

Press Release

Cry our beloved CETA

At a recent meeting to receive feedback from their representative at the Construction Education and Training Authority (CETA), members of the Built Environment Professions (BEPs) voiced their concerns about the alleged misappropriation of funds and issuing of fake certificates by the CETA. It is alleged that this has resulted in no training being provided by the CETA for our people and effectively subverting the transformation objectives of our country.

The BEPs consist of the Association of Construction Health and Safety Management; Association of Construction Project Managers; Association of South African Quantity Surveyors; Consulting Engineers South Africa; Institute for Landscape Architecture in South Africa; South African Black Technical & Allied Careers Organisation and the South African Institute of Architects.

In an open letter to the Minister of Higher Education and Training by whistle blowers who are CETA employees, it is alleged that about R400 million has been lost to corruption and maladministration through the irregular award of tenders to service providers by the CETA CEO. It is alleged that R60 million was paid to a training service provider, which had irregularly issued certificates to untrained and unmoderated learners.

While the BEPs commend the Ministry for instituting an investigation, they are perturbed that the CEO has not been suspended while under investigation. This begs the question whether the environment within which the investigation is taking place is conducive for whistle blowers to submit and present evidence without fear or intimidation and victimization. It is also feared that with the CEO in office and the recent unsuccessful court application (Case no: 2015/16059, High Court South Africa, Gauteng Local Division, Johannesburg) by the CETA to silence whistle blowers, there are forces at play within the CETA intent on undermining the legitimacy of the investigation.

Our representative, who sits on the Board of the CETA's Accounting Authority (AA), indicated that the Court application was irregular and had never been discussed or authorised by the CETA AA. Subsequent to that, he wrote a letter to the CETA AA, expressing his outrage at the court application, as well as the affidavit he submitted to the South African Police, both of which bear testimony to the unethical conduct of individuals within the CETA AA.

In light of these serious developments, the BEPs question:

- Why the CEO is still in office while she is under investigation?
- Why the salary of the CEO has recently been increased from R1.2m to R2.7m despite the concerns raised by the Portfolio Committee regarding the CETA's poor performance? This is tantamount to rewarding mediocrity.
- The authorization and funding of the unsuccessful court application?

It is alarming that the law firm, which is suspected of benefitting unduly from CETA appointments, was appointed to submit the court application and thereafter represent CETA. The same firm was fingered by the whistle blowers for being the only legal firm of the CETA's panel of five legal firms to be appointed for legal services. In view of the above irregularities, the BEPs are cynical of the unqualified audit recently awarded to the CETA and question the validity of the evidence provided to the Auditor General.

The BEPs hereby express a vote of no confidence in the administration and governance of the CETA, and call for the immediate removal of:

- The chairperson of the CETA (the first applicant of the failed court application),
- The CEO (the fourth applicant),
- Those members of the CETA AA who affiliate themselves as being the second applicant
- Those members of the CETA who affiliate themselves as being the tenth applicant

The BEPs demand that the above listed persons be replaced with individuals who will implement the recommendations tabled in the BEPs previous Press Release statement that led to the CETA being placed under administration, which read as follows:

“The BEP’s believe that one of the mechanisms to curb possible corruption is by having greater transparency in the whole procurement cycle and construction contracts awarded should be openly published, which will also increase accountability by infrastructure stakeholders. The BEP’s further believe that Government must include a compulsory evaluation and monitoring unit tasked to, amongst others, ensure that Professionals and departments comply with legislation and offers made with respect to skills and skills transfer made during the bid stage.

Matching price with quality and preference - professional service providers must be appointed based on a best weighting for price, quality and preference. Best practice in the procurement of professional services is achieved by using a mutually agreed selection methodology (within the legal procurement frameworks) that does not detract from the economic and skills transformation objectives of government. BEPs are calling for a review of the scoring system for procurement and are of the opinion that the rules that dictate the procurement of general goods and services should be amended to include a specific section that deals with the procurement of professional services. Therefore, a new set of procurement policy systems must be developed for procure BEPs and associated services.”