevant to the academic legitimacy, compliance status, peer-review process, publication arrangements or administration of the conference.

Stakeholders are respectfully requested to assess the conference based on its disclosed legal structure being the disclosed ASOCSA (Pty) Ltd., official conference documentation, invoices, banking details, academic programme, peer-review process, publication arrangements, governance oversight and transparent financial administration. Private personal matters should not be used to influence academic institutions, authors, reviewers, delegates or sponsors. The circulation of personal information in this context is inappropriate where it has no lawful, necessary or conference-related purpose. The Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013 regulates the processing of personal information by public and private bodies, and the conference administration reserves all rights in this regard and so does Professor Theodore C. Haupt.

Issued by:

The Interim Board of ASOCSA (Pty) Ltd