



## FROM THE CHAIR



The term of the current Council expired in October 2003. Members were requested to continue for a further period beyond that date so that the Institutional Review could be concluded and a new Council constituted in accordance with any relevant findings or recommendations from the Review.

The Review panel had duly reported but with the national elections intervening and a new Minister being appointed the term of the current Council was extended for a further period until October 2004.

This Council approaches the end of its extended term confident that the organisation it hands over to the next Council is a significantly different and transformed one. This has been borne out by the findings of the Institutional Review led by a panel of international and local experts.

We had seen it as one of our major tasks to oversee the transformation of the HSRC into an organisation more fully in concert with and attuned to the nature, challenges and demands of the new democratic dispensation in the country. This process of change would include such aspects as the increased participation of black and women researchers at all levels in the organisation; a thorough review of how the organisation is structured in order to best respond to the research needs of the country; an institutional contemplation and understanding of what the societal values of non-racialism, non-sexism and equality imply for the mandate and functioning of an organisation as the HSRC.

We had the privilege of working with a management team - consisting of the CEO and senior researchers and administrators - who remained open to, in fact welcomed constant engagement by Council on those and other themes. While matters of corporate governance were obviously key part of our fiduciary duties, the engagement on issues relating directly to the science and knowledge production functions of the organisation represented some of the most meaningful and fulfilling aspects of our term of office.

The ultimate test for a science council resides in the quality of its research work and outputs. Throughout its term Council continued to be in dialogue with the senior research management team about questions of quality and quality assurance. The conversations about quality went beyond issues of measurability like peer-reviewed publications, number of reports and other such measures. It touched on the nature of knowledge production, the relationship between commissioned research and more basic enquiry and theory building, the question of voice giving through science to marginalised sectors of society, the interaction between science councils and other institutions of knowledge production, and many more related themes.

There is always need for further work, improvement and progress, as the Review also indicated. Council is convinced and satisfied that the Human Sciences Research Council has made great progress in all areas relevant to its transformation into a science council fit for the purposes of a democratic South Africa. This Annual Report highlights those achievements and accomplishments in the pages that follow.

We need to acknowledge the CEO, Dr Mark Orkin, his management team and the entire staff. The process of change invariably and inevitably places strains on an organisation. The HSRC managed to cope with those strains in an exemplary collegial and professional manner.

The support we received from the Ministry and Department was a very important ingredient in driving change and maintaining quality functioning. Their support and approach to the HSRC gave evidence of government's appreciation of the role of social science in policy development and policy analysis.

We thank Cabinet for the opportunity and pleasant task of serving on the Council of the HSRC. We trust that we in some way repaid the faith placed in us and that our successor Council will find an organisation in good shape and well equipped for its future task.

A final word of thanks and appreciation to my fellow members of Council. It was a rare privilege to work with such a task-focused, non-egotistical and insightful team of people.

**Professor G.J. Gerwel**, Chair