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PUBLIC WORKS

Appeal to employ more qualified plumbers

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THE DEPARTMENT of Public Works and Infrastructure, in partnership with the Institute of Plumbing South Africa (IOPSA) and the South African Women in Plumbing (SAWIP) held a plumbers conference in Durban yesterday.

The conference was aimed at bringing awareness and imparting knowledge on the broader spectrum of careers in plumbing, and to offer a speaker series and exhibition targeting manufacturers, suppliers, plumbing services and skills development opportunities.

IOPSA executive director of plumbing Brendon Reynolds said the field of plumbing was in demand in South Africa and the rest of the world.

"It is not so much about plumbers being in demand, but that the world needs skilled plumbers. The challenge we have in South Africa is that a majority of people that call themselves plumbers are not qualified," Reynolds said.

"What is in demand are properly skilled and qualified plumbers. Statistics in 2018 indicated that about



THE DPWI, in partnership with The Institute of Plumbing South Africa (IOPSA), held a plumbers conference at the Edward Hotel in Durban yesterday. | SUPPLIED

120000 untrained people in South Africa called themselves plumbers, but only around 20 000 were qualified, and that is a problem," said Reynolds.

He said plumbing had been looked down upon for many years and a lot of people saw it as an easy job, which it was not.

Reynolds said the industry was not well regulated, which was why it was easy for people to call themselves plumbers. He said they were working very closely with a lot of government departments so that they understood the importance of working with qual-

ified plumbers.

"We are also looking at how we can regulate the industry to ensure that qualified people are hired," he said.

Reynolds said there are two routes that aspiring plumbers can follow: the first was a three-year apprenticeship, of which around 30% of the time is spent within a vocational college; while the second route is to work in an industry together with a qualified plumber for a period of not less than four years.

Capacity director at Public Works and Infrastructure Thandeka Msibi said the purpose of the conference was to empower plumbers within the state to ensure that they performed well within their areas of expertise.

Msibi said expertise was needed in huge buildings, especially for social infrastructure. "The plumbing field in South Africa is critical, and I believe that if you are a plumber, you should be able to rely on the government to give you a job so that you are able to empower the community you come from," said Msibi.

She said the number of women plumbers was very low, at around 4%.

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