

14th CESA YOUNG PROFESSIONALS SUSTAINABILITY IMBIZO — 2026 — 19–20 AUGUST PREMIER HOTEL MIDRAND

SESSION 2:

Leadership, Innovation & Ethics for a Future-Ready Built Environment

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SACPCMP
— CONSTRUCTING NEW PERSPECTIVES —

ZUTARI



CESA

School of Consulting Engineering



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Young Professionals Forum

SESSION 2 11:00 – 12:30 | 19 AUGUST 2026

Leadership, Innovation & Ethics for a Future-Ready Built Environment

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SUSTAINABILITY
IMBIZO
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FACILITATOR



Ashlan Ganass
*YPF KZN Chair & Civil Engineering
Technologist, JTN Consulting*



Ntombi Nyaga
COO, cidb



Victor Chibaya
SAICE Young Professionals Chair



Khutso Mokgehle
SACPCMP Education Manager

Ntombi Nyaga

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- **COO at the cidb**
- **Civil Engineer** with an **MBA**
- **PMP Certified**
- Experienced in:
 - Infrastructure & engineering
 - Leadership & governance
 - Organisational transformation
- Focuses on:
 - **Contractor development**
 - **Industry regulation**
 - **Innovation**
- Advocate for **ethical leadership & digital transformation**
- Passionate about a **future-ready construction industry**



14th CESA YOUNG PROFESSIONALS SUSTAINABILITY IMBIZO — 2026 — 19–20 AUGUST PREMIER HOTEL MIDRAND

Building the Future:
Leadership, Innovation and
Ethical Excellence for a
Reformed and Sustainable
Construction Industry

19 August 2026

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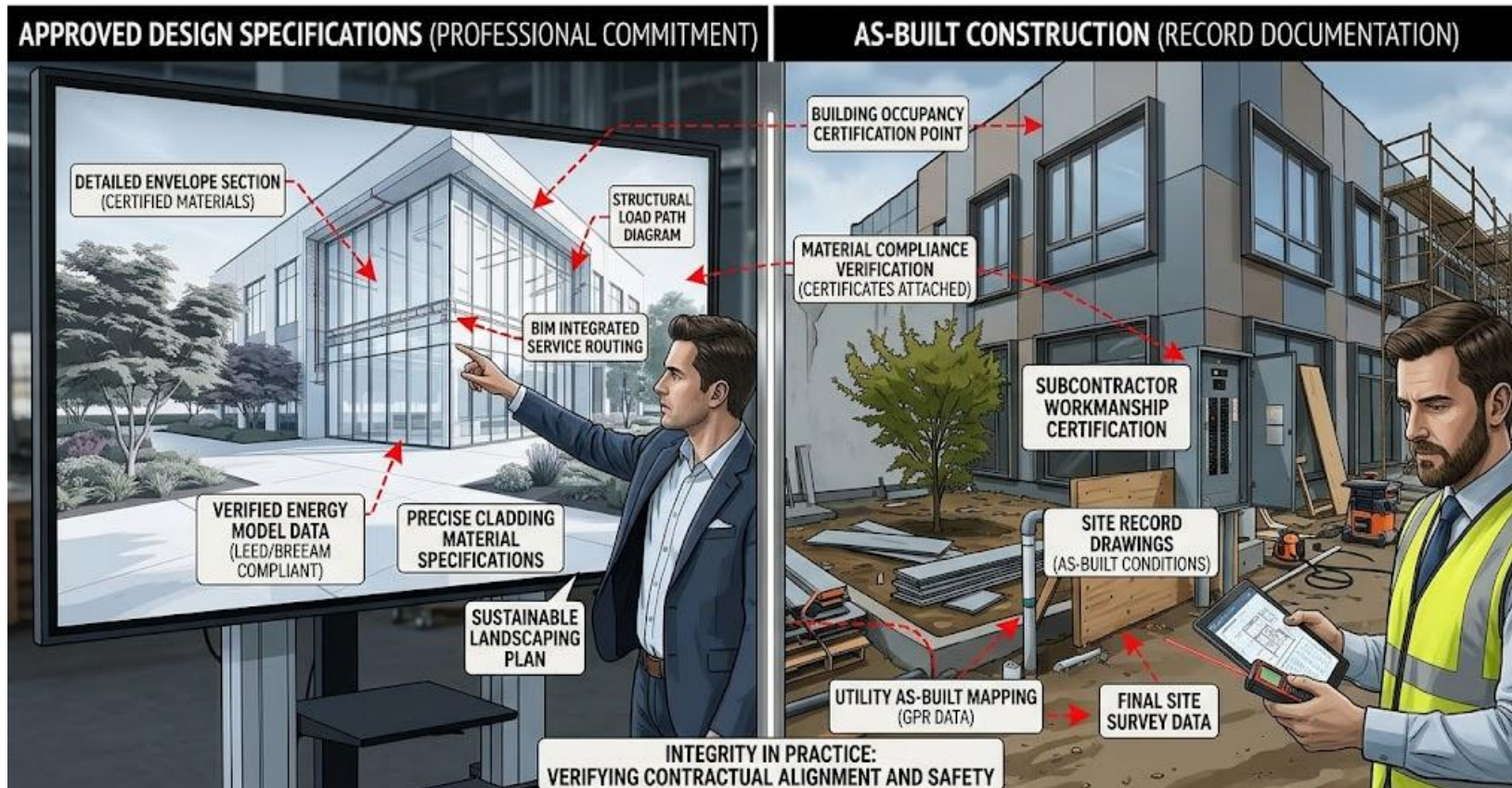


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Introduction

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE: ALIGNING DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION



Three numbers the industry can't spin

D

South Africa's overall infrastructure
grade

SAICE Infrastructure Report Card, 2022
— the lowest score recorded since
ratings began in 2006

R63bn

in infrastructure projects disrupted

180+ projects stalled by
construction-site extortion since
2019 (National Treasury / DPWI,
2024)

R1.46bn

collusion fine paid by 15
major firms

Competition Commission, 2013
— over 300 cases of bid-rigging
uncovered on public and private
projects

None of these numbers are abstract to the industry. Every one of them traces back to individual sign-offs, tenders and site decisions.

George, 6 May 2024

34

construction workers killed

28

survivors pulled from the rubble
over an 11-day rescue operation

*6,000 tonnes of concrete came down in
under five seconds*

What the investigation found

- The building was approved as a single storey and later converted to five storeys without the technical re-evaluation that change required
- Official review pointed to systemic negligence in regulatory oversight, not a mysterious material failure
- In July 2025, ECSA's disciplinary tribunal found the engineer who signed off the plans guilty on five counts of improper conduct and permanently cancelled his registration

The lesson for this room

This wasn't a failure of engineering science. It was a scope change that skipped the process built to catch exactly this. Somewhere, someone could have flagged it — and didn't or wasn't heard.

Sources: Housing Dept investigation findings; ECSA disciplinary tribunal, July 2025; contemporaneous news reporting.

The price of unethical practice

Site invasions

180+ projects, worth R63bn, disrupted since 2019 by syndicates demanding up to 30% of contract value

770+ extortion cases reported since the Nov 2024 Durban Declarations; **241 arrests, 176 convictions**

The 2013 collusion scandal

15 major firms fined **R1.46 billion** for bid-rigging on public projects, including 2010 World Cup stadiums

300+ instances of collusive tendering uncovered across 140 projects worth roughly R70bn combined



But leadership and enforcement move the number: in KwaZulu-Natal, once the epicentre of construction-mafia activity, coordinated action cut monthly site disruptions from over 60 to fewer than 10.

What does “reformed, sustainable and ethical industry” mean?



Delivery capability

Developed

An industry able to deliver South Africa's social and economic infrastructure, reliably and at scale



Globally competitive

A proudly South African industry that delivers projects to world-class standards (e.g. CMS)



Transformed & ethical

Underpinned by consistent, ethical procurement — not who you know, but what you deliver



Value to society

Sustainable growth, capacity development and empowerment that leaves communities better off

Three levers get us to a reformed, sustainable and ethical industry

1

Leadership

The courage to speak, mentor and represent — starting now, not “someday”

2

Innovation

New tools and new processes that make the right way the easy way

3

Ethical Excellence

The daily discipline of small honest choices, especially under pressure

Leadership without ethics is charisma. Innovation without ethics is risk. All three together is a trusted industry.

Leadership

Leadership isn't a job title you get later. It's a habit you start on your first site visit.



Speak in the room you're in

You don't need ten years' experience to flag a risk in a design review — you need one clear observation, and George shows what silence is costly



Mentor sideways and down

Show the intern behind you what you wish someone had shown you



Represent, don't just attend

Get involved in CESA, ECSA and cidb structures while you're still close to the ground



Own the outcome, not just the task

Leadership is asking “will this actually work for the people who use it?”

Innovation

Innovation isn't only new technology. It's anything that makes the right way the easy way.

Digital tools

BIM, drones and AI-assisted design that catch errors before they're poured in concrete

Process innovation

Transparent e-tendering and digital audit trails that make collusion harder to hide

Material innovation

Lower-carbon materials and methods suited to South African resource and cost realities

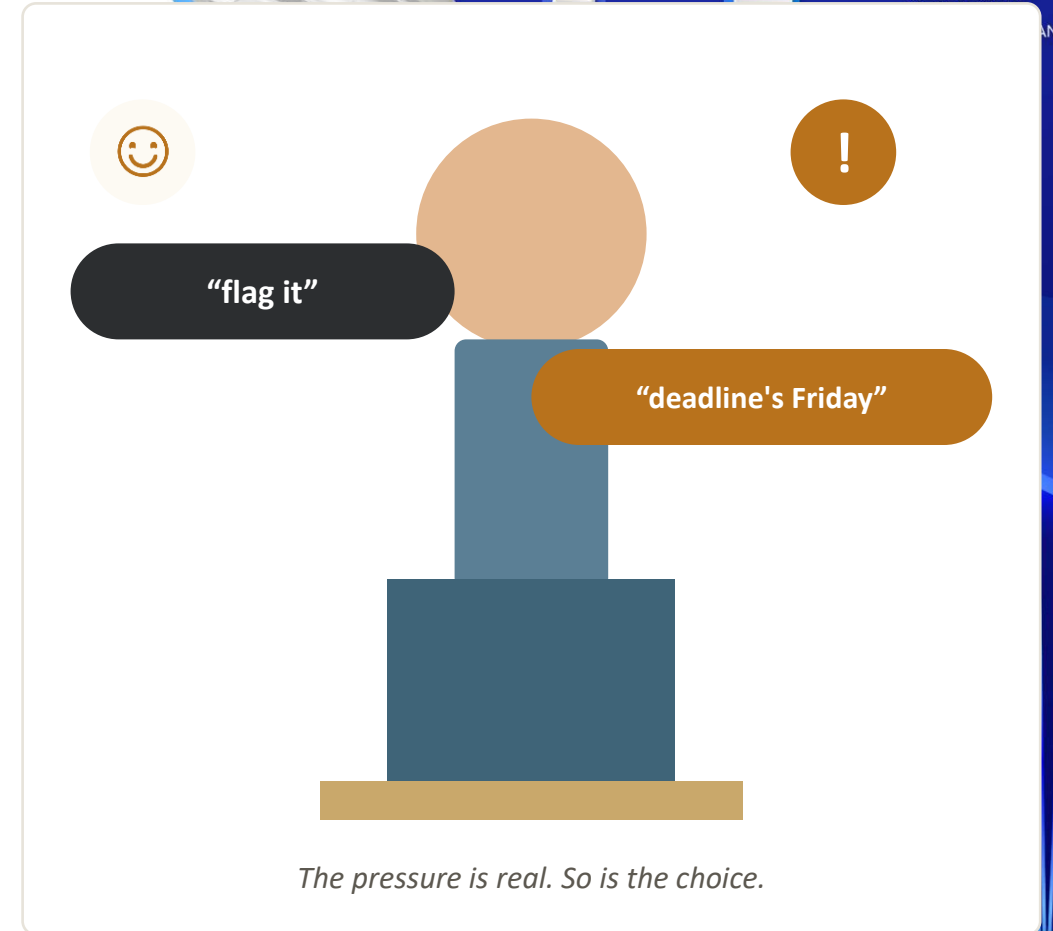
Local-problem innovation

Solutions built for informal settlements, water scarcity and load-shedding, not imported assumptions

Ethical Excellence

George happened one small compromise at a time. Ethical failure rarely looks dramatic — it looks like an engineer, alone at a desk, with a deadline pressing in.

- The test is rarely one big decision — it's a hundred small ones
- “Just this once” is how every compromise starts
- Build the habit of flagging early, while the stakes are still small
- Know your professional body's ethics and whistleblower channels before you need them



None of the three works alone

Leadership – Ethics

= Loud but reckless

Innovation – Ethics

= Fast but risky

Ethics – Leadership

= Quiet compliance, no
change

**Leadership + Innovation +
Ethical Excellence**

=

A construction industry that people can trust
with their money, their safety and their future.

What this looks like on Monday morning

1 Know the Code of Conduct

Read your professional body's and cidb's code of conduct — actually read it, not skim it

2 Find the channel

Locate the ethics or whistleblower reporting line before you ever need it

3 Mentor one person

Commit to bringing one junior colleague or student along with you this year

4 Pilot one improvement

Pick one process on your current project and make it more transparent or efficient

*“The future we want isn't designed once. It's built,
honestly, one decision at a time*

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Thank You

Ntombi Nyaga
Chief Operations Officer –cidb

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