

**Press release – No embargo**

**27 January 2006**

**TOWARDS A REGISTRATION AUTHORITY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PRACTITIONERS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

At a meeting with environmental assessment practitioners in March last year, the Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism Marthinus van Schalkwyk indicated the need for a registration authority for practitioners to improve the quality and objectivity of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) in South Africa.

While amendments made to the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) Act 107 of 1998 in 2004 have made provision for the Minister to appoint associations as 'registering authorities' for environmental assessment practitioners (EAPs), to date there have been no mandatory registration or certification requirements for individuals conducting EIAs.

A voluntary system, including an agreed process and criteria for certification, has been in place since 2001 through the establishment of an Interim Certification Board for Environmental Assessment Practitioners of SA. This Board includes representation from 17 member organisations from the broad field of professionals undertaking EIAs in South Africa including *inter alia* civil engineers, planners, landscape architects and environmental scientists.

In late November 2005, the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism and the ICB signed a Memorandum of Understanding that has enabled a broad consultative process on the establishment of a registration authority that would meet the legal requirements set out in section 24H of NEMA.

The consultation process, which will be focused on professionals active in the field of EIA, will strive for broad agreement on the structure of a future Certification Board (constitution, representation and transformation, legal personality); the certification system (i.e. the professional standards, criteria and process through which professionals are certified); and a code of ethical conduct and sanction process. The structure emerging from the consultative process will apply for registration in terms of section 24H of the amended NEMA.

A series of provincial meetings are being advertised and hosted in partnership with the authorities responsible for EIA authorisations in the provinces. Issues raised in these meetings will inform a draft proposal for the establishment of a registration authority. This draft proposal and other key issues will form the basis of the content for a national conference involving representatives of relevant organisations, which will be held on 23 and 24 March. The purpose of this national conference is to reach broad agreement on the final submission to the Minister that will propose the future Certification Board as a registration authority for environmental assessment practitioners in South Africa.

The schedule and venues of meetings are as follows: Western Cape (14h00, 13 Feb, 10 Menzies Building, UCT); Gauteng (14h00, 14 Feb, DBSA Auditorium, Midrand); Mpumalanga (15h30, 14 Feb, Rooms 2 and 3, Second Floor, Building 8, Provincial Complex, Nelspruit); Northwest (14h00, 15 Feb, Council Chamber, Rustenburg Municipality, Rustenburg); Northern Cape (10h00, 20 Feb, Training Hall, Francis Baard District Municipality, Kimberley); Limpopo (15h30, 20 Feb, Visarend Lapa, Polokwane Municipality, Polokwane); Free State (14h00, 21 Feb, Louis Botha Hall, Lebohang Building, c/o St Andrew & Markgraaff St, Bloemfontein); KwaZulu-Natal (14h00, 21 Feb, Cedara College Auditorium, Cedara, Pietermaritzburg); Eastern Cape (14h00, 22 Feb, PE Museum, Bayworld, Beach Road, Humewood, Port Elizabeth)

**For more information, please contact:** Glaudin Kruger, PO Box 599, Onrusrivier 7201, Tel 028 316 2905; Fax 088 028 316 2905; email [kruger@kruger-associates.com](mailto:kruger@kruger-associates.com) or the EAPSA website: [www.eapsa.co.za](http://www.eapsa.co.za)

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