

SQAM REVIEW
Executive Summary

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**REVIEW OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN STANDARDS, QUALITY ASSURANCE,
ACCREDITATION AND METROLOGY (SQAM) INFRASTRUCTURE**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1 Introduction

This Review of the South African Standards, Quality, Accreditation and Metrology (SQAM) infrastructure presents a unique opportunity for the South African community, as follows:

- Re-examine its national needs from its standards and conformance institutions.
- Establish the current credibility of those institutions both domestically and internationally.
- Assess whether the public funding of those institutions and related activities are national costs or essential national investments.
- Rationalise the future technical regulatory regime in South Africa to provide an appropriate balance between necessary legislation to protect the health and well-being of the population and unnecessary or over-prescriptive regulation that might hinder the efficient development and operations of industry.
- Identify partnership activities between SQAM institutions and government to achieve regional leadership and market access opportunities for South African enterprises.
- Explore opportunities for greater involvement of SMMEs in the activities and services of SQAM institutions.
- Provide a platform for a modern SQAM infrastructure that meets the current and future needs of South African society.

In a world context, the South African SQAM Review is the most comprehensive examination of an economy's standards and conformance infrastructure ever conducted. Only Australia's Kean¹ Inquiry of 1995 had similar dimensions of scope and purpose, but with less-embracing terms of reference. It is a tribute to the South African Government that it has recognised the significance of its SQAM and the potential an improved infrastructure has to contribute to South Africa's technical, economic and social development

¹ Linking Industry Globally – of the Committee of Inquiry into Australia's Standards and Conformance Infrastructure, 1995

2 SQAM's permeation of, and support for, whole of society

The twenty-five Terms of Reference for this Review reflect the complex roles that the SQAM infrastructure has in South African society. While unrecognised by most people, the SQAM has daily impacts on many facets of the economy and society:

- The effectiveness and competitiveness of industry.
- The access of South African products and services to international markets.
- The reduction of technical barriers to trade.
- Public health, safety and protection.
- Quality of goods and services.
- Effectiveness of public infrastructure services in construction, energy, water and gas supplies, defence, transportation and communication systems.
- Consumer protection through control of unfair trading practices.
- Credibility of forensic services and justice systems.
- Interoperability of products and systems.
- Implementation of regulatory processes.
- Quality of the urban and natural environment.
- Transfer of technology and world's best practices in technical, productivity, quality, business excellence and management systems arenas.

Later sections of this summary describe the SQAM elements in detail and the processes by which the Review was undertaken, and its conclusions drawn. Before describing those processes, however, it is worth highlighting the broad impressions of the South African SQAM and the environment in which it now operates that have most influenced the Review's recommendations.

Those recommendations have fallen into a number of distinct, but interdependent clusters that influence the future patterns that would need to be followed for successful adoption of the Review's recommendations. The road ahead for such implementation forms the conclusion of this Executive Summary.