

# eastern cape institute of architects



May 2013

Dear Colleagues,

A few days ago the ECIA had a very productive and interesting meeting with the NMBM Building inspectorate and Town planning divisions. Our delegation was led by the ECIA vice president Neil Kievit. Other than the good progress that was made regarding some approvals procedures, it was interesting to reflect on the Municipal Plan submission data presented by the building inspectorate. The building inspectors say that the last twelve months has been quieter for them than it has been in at least the last five years! That's quite bad!

The data (which it was agreed, we will now receive on a regular basis) must be analysed to see what the trend has been and whether a "turn" has been detected, but regardless of the analyses the building plan submission figures only serves to confirm the "word on the street" that Architects have been through a rough patch in the last while. In this time some practices have closed down, other prominent Architects have relocated to Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere. We have seen retrenchments at some larger practices. All this evidence is very worrying, but the question I suppose is "Has the worst passed?"

I heard someone speaking about stock markets saying that "There is no bell that rings when the market bottoms out" and I suppose this is true too for the economy in our chosen profession.

But there are signs and rumours that things are getting better (not worse), here are some of them:

- The last few months have seen a number of adverts placed of practices seeking to employ Architects or technologists (after a long drought of such recruiting)
- I represented the ECIA at a Master Builder's association function a few weeks back. There they were speaking of the massive and growing budgets available for state spending going forward and how 40% of their member's contracts come from state spend. (this then, by extension is true for our members)
- The NMMU is poised, in the coming months, to make two new appointments (about R50 million each)
- The multi-billion rand Baywest Shopping centre has commenced work on site. While sadly much of the work goes to out of town architects, there must still be some opportunity for our members within the very large precinct which surrounds the shopping centre.
- The MBDA is commissioning new work, recently appointing two of our member firms for work on the Vuysile Mini Square and the Western Road Upgrade (thankfully this work did not go to out of town Architects)

So, I would say on the whole things are still tough, but the worst of this downturn seems to be behind us. If you have made it this far, just hold on a little longer (and don't tender stupidly low. It will only make things worse!)

During this slow time the ECIA has not been crying in its pretzels. It has been preparing its members for the busy and better times to come by running a number of programmes and activities. I list a few newsflashes below:

<p>John Blair gave a very interesting lecture on "Concrete for Architects" If you missed the lecture you can find it on the ECIA Youtube channel  <a href="http://www.youtube.com/user/eciarchitects">http://www.youtube.com/user/eciarchitects</a></p>	<p>thanks to Andrew Palframan' education Committee</p>	
<p>The ECIA awarded is annual travel prize (R10000.00) to the very deserving Jan de Wet</p>	<p>Thanks to Albrecht Herholdt's Benefits Committee</p>	
<p>Mary Duker gave a very interesting talk on public art and its impact on urban regeneration.</p>	<p>Thanks to Phillip Loots' Habitat Committee.</p>	
<p>ECIA youth were recipients of a rugby ticket give away</p>	<p>Thanks to Khwezi Mandita's Youth Committee</p>	
<p>The ECIA, met in East London with the BKIA, to ensure that our response to tendering for architectural services was on the same track</p>	<p>Thanks to Tim Hewitt-Coleman</p>	
<p>The ECIA have received 15 submissions in the regional Awards of Merit programme. Judging will happen in time for an announcement by October 2013</p>	<p>Thanks to Andrew Palframan' Education Committee (and Kathy's tireless support)</p>	
<p>Preparation for this year's Merit Awards dinner is well under way and look to be very exciting.</p>	<p>Thanks to Debbie Wintermeyer' s Promotions Committee</p>	
<p>The Youtube channel, Facebook page and Twitter feed have been going from strength to strength.</p>	<p>Thanks to Johan Staats' communications committee</p>	

There is a lot more brewing and there is a lot of work to be done to protect, promote and serve our beautiful profession. If there is any member that has time to commit, please make yourself available for projects and programmes in any one of the following committees:

- Benefits
- Habitat
- Communications
- Practice
- Youth
- Heritage
- Education

You can phone Kathy Hess at 041 585 8037 to make contact. (Remember she works morning only)

Thank you very much and thank you for reading this letter. We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours in the service of our beautiful profession,

Tim Hewitt-Coleman

*(President – Eastern Cape Institute of Architects)*