CESA Gauteng Branch Function

March 2026

If Not Engineers, Then Who?
Reclaiming Our Purpose, Securing Our Future



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Who will fix this when we are gone?
Infrastructure ecosystem:



WHAT KIND OF FUTURE ARE WE BUILDING?

What kind of future are we building?

- Vast backlog of maintenance and repairs
- With annual budget of R3.27-billion – 2 decades to eliminate the maintenance backlog on 56 000 government-owned properties
- Vast impact on communities and economic growth

We are facing a national infrastructure maintenance crisis!



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We Have Not Lost our Engineering Capability

- Where expertise is respected, and where maintenance is prioritised, infrastructure still works.
- There are successful infrastructure projects across SA
- We need to replicate this success!

Advisory on NDP Implementation Priorities for 2024-2029 MTDP report

- Real GDP per capita has declined
- Unemployment rose to 33.9%, deviating markedly from the NDP's job creation target
- Investment levels have consistently missed the annual 30% of GDP target
- Real GDP per capita has declined, averaging annual growth rate of 0.99% - NPC report

The trends point to job creation constraints, a lack of business confidence, and infrastructure deficiencies, among others.



Photo Credit: National Planning Commission

Understanding the Infrastructure Landscape

- Commitment to invest more than R1 trillion in public infrastructure over the next 3 years
- Long standing structural issues need to be addressed
- Culture of reactive asset management: SAICE Infrastructure Report Card
- Real GDP per capita has declined, averaging annual growth rate of 0.99% - NPC report



Photo Credit: SAICE

Only 4 years to 2030: the gap between ambition and reality is widening.

The Need for Resilient Infrastructure

- R400 billion to rehabilitate South Africa's water and sanitation systems
- January's flooding and wildfires highlighted the consequences of a reactive approach to infrastructure risk

Are we prioritising long-term safety, quality, and sustainability or are short-term cost pressures driving decisions?



Building more resilient infrastructure is critical, not only to reduce the impact of extreme weather events, but to move away from crisis response towards prevention, preparedness, and long-term resilience.

Gauteng’s Water Crisis

- For years, province’s water systems have been deteriorating
- This is not sudden failure, but the cumulative result of aging infrastructure, fragmented decision-making
- Reliable access to water is a basic human right
- Collaboration - government, the private sector and built environment professionals to invest in maintenance, strengthen institutional capacity, and rebuild public trust through consistent, equitable service delivery.



Image Credit: Daily Maverick

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CESA's continued Call for:



Credible multi-year project pipelines



Accelerated approvals



Enforced timely payments to stabilise workloads



Counter persistent cancellations and delays

Our nation and our profession is at a crossroads!

CESA's 2026 Theme:

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Accountability for Building Capability

- South Africa faces a severe skills shortage
- SA - one engineer for every 3 100 people, developed nation average one engineer for every 300 people - ECSA
- Partnerships and collaboration are key to address critical skills gap
- Advocate and support STEM Education

Are we doing enough to prepare and empower the next generation to build, maintain, and innovate?

Accountability for the value we deliver

- Procurement systems prioritise lowest cost over quality, longevity, and social benefit endangering both infrastructure and communities
- Prioritising short-term savings leads to higher long-term costs and increased risks to public safety





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Accountability for the value we deliver

When cost and compliance are prioritised over quality and safety, the consequences can be devastating.



Temple Collapse in Verulam, Durban
Image Credit: Reaction Unit SA



George Building Collapse
Image Credit: District JOC/George Municipality



Ormonde Building Collapse
Image Credit: Johannesburg Emergency Services

Accountability for Integrity

Integrity is not just what we do; it is who we are, and the culture we foster.

- *Corruption Watch 2025 Annual Report* - procurement-related corruption remains one of the most reported forms of misconduct, with infrastructure projects featuring prominently
- CESA continues to collaborate and lobby for dedicated policing, disruption protocols, and anti-corruption controls to protect workers, clients, our member firms, and communities from organised crime

Accountability for Integrity

How will we ensure that public resources serve the people, and not private interests?



Securing a meaningful seat at the decision-making table

- Who is making decisions about infrastructure if the people, who design, build, and maintain it are not in the room?
- Why are engineers consulted only after projects fail, rather than before decisions are taken?
- Why do we call on engineers to fix collapsing systems, but exclude them when strategies, budgets, and priorities are set?



Securing a meaningful seat at the decision-making table

- How long must engineers continue knocking on doors, offering expertise, while critical decisions are made without technical accountability?
- Why are we so often a ‘needle in a haystack’? One voice among many, easily ignored, easily overridden.

Engineers must be at the centre of decision-making, where accountability begins!

Economic growth does not happen on spreadsheets

Together, grounded in *Ubuntu* and accountability, let us show South Africa what collaboration looks like!

Let us ALL be the custodians of a safe, sustainable, prosperous future our country deserves.



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This is my invitation to all of you! We will fix it. We all have a responsibility to fix it through:



Thousands of skilled, empowered engineers nurtured in our ranks



Communities united by trust



Institutions



Public and private sector partnerships

We can all share in the future of infrastructure that builds.

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Thank you

