The Star
TENDERS
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Quality counts when you tender

POORLY prepared tender documentation has become a major problem in South Africa with tenders put out by municipalities and parastatals, in particular, increasingly dropping to a "dismal standard", the Association of SA Quantity Surveyors (ASAQS) has warned.

Bert van den Heever, president of ASAQS, says this alarming tendency has the potential of destroying emerging as well as established building contractors, and cause escalating costs of building and other projects that South Africa's reeling economy cannot afford.

Van den Heever states: "Proper tender documentation helps to obtain competitive tenders that can be evaluated objectively to select a suitable contractor, prevents claims and disputes, and underpins proper financial control.

"Poor specification writing, so-called Bills of Quantities that cannot be priced, and dismal drawings and other supporting documents are increasingly the norm in tender packages drawn up by local governments and parastatals which, as repeatedly stated in the media, appear to have inexperienced and unskilled staff in key positions.

"Unqualified scammers have also been caught posing as professional quantity surveyors, and to exacerbate matters, there are many reported cases of vested interests and corruption in the awarding of municipal tenders.

"All tenders – whether from the public or private sector – should provide a clear description and quantified scope of the work and terms and conditions under which such work should be undertaken.

It's in SA's interests that tenders are free of corruption, and are clear and concise

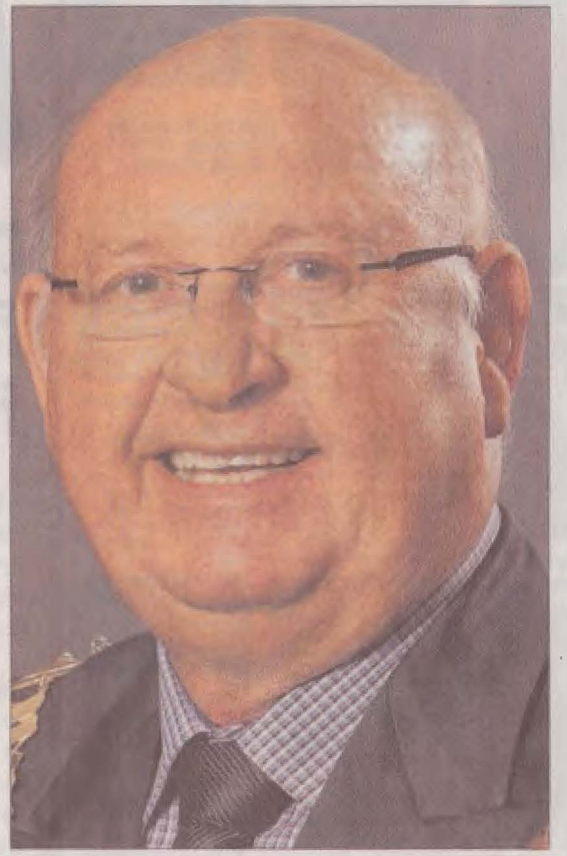
"Tenderers often pay substantial amounts to obtain tender documents - only to discover that they are worthless. Tenders based on such documents cannot be properly adjudicated, nor can any form of cost control be implemented when such projects are started."

Van den Heever urges municipalities, and other organisations without a full-time QS on their staff, to employ a qualified QS on a consulting basis to assist in tender documentation, and the drawing up of Bills of Quantities for construction projects.

"But here also care should be taken to ensure that the QS employed is an accredited ASAQS member, selected for his or her skills and experience – and not merely on the cost of the consulting services offered."

ASAQS believes it is in the national interest to ensure that South Africa embarks on a policy of not only stamping out corruption in the awarding of tenders but also implementing measures – "mainly through the appointment of qualified and skilled personnel to compile tender documents" – to ensure that invitations to tender are clear, so that contractors and quantity surveyors can work with proper documentation without having to resort to assumptions or guesswork.

● *For more information, contact Larry Feinberg, executive director of ASAQS, on e-mail director@asaqs.co.za or visit the website www.asaqs.co.za.*



CAUTIOUS: Bert van den Heever, president of the Association of SA Quantity Surveyors, says poorly prepared tender documents have become a major problem in South Africa.