



I know that everyone associated with ICP will share the great sadness felt by all of us on the ICP Executive at the news that our dear colleague, Alta Van Heerden, ICP's Past President, passed away on 24 August 2022.

In a blog last year Alta wrote about professional organisations and the way in which they can provide a *'safe place where colleagues care about the well-being of others and create growth opportunities'*. It is this concern for the well-being of others that inspired all that Alta did and made her such a wonderful colleague for each of us within ICP.

When I first joined ICP Executive I remember being deeply touched by the warmth and hospitality that Alta and her husband Vic showed to my wife and I during my first face to face Executive meeting in Cape Town in 2017. Since then their continuing friendship and kindness has summed up for me the very special bond that links members of the ICP community.

Throughout my time on Executive, Alta's vision for ICP has inspired me and many others as well. As she wrote in the same blog, her aim was to create an opportunity for *'the sharing of experiences in a collegial, non-judgmental environment'* which provided colleagues with an array of ideas that enabled them to *'thrive regardless of the challenges faced'*.

Alta was a role model to all of us in so many different ways. She was a gifted leader and organiser and that was reflected in the huge success of the 2017 convention in Cape Town, as well as her Presidential convention in Shanghai in 2019 and a whole series of other ICP events that she played a leading role in organising. As President she had a wonderful clarity of vision, showing a clear sense of direction and sense of purpose that steered ICP through a global Pandemic and all of the challenges that it brought. I think all of us regularly gave thanks that at a time of worldwide crisis ICP had a leader of Alta's calibre who was able to steer us through these stormy waters with such a calm authority. Alongside all of this, Alta also understood the importance of high professional standards and made sure that the systems and structures underpinning ICP reflected the latest models of good practice in corporate governance.

Above all else, it was her concern for the well-being of others that underpinned all that Alta did and explained why she was held in such respect and affection by all of us in the ICP community. I still remember the response from delegates in the Convention Hall in 2017 when Alta was elected President. I think I have never witnessed such an impressive expression of appreciation and affection. The applause and cheering went on for several minutes as a Praise

Singer spontaneously gave thanks for all that Alta had done for the community of leaders in South Africa, Africa and around the world.

I was reflecting, as I thought about this report, on how much ICP in its current form has been shaped by Alta. Our strategic plan was overseen by her and expresses her vision for the organisation and her desire to create the collegial environment which allows others to thrive that she wrote about. This has been put into practice in several different ways. The plan has a particular emphasis upon looking to grow the organisation, reflecting Alta's belief that leaders can best be helped to thrive through membership of professional communities. Hence our current strategy of reaching out to areas that have not historically been members of ICP is one that was put in place by her. In the same way, she led an increasing focus upon regional meetings, allowing members a chance to get to know their regional representatives much better and providing smaller groups to share ideas, concerns and new initiatives. In a similar way, our programme of blogs and podcasts has continued to provide an opportunity for individual members to pass on ideas and new approaches that can be shared more widely in order to help others.

Alta understood the need for clear and regular communication, particularly in an organisation that spans so many different countries and continents. It says a great deal about Alta that even during the final stages of her illness she continued to edit our magazine, setting her usual very standards for the publication. When the most recent edition was published I wrote to Alta on behalf of us all to thank her for *'the latest edition of the magazine, which is a fantastic read and seems to go from strength to strength. It is a wonderful introduction to the theme of sustainable school leadership and has just the right blend of serious and slightly more light-hearted articles. It is thanks to your research and enterprise that we begin with an article from Andy Hargreaves and Dean Fink, two of the world's most famous academic authorities on the topic. Thanks again for the huge amount of work that has gone into making this such an impressive edition'*.

Alta placed great emphasis upon the value of meeting face to face and the idea of holding a Council Plus, which allowed more delegates to attend than would normally be the case, is one that came from her. She also made the inspired suggestion that we should develop a conference for emerging leaders around the world- a vision that Executive hopes to take forward over the coming months.

All of which brings me back to where I started. Alta was a person of faith, who inspired by her profound faith in God, also had faith in people. In particular, she believed in the power of leaders coming together to help and support one another. All of us give thanks for her, for her inspiration and example and for all that she brought to our lives and organisation. We will miss her more than we can say and send our deepest sympathy to Vic and her family. Over the coming years we will continue to express how much Alta meant to us by putting her vision into practice, offering through the ICP community that caring, safe and supportive environment which offers inspiration and hope, and enables leaders across the world to thrive.

Peter Kent
ICP President.