

eastern cape institute of architects



January 2013

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the first Newsletter for the year from the **Eastern Cape Institute of Architects**. We will be sending out these communications monthly, in order to give a view of what is topical to our profession and to the built environment.

If you are anything like me then you already have too much information coming to your desk and you can't stomach the idea of another monthly mail that you won't get around to reading. I urge you please to see this Newsletter rather as a time saving device, a view of what you should look into in greater depth and what you could perhaps come back to later.

- The ECIA has a very useful website (www.ecia.co.za) (thanks Jacques van Tonder) All important notices, memos and minutes are stored there for you to browse through at your leisure. The newsletter will not duplicate that information, but rather highlight what may be most relevant or pressing.
- The ECIA now has an active Facebook page (thanks Jo Staats). This is an ideal forum for members to engage in debate and discussion around issues relevant to us in our work as Architects. Please "like" the page "Eastern Cape Institute of Architects"
- You can follow the ECIA on twitter @ECIAPE (Please do). Jo Staats is in control of this feed and posts only quality information there for us.
- The ECIA has begun to post videos of lectures you may not have been able to attend. These can be found on Youtube (thanks Tarique Abdul) at <http://www.youtube.com/user/eciarchitects>

"So what does the year have in store for us?"

January would not be complete without us pondering this question. Let me offer you my view, so we can see how different it is to yours. The truth is, I see a good year ahead. I say this sincerely and I say it for the following reasons:

- I see a consensus developing that the worst of the economic downturn is now behind us and that the public and private sector are starting to build buildings again. House prices are beginning to rise and there are some reports coming through of agents reporting stock shortages especially at the lower end of the market. Shortage of stock means new buildings have got to be built and that means business for Architects.
- I also see that we are heading for national elections next year, and when I look back at the last three national, there was a definite spike in urgency from the public sector developers in the year or so before. I predict we will see the same this time around and have already begun to see evidence of renewed vigour in stalled or sluggish projects.
- I predict that the political impasse that has crippled *Nelson Mandela Bay's* administration of the last few years, will in the coming months find resolution. I see this as an unexpected by-product of the Manguang conference, where our Mayor, Zanuxolo Wayile, visibly supported the winning "Zuma" faction and his arch rival, regional political boss Nceba Faku, vociferously backed the Monlante "loosing horse". Why is this important for Architects to watch? Because it now becomes more likely that the ANC in the region will rally behind our mayor knowing that

he is on a winning wicket; and a Mayor with strong support in his own party is a mayor who can be decisive and effective. And we all know that getting buildings built requires decisive and effective leadership. We will watch this space eagerly.

- The other dynamic I am watching carefully is the tragedy of dramatically low fee tenders that are being accepted by many of our clients. In the past year the MBDA and National Department of Public Works accepting tenders with 40 and 50 percent fee discounts. There are only two possible outcome of this trend:
 - the first outcome sees firms continue to offer the service that we have traditionally expected the architect to provide, but find their expenses outstripping their income leading to inevitable business collapse.
 - The second outcome sees firms compromise dramatically on quality of service. Working 'to rule' but in the process damaging the built environment and the long standing good reputation of the Architect as a professional.

Controversially, perhaps, I would argue that both of these outcomes will lead to corrections that would improve prospects for Architects in the longer term. The first outcome will see Architects tendering too low punished with business failure, leaving those that survive to continue, but at more realistic rates. The second outcome, will see client organisations looking more carefully at their procurement systems to protect themselves against the inevitable poor service that emanates from a tender process that emphasises lowest price above all else.

Whatever happens, 2013 promises to be full of excitement? We have an excellent committee elected at the AGM toward the end of last year. This new team will build on the success and the momentum of Professor Albrecht Herholdt's 2011/2012 committee. This committee is made up of: Albrecht Herholdt, Andrew Palframan, Bandile Boyana, Debbie Wintermeyer, Jacques van Tonder, Johann Staats, Mary Mangan, Neill Kievit, Nicola Darke, Tim Hewitt-Coleman

These people have all volunteered their time and energy to the cause of the Architectural Profession in the region. Please support them in their task by taking them into your confidence by sharing your frustrations, dreams and ideas.

Colleagues, lastly, please remember that we run the Merit awards programme this year. (thanks Andrew Palfarman and Debbie Wintermeyer) You will be called upon later in the year to submit your best work for a panel of expert judges to assess. Yes, it's scary, but please participate. This process of peer review and peer recognition is part of what makes our profession great.

Thank you.

Yours in Architectural Excellence



Tim Hewitt-Coleman

(President – East Cape Institute of Architects)