

Tiso Blackstar's Lisa MacLeod, first-ever female VP of Wan-Ifra

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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Lisa MacLeod, head of digital at Tiso Blackstar Group was recently elected VP of the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (Wan-Ifra) at the World News Media Congress, World Editors Forum and Women in News Summit in Estoril, Portugal.

MacLeod joins the presidency at a time when Wan-Ifra is implementing its new 'Strategic Plan for Diversity and Inclusion' to achieve gender balance in its operations and governance bodies by 2020.



South Africa's Lisa MacLeod elected as first female vice president of Wan-Ifra

12 Jun 2018



I interviewed MacLeod to find out what this recognition means to her and why she's looking forward to represent Tiso Blackstar and South Africa in contributing to the global media industry at such a critical time of digital transformation...

■ ***Congratulations on being elected vice president of the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers and appointed to the board of Wan-Ifra. What does this mean to you and say for Tiso Blackstar and the country as a whole?***

It's a great honour for me personally. After 25 years in the industry and a journey from pure print to pure digital, and everything in between, I feel like I have a lot to contribute. It's fantastic to represent Tiso Blackstar, which is a great African media company with vision.

“ My biggest concern about coming back to SA four years ago was that I would not have the investment to do what I needed to do in the digital space. It's been quite the opposite, and we've invested very strategically in digital talent, quality content and product at Tiso Blackstar, and it's paying off. ”

■ ***How does it feel to be the first female vice president ever for this organisation, and coming from SA?***

It feels great! There are tons of brilliant women in journalism in South Africa – truly fearless and whip-smart. I'm in excellent company. The best part of this has been the messages of support from my female colleagues – it means a lot to them, and that means a lot to me.

■ ***What does the role entail?***

Representing Wan-Ifra as an organisation, attending the board meetings and conferences where possible, contributing to policy direction and working in an advisory capacity on their initiatives. Also speaking at conferences and teaching, which I have been doing for many years already.

■ ***What excites you most about the organisation?***

I think it has enormous reach and influence and is perfectly positioned to help this industry through the toughest and most exciting times in its history.

■ ***What is your stance on Wan-Ifra's new Strategic Plan for Diversity and Inclusion, and gender balance in the industry?***

I'm delighted with it. I may be the first female VP but I certainly will not be the last. We have a lot of work to do, but change begins from within.



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Lisa MacLeod

What do you love most about your career, your industry; proudest achievements?

I really do love my job and my brilliant team. My husband says I would actually work for free. I can't think of anything worse than having a job that doesn't inspire and energise you, at least in some way. What we do is fascinating: we tell stories about people, we expose things that should be exposed and then we build beautiful products – print and digital – to showcase our efforts. It may be tough and demanding, but it's such fun.

What's at the top of your to-do list?

So much. We've got a list of new products coming out in the next few months and a huge change project internally that will really be a game-changer.

What are you currently reading, watching or listening to for work?

I just watched *The Post*, about the *Washington Post* and Katherine Graham's decision to print the *Pentagon Papers*. For work I read the *Nieman Lab*, *CJR*, *Wan-Ifra Executive News Service* and *The Monday Note* newsletters, my own websites (*BusinessLIVE*, *TimesLIVE* and *SowetanLIVE*), and the *Financial Mail*, *Wanted* and *Vanity Fair* in print. I have about three books on the go at once. I listen to lots of podcasts in Cape Town traffic: lately Malcolm Gladwell's *Revisionist History*.

Tell us something about yourself not generally known.

My amazing five-year-old had a kidney transplant in January, donated to her by my amazing mother. My future project is going to be lobbying government to make organ donation automatic with an opt-out, as they do in many countries around the world. We were lucky, but we have watched so many kids just waiting - and dying - while good organs go to waste, and it is devastating. If you're reading this and you haven't signed up to be a donor, please do so at ODF.org.za.

ABOUT JESSICA TENNANT

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