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Engineers bemoan the absence of an infrastructure directorate at Treasury

Engineers bemoan the absence of an infrastructure directorate at Treasury Consulting Engineers South Africa president Neres Pather says member companies need to be vocal about corruption.

THE LACK OF an infrastructure directorate at the National Treasury to take ownership and accountability for the implementation and monitoring of compliance with the standard for infrastructure procurement was a concern, according to Consulting Engineers South Africa Cesa. Neres Pather, the president of Cesa, said yesterday that the organisation needed to encourage its member companies to be vocal about corruption, because this evil was not only prevalent in the public sector, but equally widespread in the private sector. "Using our membership committee, our constitution and our industry partners, we need to ensure that behaviour unbecoming of our profession is made as public as possible, so it serves as a warning that not only will we act against transgressors, but will use our networks to make this known beyond our immediate circles," he said.

Pather said an infrastructure directorate was formulated during the era when Kenneth Brown was the chief procurement officer at the National Treasury. But Pather said that the National Treasury had not capacitated this team and, to the best of his knowledge, it had remained vacant for more than a year. He said this failure to act should now be escalated to more senior decision makers in the government. "We believe this area is certainly in the country's best interest and it's in the National Treasury's interest to ensure that you have an infrastructure directorate that particularly drives this and it sits in the chief procurement officer's portfolio.

But that particular post has not been filled and remains vacant," he said. Pather stressed that the lack of appropriate skills at both the National Treasury and the office of the auditor general also needed to be addressed urgently if the value for money consideration of the R300 billion spent annually on infrastructure was to materialise. He said a breakthrough in government spending was formulated in 2015 when the National Treasury, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Public Works agreed that the procurement of infrastructure and the general procurement of goods and services needed to be handled differently by the government.

He said the standard for infrastructure procurement and delivery management across all spheres in the government became the model for infrastructure delivery that would be used by those spheres. "This was a positive intervention and Cesa was happy to be collaborating with the National Treasury in the rollout and training of this procurement system. "We are, however, concerned that since the announcement and implementation of this procurement system, across government there is no infrastructure directorate at the National Treasury that is taking ownership and accountability for the implementation and monitoring of compliance with this standard. "It is also not being driven by specific infrastructure specialists that should be capacitating the auditor general's office who are meant to be reviewing this system and

its application in all state organisations during the audit process," he said. Pather said that on the face of it procurement was at the heart of many of the current blockages but studies from various parts of the world referenced standards and the role of the client as being fundamental in the success of infrastructure projects. He added that the National Planning Commission had found that the emphasis of government procurement focused on compliance by box ticking.

Dimensions: