

Numbers & Needs in local government launched

NUMBERS & NEEDS in local government: civil engineering – the critical profession for service delivery by Allyson Lawless was launched at SAICE House in Midrand on 26 November 2007.

This document covers extensive research on the challenges of service delivery in local government and the suggested interventions that will effect a turnaround, which are both feasible and achievable.

Allyson stressed that 'there is no alternative for South Africa but to build a strong third tier of government – local government'.

She is of the opinion that South Africa has a limited window of opportunity of five to possibly ten years to turn around the skills decline and transfer expertise. This period relates to the fact that the majority of experienced civil engineering professionals are in their late fifties and older. South Africa must harness their expertise to transfer skills to the younger generation whilst they are still active, able and willing. Innovation and thinking out of the box will be required.

South Africa's economy and the quality of life of its citizens depend on the supply and efficient management of infrastructure. The bulk of the infrastructure identified in the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) is the domain of local government. At the heart of service delivery is the civil engineering profession, which plays a pivotal role in creating, operating and maintaining infrastructure.

Local government carries the responsibility for ensuring sustainable and efficient water supply, sanitation, roads, electricity, waste disposal, health facilities, which are only achievable with appropriate engineering skills in place. Where there is no potable water or where systems malfunction, people are at risk of contracting waterborne diseases, such as cholera, dysentery and typhoid. Increasingly communities are demonstrating their frustration with insufficient and inefficient delivery of services in many areas.

Viable local government is achievable, but strategies and capacities are required

to increase income, reduce losses, root out failures and ensure that delivery and growth go hand in hand.

In the new publication Allyson discusses practical short-, medium- and long-term interventions which should be initiated immediately. To achieve this she has created a model of three parallel streams of activities, including a turnaround team in engineering departments, to develop plans and grow capacity.

Allyson believes that the preoccupation with restructuring should be replaced with a determination to rebuild technical structures. She says that the zoom-in and zoom-out short-term support currently being offered, while necessary to address burning issues, does little to build the long-term sustainability of local government.

In Number & Needs II Allyson offers an overview of local government, discusses the past and present, and shares ideas for the future. Read more in our January issue! – Ed

TO ALL SAICE MEMBERS

This is a note of thanks from everybody involved

in the magazine to the numerous contributors to this year's issues of *Civil Engineering*. Kindly

diarise the submission dates below – as always, we will rely heavily on your contributions!

FEATURES FOR CIVIL ENGINEERING 2008

ISSUE	MAIN FEATURE 1 (DIVISIONS [§])	SUB-FEATURE 1 (BRANCHES*)	SUB-FEATURE 2 (OFFICIAL LANGUAGES) MAIN THEME: HISTORY AND HERITAGE	D-DATE: SUBMISSIONS TO EDITOR
FEBRUARY	IT [§] and Technology	Free State*	Sesotho	2 January 2007
MARCH	Structural [§]	North West*	Setswana	15 January 2008
APRIL	Geotechnical [§]	Young engineers	SiSwati	15 February 2008
MAY	Railways and Harbours [§] (Coastal)	Limpopo*	Tshivenda	15 March 2008
JUNE	Water [§]	Lowveld*	Xitsonga	15 April 2008
JULY	Construction Project Management [§]	Highveld;* Northern Cape*	Afrikaans	15 May 2008
AUGUST	Environmental [§]	Western Cape;* Southern Cape*	English	15 June 2008
SEPTEMBER	Transportation [§]	Gauteng (Witwatersrand* and Pretoria*)	IsiNdebele	15 July 2008
OCTOBER	Urban and Rural	Eastern Cape (Amatola,* Algoa,* Transkei*)	IsiXhosa	15 August 2008
NOV/DEC	Awards	KwaZulu-Natal (Durban,* Pietermaritzburg* and Zululand*)	IsiZulu	15 September 2008

[§] Divisions * Branches