

**Minister of Public Works  
Ms S Sigcau  
20 September 2002**

[Back](#)

**Official opening of the Gauteng Corobrick Building Training Centre**

Master of Ceremonies  
Mr Kevin Bowers from Corobrik  
Mr Themba Dlamini from CETA  
Distinguished guests  
Ladies and Gentlemen

From the perspective of the new millennium, looking back to 1902 when Corobrik began the route on their proud centenary, we must admit that indeed they have seen change, transformation, development, growth, and a multitude of different things that happened to humankind..... One thing though is for sure - people still build with bricks, mortar and several other clever materials, keeping them in business.

I am told that Corobrik creates products that are defined by their strength, pleasing aesthetics and durability. Their product range includes clay face bricks in many colours and textures, clay pavers, plaster bricks and concrete blocks, pavers and retaining blocks.

As a company, Corobrik has had different partners and alliances during its existence, expanding over the entire South Africa to be represented in all the regions today and increasingly beyond our borders. You say that after the acquisition of Brickor you became the second largest brick manufacturer in the world, after the London Factory. I do want to believe that you are a company 'built on a strong culture of excellence, both in customer service and product quality, an important foundation' for your current national operation. Corobrik is also closely linked with the architectural development of the built environment in South Africa.

Allow me to agree with, and then respond to what Corobrik further says about itself:

"Corobrik has indeed been a key player in the building industry over the past one hundred years. If the total number of bricks supplied by Corobrik over the last century were lined up, this line would circle the earth's circumference four hundred times !! The challenge that lies ahead for the company's management today, is to continue Corobrik's strong culture of product and service excellence and to respond innovatively to the market place and the changing world for the next one hundred years."

As I said, briefly looking at your history, I agree with you and appreciate that some of your distributors include emerging entrepreneurs.

But, in response to your statement, I want to pose further challenges to you in terms of how you can innovatively deal with the market place and the changing world for the next one hundred years.

Regarding the construction industry as a national asset as I do, much needs to be done to ensure that advances and transformation achieved during these first few years of democratic rule in South Africa indeed translates into longlasting growth and development for the industry itself.

Amongst these achievements I count the establishment of the Construction Industry Development Board and the Council for the Built Environment with its professional councils. Also the accredited training systems where CETA has a major role to play.

Transformation of the construction industry to become more inclusive of all the people in our country has progressed rapidly since 1995, and procurement reform has enabled greater participation by contractors and consultants from previously disadvantaged groups and individuals.

Specific programmes by government, such as Public Works' Strategic Projects Initiative to create opportunities for contractors with the capacity to deal with large scale projects, the respective rosters for contract awards and the Emerging Contractor Development Programme have contributed to the transformation. Yet certain challenges remain, and as Government, we believe that these challenges can best

be addressed by our larger corporate world, particularly those firms operating within the built environment.

Emerging contractors have been supported with mixed success. Current shortcomings still to be addressed include the lack of skills in technical expertise and traditional craftsmanship. We have observed that the number of foremen, facebrick artisans, masons etc. is declining at an alarming rate. Where craftsmen skills exist in these trades the average age is a cause for concern. We sincerely hope that Corobrick will consider this challenge and come forward with a contribution to the revival of traditional craftsmanship amongst the youth.

Another factor that we think requires attention, and this I should warn you is a pet subject of mine, is the training of women contractors. A lack of skills is the single biggest constraining factor towards the effective participation of women in construction. And particularly in the culture of the majority of South Africans, traditionally it was the women who built - but somehow that transfer to the formal built environment in terms of black women as bricklayers, masons, architects, engineers, quantity surveyors and related professions has fallen flat.

Some concern has been raised that training interventions could simply raise expectations of communities targeted for training. Once the training is complete, the trained person's life does not necessarily improve. Often they still remain unemployed. We would therefore recommend that those targeted for training should be properly selected. Priority should be given to those who will make the best use of the training provided. We would urge close working relationships between your training centres and the Emerging Contractor Development Programme (ECDP) and the Construction Education Training Authority (CETA). The ECDP can provide Corobrick with a database of contractors who require training, whilst the CETA amongst others can provide for quality assurance of training and development of learnerships.

We should accept as a given that construction is probably one of the most difficult businesses to be in. Challenges facing this industry can only be effectively addressed if like-minded organisations and programmes work together.

Allow me then this opportunity to Congratulate Corobrik on the certification of their third Bricklayer Training School located here in Midrand. I have been told that this school will cater for the building industry, local entrepreneurs and "do-it-yourself" persons through its different courses. Apparently you are anticipating that more than 300 qualified bricklayers will pass through these courses over the next five years.

I do want to believe, that, together with the existing successful building schools in KwaZulu-Natal and Cape Town, you will indeed bring about a significant benefit to employment in the built environment and that the bricklayer training school is a step in the right direction in further enhancing the capacity of emerging and women contractors.

It is my pleasure to declare this school officially opened.

[top](#)