

## Engineering Council of South Africa

### ECSA News

#### **1. The new Engineering Professions Bill in Parliament**

The Portfolio Committee for Public Works conducted public hearings on 6 and 7 June 2000 regarding a suite of bills pertaining to the professions in the built environment, including the Council for the Built Environment (CBE) Bill. These hearings included, amongst others, the Engineering Professions Bill.

A delegation from ECSA consisting of the President (Mr. RA Pullen Pr. Eng), the Vice-president (Mr. Peter Thomson Pr.Eng), the Registrar (Mr. Paul Roux), a Council member and legal adviser (Mr. CM Sardiwalla) and Council's Legal Adviser (Prof. Henning Viljoen) attended the hearings to state ECSA's case.

While most of the principles contained in the Bill carried ECSA's full support, a few issues of fundamental importance contained in the Bill were of great concern to ECSA.

These were:

- **The principle of peer judgment and the superiority of the CBE**  
The Bill provides that all decisions made by the Engineering Council (ECSA) are subjected to an appeal process to the CBE. Council emphasized that a decision by peers should not be appealable to any other body, unless the members of that body are peers in their own right. The CBE is not considered as a body of peers in the engineering profession.
- **Discipline functions**  
The Bill prescribes a common procedure for conducting disciplinary inquiries. This procedure for conducting is very cumbersome and can be very costly. ECSA previously agreed with the Department of Public Works that a more expeditious disciplinary procedure could be prescribed through rules for less serious offenses. The State Legal Advisers, after hearing ECSA's submission, conceded the principle that the Bill should provide such a procedure.
- **Funding of CBE and professional councils**  
ECSA was concerned that the Bill did not provide sufficiently for state funding to enable the CBE to conduct its business efficiently. It was ECSA's expressed view that since the CBE was mainly an instrument of Government to coordinate the activities of the professions, the commitment of the State to fund the CBE should be evident. The professions were not prepared to fund the CBE on their own.
- **Proposed project management and construction profession**  
ECSA and the other professional councils were unhappy that the legislation establishing such a profession should pass through parliament, without full consultation with all concerned professions within the built environment under the auspices of the CBE.  
ECSA believes that it has succeeded in persuading the Portfolio Committee to allow further in-depth deliberations with the State Legal Advisers on technical issues, as well as follow-up discussions with the parliamentarians concerned after the parliamentary recess; discussions are likely to continue in July/August 2000.

## **2. Professional evaluation of candidates applying for professional registration within the engineering profession by means of compulsory reviews**

Council decided that all candidates who apply for professional registration with ECSA should personally appear before a panel of experts as from January 2001.

Apart from written summarised reports, which should clearly indicate the candidate's ability to apply his/her engineering knowledge in practical projects, the evaluation panels may additionally require a more detailed report on a specific project for which the candidate was responsible.

It always remains important that the candidate's personal involvement in projects, as well as the extent to which he/she took responsibility in the projects, should be clearly evident from all reports and interviews.

Professional Advisory Committees (PAC's) which exist for each of the disciplines within the engineering profession and who make recommendations regarding registrability of candidates to the Registration Committee, must ensure that all members of the evaluation panels should be peer experts according to the fields of expertise of the candidates that they evaluate.

This procedure as decided by Council, is aimed at Council's responsibility to ensure that high standards are maintained by all persons performing in the engineering profession. At the same time this procedure is an important development in view of the international recognition of South African engineers.

## **3. Relationship between ECSA and the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA)**

ECSA reached an agreement with SAQA in April 2000 to secure better liaison cooperation between the two bodies. The agreement applies to the establishment of academic and professional standards and related evaluations in view of quality assurance in the engineering profession.

**News items compiled by J Veenstra Pr.Eng in liaison with the Register of ECSA.  
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