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MEDIA STATEMENT

Swarts calls for the inclusion of Persons living with disabilities in the Built Environment

Public Works and Infrastructure Deputy Minister Bernice Swarts has called on all entities reporting to the Department to play their part in making sure that people with disabilities are trained, employed and get businesses in the built environment.

Deputy Minister Swarts said often people living with disabilities are overlooked in the Built Industry work and business opportunities because of the assumption that they would not be able to do physical duties associated with the industry.

Deputy Minister Swarts had been speaking at the inaugural Council for the Built Environment's (CBE) Colloquium on Persons with disability held in Gauteng Province yesterday.

The 3rd of December is the International Day of Persons with disabilities and is also celebrated as National Disability Rights Awareness Day. The CBE's colloquium on Persons living with disabilities in the built environment, held to coincide with this period, was held under the theme "Co-creation of spaces which entrench universal access". The aim of the conference was to consolidate and accelerate the rights of persons with disabilities.

Among challenges still faced by People with disabilities in the Built environment is physical access to many buildings which don't have ramps, hand rails, etc, heavy doors that are hard to open and close, narrow doorways and hallways, poor signage that does not cater for the visually impaired.

Deputy Minister Swarts called on people living with disabilities to be given opportunities in jobs like project management and owning businesses in the Built Industry. She has called on the department of Higher education to make sure that persons with disabilities get trained in Built Industry qualifications in order for them to be more employable in the sector.

She said while there have been positive gains in the fight for the inclusivity of persons living with disability in the country like the inclusion of the South African sign language as the 12th official language, the country was still lagging behind in reaching minimum targets for the employment of People with disabilities.

For next year's colloquium, the Deputy Minister called on the CBE to invite different stakeholders outside of the built industry sector like those in Education in order to have a more holistic approach in resolving a number of challenges faced by persons with disabilities in the built industry.

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