

## Eskom will trump critics

In her column (Eskom's public relations not switched on, November 9), editor-at-large Hilary Joffe asked rhetorically whether going "off script" at last week's press conference was Eskom CEO Brian Molefe's "Trump moment".

I am not sure if this suggested Molefe would do the unexpected, as Donald Trump has done in the US elections. What I do know is that Molefe is more measured and a better leader than Trump, with an impeccable track record.

Joffe suggested that Eskom was soliciting the support of a communications agency to help it manage its public image. That is misleading. All of Eskom's corporate communication matters are handled internally. This has been the case for many years, including when Joffe was Eskom's spokeswoman. That approach hasn't changed. What Joffe might be referring to is an open tender process that Eskom will embark upon soon for a media monitoring agency. There's a vast difference between a media monitoring agency and a communications agency.

Eskom's proactive stance has not only led to an improvement in its image, but resulted in the South African Human Rights Commission honouring Eskom with the Golden Key award for openness and responsiveness in 2015. The winner of this annual award is voted for by the media, political parties and Chapter 9 institutions. However, not everyone is happy with Eskom's changing fortunes.

Joffe incorrectly predicted the demise of Eskom following the departure of some of our former senior managers and executives (Eskom's brain drain poses significant long-term risks, January 20). As if that was not enough, she alleged that the absence of load shedding was not a result of Eskom's rigorous maintenance programme but sheer luck.

Now that we have gone 15 months without load shedding and Eskom is still around, it looks as though Joffe is searching for anything that might stick to Eskom.

Eskom has been a whipping boy for years, but now that it is defending itself, some see this as arrogance or bullying, as suggested by Peter

Bruce recently (Why school bullies shouldn't be prefects, October 2).

It is not clear to me how Eskom's right to defend itself and set the record straight can be perceived as a "patronising account of the facts". Joffe says "the more aggressive the defence, the more Eskom seems to protest too much, arousing suspicions even among those who used to trust it".

That is funny coming from someone preaching about public relations — Communications 101 frowns upon hiding one's head in the sand in such situations. If that was Joffe's approach while she was Eskom's spokeswoman, it explains why we have had to start from such a low base.

Perhaps, with the mooted commission of inquiry, we too shall have our "Trump moment" and turn around the negative onslaught we've been subjected to.

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