

# Lucidum Literature Review

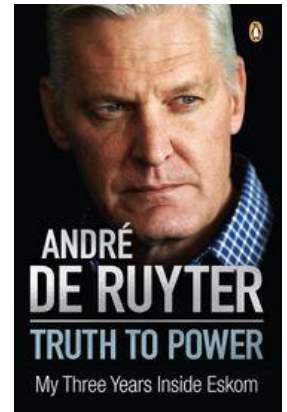


Title **Truth To Power – My Three Years Inside Eskom**  
Author **Andre De Ruyter**  
Published **2023 by Penguin Random House**  
Review By **Michael Duncan, Christelle Marais, Annabel Klopper**  
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**Lessons For**  
Directors, Prescribed Officers, Executives  
Governance Officers, Company Secretaries  
Ethics Officers, Risk Managers, Compliance Managers  
Audit Professionals  
Strategy Professionals  
Line Managers

Relevance	Overall Rating
10	<b>8.2</b>
8	
10	
8	
6	
7	



**Synopsis:** De Ruyter's harrowing account of his 3-year tenure as Group CEO of South Africa's embattled power utility unfolds across three layers: the *personal toll* of leading under constant threat, the *organisational challenge* of saving a crumbling monopoly, and the *national crisis* of energy security. De Ruyter details how his attempts to rebuild Eskom were met with systemic resistance: from sophisticated criminal syndicates sabotaging infrastructure to push-back by those benefiting from corruption. He exposes the reality of State Owned Entities under siege: daily operations undermined by fake fuel deliveries and theft of critical equipment, ultimately driving national sovereignty risk. Beyond the mechanical failures of coal plants, he explores the deep-seated cultural and political friction at the heart of the State. De Ruyter's tenure culminated in a near-fatal poisoning attempt, starkly reminding us of the personal risks faced by ethical leaders in high-stakes entities, requiring personal resilience and robust support systems. Without consequences for misconduct, ethical violations become normalised and impossible to combat. This is exacerbated as policies and procedures become inefficient when leadership lacks the authority or political backing to act on wrongdoing. De Ruyter's experiences highlight how positive change efforts can be deliberately obstructed from within, requiring a systems-thinking approach by governance, risk, ethics, and compliance practitioners to safeguard the entities that underpin South Africa's sovereign integrity.

**Key Concept:** Leaders Eat Last. Never believe that you are untouchable as a leader, no matter the perceived status of another. Your past actions will either help or haunt you; the choice is yours.

## Quotes:

"Having a higher purpose is crucial...to achieve and deliver." "By treating people with...respect...one can build up a well of goodwill that might...be very valuable one day...if you treat people like dirt, word spreads around very quickly." "A leader makes you feel that you have voluntarily signed up to join a worthwhile mission." "The ideology of resources politics overrides common sense." "Sadly, selfless leadership has been in short supply...with a pervasive culture of rent-seeking and patronage poisoning our society." "Leadership requires doing the right thing, not always the popular thing"

## Practical Tips

- The word "risk" appears 30 times in this book, in four main contexts – as a risk practitioner, consider how these interrelate:
  - Ethical individuals' **personal risk** resulting from their actions against fraud and corruption.
  - Eskom's **existential risk** as a sustainable entity under siege from those engaged in fraud and corruption.
  - South Africa's **sovereign risk**, due to a lack of energy, slowly but surely destroyed the national economy.
  - All the above are driven by the **risk of exposure** for those engaged in fraud and corruption risk.
- Avoid viewing risks in isolation; your organisation's health is tied to the national economy and broader societal trends.
- Identify and prevent wrongful behaviours that take place under the cover of seemingly legitimate business arrangements.
- The cost of failing to protect whistle-blowers, in human life and financial impact, is significantly higher than the cost of protection.

## Think About

- How can all economic sectors (public, private, non-profit) act together constructively to create a space where South Africa's economy and therefore the most vulnerable in society can prosper?
- Do you truly understand your organisation's interconnectedness with its customers and service providers? Are you finding ways to prevent and safely expose wrongful behaviours that take place under the cover of "so-called" legitimate business arrangements?
- Consider the quality and transparency of transactions, reported information, and oversight structures in your organisation, as well as the quality of ethics call investigations.
- Are you maintaining an uncompromising commitment to protecting whistleblowers at all cost?

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