

CCSA Provides Cement and Concrete Industries with Unified "One-Stop" Platform



Hanlie Turner, Business Development Manager of CCSA

Cement & Concrete SA (CCSA) was launched on March 1 this year following the amalgamation of The Concrete Institute (TCI), Concrete Society of Southern Africa (CSSA), and the Association of Cementitious Materials Suppliers (ACMP). Here, Hanlie Turner, Business Development Manager of CCSA, outlines the operations and plans of the new organization.

Q: Where is Cement & Concrete SA (CCSA) head office?

HT: Our offices are centrally located in Midrand, Gauteng, in the same office previously occupied by TCI in the Waterfall Park Office complex in Bekker Street.

Q: How many branches with their own committees will operate within the CCSA concept? And where?

HT: There are currently three active branches: Inland, KwaZulu Natal, and Western Cape. These branch committees will ensure that CCSA has concrete ambassadors in various regions. Committee members are volunteers and will be responsible for arranging area-specific events such as technical meetings and site visits. It is also convenient for the regional branches to interact with the tertiary organizations in their respective areas.

Q: What has been the market feedback on the creation of the new body so far?

HT: Reaction has been very positive as CCSA is now the one-stop shop for all things cement & concrete, removing confusion in the industry as to which body to approach for the various services.

Q: CCSA has been established following the amalgamation of The Concrete Institute (TCI), Concrete Society of Southern Africa (CSSA), and Association of Cementitious Materials Suppliers (ACMP). Can you briefly tell us the principal role of the three bodies and when they were established?

HT: TCI and its forerunners (Concrete Association of South Africa, The Concrete Association, The Portland Cement Institute, The Cement and Concrete Institute) have been in existence since 1938.

It was initially established to promote the use of Portland cement and concrete by disseminating information through a centralized library and offering independent laboratory testing, training, and advisory services. In 1969, the Concrete Society of Southern Africa was founded out of the Prestressed Development Group, which had been in existence since 1952.

CSSA was established as an interest group based on a membership where exchange of information relating to development in concrete technology was paramount. This body actively arranged events and created opportunities to promote excellence in concrete.

In 2003, ACMP was formed to guard producers of SABS-approved cementitious products in South Africa. ACMP evolved from the old South African Cement Producers' Association (SACPA) to deal at the industry level with production issues related to, for example, Health and Safety, Minerals, Mining and Energy, Environmental Affairs, Risk Management, as well as Transport and Logistics.

Q: Does amalgamation give the cement and concrete industry a far stronger and more united voice the industry has had until now?

HT: The different stakeholders have identified the need for less fragmentation of the services to the industry, ultimately to reduce duplication of services, to close identified gaps, and to eliminate confusion for the users of cement and concrete. When many conflicting and ambiguous messages are shared readily on various platforms, and with the proliferation of substandard products and services, the need for authoritative engagement with all stakeholders has become critical. This can only be achieved from an official, unified platform as we now have with Cement & Concrete SA.

Q: What is CCSA's stance on issues such as cement imports?

HT: CCSA will continue engagement with ITAC, DTIC, parliamentary portfolio committee chairs, and members through the Industry spokesman: CEO of the Cement & Concrete SA, Bryan Perrie. Advocacy for both cement and concrete matters will be high on the agenda for CCSA.

INTERVIEW

Q: Will the new issue of Fulton's Concrete Technology be launched as a CCSA publication in the future, and when is the latest issue scheduled to be available?

HT: Indeed, all the valued services of the three bodies have been retained and will continue under the Cement & Concrete SA banner. The editorial committee, led by emeritus-professor Mark Alexander, is in the final throes of preparing the 10th edition of the authoritative handbook, which will be launched on June 10.

Q: What are the plans for other publications?

HT: CCSA will continue to make technical leaflets and publications available and will take guidance from the technical committee on possible new titles. Concrete Beton, the only non-commercial technical journal in our industry, will continue as the flagship quarterly CCSA publication in digital format.

Q: Will the marketing and promotion of CCSA employ the digital platform on a far bigger scale than the three foundation bodies had done in the past? Some examples of social media components and plans?

HT: In line with international best marketing practice and research into channels for reaching various audiences, we will definitely embrace digital offerings far more than any of our predecessors. The COVID-19 pandemic, in particular, has catapulted our services into the digital and virtual space. ConcreteFiX the Series, technical hour-long webinars, have taken the place of physical seminars and have proved so successful that these are now becoming a feature in CCSA's technical calendar.

Q: Can you briefly tell us about your personal duties as Business Development Manager?

HT: My role is to pursue strategic opportunities for CCSA, by cultivating partnerships and relationships with members and other stakeholders to identify new markets for cement and concrete in South Africa.

Q: How will the new CCSA "membership model" work? What are the main benefits of membership, who can join, and at what cost? Will corporate membership cost more than that of a person? Will there be membership incentives for SMEs and emerging companies?

HT: The membership model was designed to make it very easy for potential members to select a category in line with the size of a particular business, offering various cost and benefit structures to suit their needs. The model makes it convenient for SMEs to find appropriate levels of engagement. A special category for emerging contractors is included. Members will be entitled to many services either free of charge or at member discounted rates. Free services for members include access to the comprehensive Information Centre and free advisory services.

Training in our School of Concrete Technology, consulting services, attendance at events, and purchase publications are available at special member discounted rates.

CCSA's focus on committees will ensure that all relevant business areas are addressed with expertise through consultation with the members of committees dealing with topics such as technical issues, marketing, education and training, standards, health and safety, etc. The committee structures will empower members to guide and shape many of the services and benefits.

Q: Will CCSA ensure that its members uphold ethical standards and be selective in granting membership? Will you conduct audits and handle customer complaints, for example?

HT: CCSA's membership is meant to be very inclusive. However, membership may be declined based on technical and quality concerns in the case of product and service providers. As a body that stands for unity, leadership, and relevance, we cannot afford to support the substandard products and services I referred to earlier.

Currently, we do not have the mandate or the capacity to be the industry ombudsman. However, members can get expert, unbiased information and advice from our technical team through our consulting services.

Q: Will the cement producers provide input and exercise a level of control in the running of CCSA? Who funds CCSA?

HT: Four cement producers, AfriSam, Lafarge PPC, and Sephaku, have come on board as Partner members, providing a substantial percentage of the funding for CCSA.

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Q: What about the Concrete Society's 2022 Fulton Awards - when will this now be held?

HT: The prestigious Fulton Awards will continue under the CCSA banner. Non-members are welcome to enter their projects. This prestigious event which was initially scheduled to occur this year was postponed till 2022 because of the limitations and restrictions of COVID-19 lockdown levels. We are all set to host the event next year to showcase and reward excellence in concrete, as has been done for decades.