



4 August 2024

## SMRI celebrates its 75th Anniversary

Dear SMRI Members, staff and other important stakeholders

Today marks the **75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Sugar Milling Research Institute NPC (SMRI)**. In a bold step that recognised the importance of innovation-via-research to the long-term sustainability of an industry and the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of centralising that research in a dedicated facility, the captains of the sugar milling industry, in collaboration with the then University of Natal and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, created the Institute on the 4<sup>th</sup> of August 1949.

The strength of the SMRI is based on supporting the sugarcane processing industry on several fronts: world-class accredited analytical services using the latest instruments and techniques, a team of experienced sugar technologists to provide support and consulting services to the factories, a multi-skilled research and development (R&D) team that understands the factories' needs and seeks to develop and implement relevant and impactful technologies, a state-of-the art pilot plant facility, and a well-respected (and growing) portfolio of sugar technology training courses to equip factory staff with the skills and knowledge they need.

With the strong support of its members, even during tough times, and more recently with competitive grant funding provided by government agencies, the SMRI has grown from strength to strength. The reason I believe, is that the organisation has been quick to adapt and has remained relevant to the industry it was set up to serve, and it has worked together with the industry in a strong spirit of partnership.

The SMRI recognises the need for the industry to reduce its cost base and diversify its product base to enhance its profitability and sustainability. Looking further into the future, with the global focus on climate change mitigation, decarbonisation and sustainable consumption and production towards NetZero 2050<sup>1</sup>, it is anticipated that the South and southern African sugarcane industries have the potential to become important suppliers of renewable carbon to supply bio-based carbon economies.

Thus, aligned with member needs and whilst the SMRI intends to retain a strong focus to assist and support its members to improve the technical performance and competitiveness of their sugar factories, it will continue to grow its leadership and support for the industry's product diversification efforts.

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<sup>1</sup> The internationally agreed upon goal for mitigating global warming in the second half of the century

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As the Chief Executive Officer of the SMRI, I would like to thank you, the SMRI's members and important stakeholders, for your contributions and support over the last 75 years. I trust that with the strong technical partnership that exists between the SMRI and the industry, built up over seven and a half decades, the new strategic direction and the Institute's purpose-driven team, the SMRI will remain relevant and continue to provide its members with a highly valued service now and into the future.

The SMRI would be nothing without its people – I would like to acknowledge the efforts of all those talented engineers, scientists and technologists who have come before us and have contributed to the success to date. I would also like to pay tribute to the current team of professional, highly ethical and purpose-driven individuals who I am fortunate to work with every day. I am confident that they will take the SMRI and the sugarcane processing industry into a new and exciting future.

With kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Janice Dewar', written in a cursive style.

Dr Janice Dewar  
SMRI Chief Executive Officer