

## **The National Home Builders Registration Council (NHBRC)**

The National Home Builders Registration Council (NHBRC) requires that all new houses be inspected during the building process to ensure that they comply with the relevant Act. There is currently no legal requirement for an inspection of second-hand houses before a sale takes place.

## **The Home inspection industry in South Africa**

In South Africa there has been a fledgling property inspection industry for about 30 years but most South Africans still don't make use of property inspectors when buying, selling, building or altering a property.

The role of the professional property inspector is to provide common sense, factual answers regarding the actual physical condition of the property. Using his training, extensive knowledge and experience, the property inspector will document all significant observable defects, assess and explain the significance of each defect and, where practical, provide an informed estimate as to the cost of repair.

In South Africa it is a fact that most people still pay more attention to the condition of a second hand motor vehicle than to the condition of a property they are interested in buying. That's pretty weird when one considers the amount of money it takes to build, buy or maintain a property in South Africa.

To avoid expensive mistakes, anyone who is thinking of buying or owning property needs accurate information regarding the property they are interested in. They need answers to questions such as:

- How long will the roof last before needing replacement or repair?
- Are there any problems with damp in the walls, roof leaks or storm water run-off?
- Are there any structural concerns regarding the foundations, walls and roof?
- Are the visible cracks in the walls serious – does it mean the house will fall down?
- Are the geyser, plumbing and drainage systems all in order?
- Is the electrical system adequate and safe?
- Have all of the improvements on the property been approved by the local authority?
- Has the building been well maintained?
- What maintenance and repairs are needed – immediately and within the foreseeable future?

The rules of the property game have now changed because the new Consumer Protection law places the responsibility on the seller and his agent to make full disclosure to the buyer of the actual condition of the property which is changing hands.

The problem, of course, is that very often the seller and his agent are not aware of what may be serious defects in a property. This may be because the seller and the agent have not climbed up onto the roof or crawled into the roof cavity. Sellers and their agents generally also lack the expertise and experience to identify structural problems, damp and so on.

### **Building Credibility**

The second-hand home inspection industry in South Africa is small and unregulated at present. Home inspections are sometimes undertaken by under-trained or inexperienced inspectors and there is no standardised operating procedure to ensure quality of service.

*For home inspection to gain credibility and establish itself as an industry in South Africa it needs:*

- Clearly defined home inspection procedures based on international standards and experience;
- An minimum training standard and generally accepted qualification for South African home inspectors;
- A generally accepted system for routine home inspections before transfer of properties. To gain traction the rationale for such a system would need to be accepted and required by the major South African banks as a pre-requisite for the banks providing home finance;
- Legislation and other rules and regulations to define standards of practice and training and a code of ethics. The Consumer Protection Act is a welcome first step in moving to protect consumer rights this regard;
- A formal, independent governing body to regulate the home inspection industry in South Africa.