

# Farewell Message

SADJ JUNE 2025, Vol. 80 No.5 P239

P Govan

After 28 deeply rewarding years of serving The South African Dental Association and the broader dental profession, the time has come for me to bid farewell as Head of Legal & Governance.

It has been a profound honour to walk this journey with you, advocating for the profession, supporting members through challenging times, and contributing to the ever-evolving legal and ethical landscape of dentistry in South Africa. Over nearly three decades, I have had the incredible privilege of working under four CEOs, each with unique management styles that required adaptation. I have witnessed resilience, integrity, and unwavering dedication of dental professionals across the country, and I am immensely proud to have been part of this community.

## Reflecting on Our Shared Journey

I have had the incredible privilege of contributing to the landmark unity discussions amongst four dental associations, culminating in the new and unified SADA with a new structure and constitution.

Throughout these years, we have navigated significant milestones together. From the early days of strengthening a comprehensive professional indemnity framework, short term insurance products, providing guidelines and templates, to adapting to the digital transformation of our membership, we have consistently worked to ensure that South African dentistry remains at the forefront of both clinical excellence and ethical practice. I have had the privilege of contributing to policy developments, bulletins, guidelines, templates, position papers, the enhancement of protocols, that have become models for other healthcare professions.

Together, we have weathered regulatory changes, economic challenges, and the unprecedented demands of the global pandemic. We were one of the first organisations to conduct our annual meetings and other meetings electronically. Through each challenge, I have been continually inspired by the profession's commitment to patient care and professional integrity. The countless hours spent on complex legal matters, ethical consultations, and policy refinements have been made meaningful by knowing that our work directly supported practitioners in delivering exceptional care to their communities.

I am particularly proud of our collective efforts in advancing continuing professional development requirements, establishing clearer guidelines for emerging dental technologies, and creating robust frameworks for inter-professional collaboration. These achievements represent not just legal milestones, but genuine contributions to the elevation of dental practice standards across South Africa.

## Gratitude and Recognition

To the leadership of SADA, thank you for your trust, your vision, and your steadfast commitment to serving the profession. Your strategic guidance and unwavering support



have made it possible to address complex legal challenges with confidence and clarity. The collaborative spirit you have fostered has been instrumental in achieving so many of our shared objectives.

To the members, thank you for allowing me to be part of your professional lives and for the many moments of engagement, collaboration, and learning we have shared. Your questions, concerns, and insights have enriched my understanding of the practical realities of dental practice and have guided the development of more responsive and relevant legal guidance. The trust you placed in me during difficult professional moments has been both humbling and motivating.

To my colleagues within SADA's administrative and professional teams, your dedication and expertise have made every achievement possible. I am particularly grateful to Ms Lin Domenico for her guidance and support during the early years and for more than 10 years, Ms Noma Nkiwane in our department as well as Dr Tinesha Parbhoo. The synergy we created together has been one of the most fulfilling aspects of this role.

## Looking Forward

As I step away from this role, I carry with me a deep sense of gratitude for the relationships built, the lessons learned, and the privilege of having played a part in safeguarding and strengthening the profession I respect so deeply. The legal and ethical foundations we have built together will serve as a solid platform for future growth and adaptation.

I am confident that the Association is well-positioned to continue addressing the evolving needs of the profession. The robust systems, clear precedents, and strong professional culture we have cultivated will serve both current and future members well.

May the Association continue to grow in strength and impact, and may the profession always be guided by the highest principles of care, ethics, and service. May each practitioner find fulfilment in their vital work of promoting oral health and enhancing the well-being of all South Africans.

With sincere thanks and warmest regards.

**Punkaj Govan**  
**Head Legal and Corporate Governance (Retired)**  
**South African Dental Association**