

ASAQS addresses late and non-payment by national, provincial and municipal government

A recent survey by the Association of South African Quantity Surveyors (ASAQS) shows that the majority of quantity surveyors experience late or non-payment of contractors on national, provincial and municipal projects. ASAQS President Christelle Bown presented the survey findings during a panel discussion at the 2019 Master Builders Annual Congress, which was held on 9 September in Johannesburg

By Stephné du Toit

"More than 140 ASAQS members participated in the survey, with the majority of respondents saying that they experience late and non-payment on government projects," says Bown. "The Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure Patricia de Lille recently said that her department had paid R106-million in outstanding invoices. While this is a step in the right direction, it is still only a drop in the ocean of the R6-billion of government debt that needs to be paid to contractors and professionals in the built environment."

The survey also highlighted that the Eastern Cape and Gauteng were the provinces where members experience the most payment-related problems from government entities.

"The Department of Public Works and Infrastructure isn't responsible for the entire R6-billion in outstanding payments," says Bown. "Finding the sources of all the outstanding debt, and addressing it with the appropriate departments and implementing agents will require a collaborative approach from built-environment stakeholders."

Accounting for violence and disruption on projects

Another issue that was addressed during the panel discussion was how quantity surveyors should account for the community facilitation and safety measures that are needed to combat the ongoing violence and intimidation



SAPOA CEO Neil Gopal was part of a panel discussion entitled "Government Support for Sustainable Construction Industry", which consisted of (from left) ASAQS President Christelle Bown; MBSA Executive Director Roy Mnisi; Neil Gopal; Property Sector Charter Council CEO Portia Tau-Sekati; Peter Barnard, a partner at Cox Yeats; and Henk Serfontein, Director at the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation

that has plagued many infrastructure projects in the country.

"There is a provision for a community liaison officer in the bill of quantities for government projects," says Bown. "A possible solution could be the addition of a social and community facilitator. This would be a consulting role, and would be an additional cost to the client – but it could potentially minimise the cost of delays and damages from the construction mafia and other illegal activities on project sites."

Closer collaboration needed

On 1 August, the ASAQS and Master Builders South Africa (MBSA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding to work more closely together to address challenges in the local construction sector. The recent Congress cemented this sentiment, with members of the ASAQS and the MBSA committing to working more closely together in future.

"It is vitally important that the many stakeholders in the built environment continue with their current attitude of sincere and meaningful collaboration," says Bown. "These engagements create a platform that allows us to address the diverse and multi-faceted issues that our industry faces from a position of commonality. By keeping each other informed, stakeholder engagements can prioritise the central issues that are common to us all, and simultaneously create action plans that deliver viable and sustainable solutions."

She concludes by encouraging ASAQS members to participate in upcoming surveys, and she compels other built environment professionals to do the same. "Input from different role-players can help shed light on the backlog of outstanding payments for government projects," she says. "The ASAQS will continue to contribute to meaningful dialogue around these issues. We aim to make a change for the better."