

## ASSOCIATIONS

# Promise of stainless steel undermined by fly-by-night fabricators

What happens when stainless steel contractors fail to deliver on promises?

In a tough economy, consumers veer towards the cheapest option and some contractors may be tempted to cut corners. Unfortunately, contractor mistakes cost a fortune, mistakes kill profits and both parties usually blame the other, and often stainless steel itself, through angry exchanges that waste time.

South African Stainless Steel Development Association (Sassda) executive director John Tarboton says, “Based on the number of complaints we receive, we have seen a rising trend towards C steel fabricators moving into the stainless steel area without a full understanding of the differences between the materials, often with costly mistakes. Sassda’s role is to uphold an industry standard, provide advocacy and education for its members and the consumer and be a voice for best practice. Our code of conduct provides access to key pointers for contractors and consumers to consider before utilising a so-called ‘expert’ contractor.”

During contractor altercations, end-users are often misled to place the blame on stainless steel as a product, however Sassda counters that in most cases it may not be poor fabrication, but rather the poor installation of the product. Apart from this being a safety risk, it can lower the life expectancy of the stainless steel product as its corrosion resistance becomes compromised. Sassda is clear that member companies which fail to adhere to their code of conduct regarding best practises will see their membership terminated.

Tarboton says, “To become a member of Sassda a company needs to be ratified,



■ STL: Example of sub-standard stainless steel balustrade installation in KwaZulu-Natal.

meaning we investigate the company, making sure correct practises are being performed together with good business ethics.

We provide education and training to both our members and the public on the qualities of stainless steel, the correct selection and the required grading of the material to the application, together with

its required finishes. Stainless steel is a quality product. We understand that mistakes can happen, but it’s the way the member company handles that sets a quality fabricator apart from the rest. We also appeal to consumers to only make use of our industry standard member knowledge and practices to avoid costly mistakes.”

