Sustainable building: a challenge for quantity surveyors

The increasing emphasis on sustainable construction has placed new and unprecedented responsibilities on the shoulders of the quantity surveying profession, Dr Deen Letchmiah, Board member of the Association of South African Quantity Surveyors (ASAQS), has stated.

Speaking at the recent ASAQS seminar, ‘Building on Sunshine’, held in Johannesburg, Deen, who is CEO of the LDM Group and represents ASAQS on the Green Building Council of SA (GBCSA), said the days of quantity surveyors’ role in the building environment concentrating mainly on cost control were over. “Modern quantity surveyors need to consider the driving forces of the green environment in which they operate,” he explained to more than 200 delegates from all over the country who attended the first ASAQS seminar of the new millennium.

Deen said sustainable construction presented new challenges – as well as important new opportunities – to quantity surveyors. “New services can now be offered to clients, such as analysing and advising on Green Capital Costs, promoting the benefits of Life Cycle Management, Green Financing and Green Leases, and cost-effective sustainable strategies,” he continues. “Property Performance Appraisals, Value Management and Engineering solutions, as well as the use of information technology such as Building Management Systems and Information Models, will now all form part of the services a QS can offer clients.”

He said Life Cycle Costing and Facilities Management, in particular, were two services quantity surveyors could offer – and specialise in – to achieve sustainable building. He also urged quantity surveyors to play a bigger role in Facilities Management. Some of the core skills in this category include:

- Construction, building technology and maintenance costs
- Estimating and budgeting
- Cost control and reporting
- Managing building operations
- Life Cycle costs
- Understanding building components and functionality
- Procuring goods, services and leases
- Managing contracts and sub-contracts
- Understanding building management systems
- Integrating information and management systems

“The Green Revolution is not a fad, and the roles of building industry professionals are changing rapidly,” he added. “An integrated design process is required and there is the opportunity for the quantity surveying profession to stimulate change and attract the right people – and retain their commitment to the profession.”

In closing the seminar, Larry Feinberg, Executive Director of ASAQS, said industry was South Africa’s largest polluter and that the quantity surveying profession would in future have to strongly consider the environmental responsibility and carbon footprint of all companies that formed part of the building supply chain.

For more information on the numerous speakers and their presentations visit www.asaqs.co.za.