

## THE WEEKLY

### FOURIESBURG FEMALE CONTRACTOR SCOOPS AWARD

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A worthy winner ... Cogta MEC Olly Mlamleli, Contractor of the Year Rachelle Els, and premier Ace Magashule

A young female contractor, Rachelle Els, was honoured with a top accolade from the Free State Department of Cooperative Governance, Traditional Affairs and Human Settlements (Cogta) during last weekend's Govan Mbeki Awards.

Hailing from the remote area of Hagesdam near Fouriesburg, Els was named as Best Contractor of the Year for the role her company, Thutela Bogolo, has played in helping the department meet its objective of building sustainable houses for the poor.

The awards were hosted by the MEC for Cogta, Olly Mlamleli, at the President Hotel in Bloemfontein. Mlamleli was flanked by premier Ace Magashule who lauded her department for the great work they have been doing in collaboration with contractors.

The MEC and the Premier bestowed awards on Els and several other dedicated contractors who have been working with government to develop human settlements in order to reduce homelessness and poverty.

The companies working with the department include building contractors, building material suppliers, and professional engineering organisations.

Els received the Best Contractor of the Year accolade for the work her company, Thutela Bogolo Construction, has been delivering. It was also recognised in the Best Priority Project category.

The self-proclaimed humanitarian established her construction company in 2006. The business was established with the sole aim of uplifting communities through sustainable projects.

She initially relied on donors and sponsors to build roads and houses before approaching the Mangaung Metro Municipality (MMM).

“I approached the municipality and spoke with the Mayor Thabo Manyoni and I offered to help the government build better RDP houses. He then linked me with the Free State premier, who subsequently gave me the opportunity to build one of the show houses that formed part of government’s building projects.”

Els’s company has been one of the major forces behind the new-look RDP houses that were pioneered by the Free State government in various towns around the province. Thutela Bogolo Construction was contracted to build the bigger houses that have made the Free State a leader in building decent RDP houses.

Unlike RDP houses in other province, the Free State’s RDP houses have a modern appearance, ceilings, water and electricity, a separate bathroom, and three bedrooms.

In her acceptance speech, Els expressed her gratitude to the Free State government and the premier for giving her the platform to help government further the cause of building more sustainable houses.

“I would to thank Mr. Magashule for believing in me and for giving me a chance to showcase what I think every human being should have – a decent house”.

“I initially started the company to carry out projects that saw us build proper roads and houses in the various townships. I did not start [my business] for profit gain and view myself to be more of a humanitarian than a businessperson.”

The annual awards take place across the country and serve to commemorate the late ANC stalwart, Govan Mbeki. Mbeki partnered with key stakeholders in order to further the cause of building a nation that effectively rendered basic needs to its people. He laid the blueprint for the selfless dedication that Cogta and stakeholders working on the development and provision of shelter to the poorest citizens in the country are following.

MEC Merit Awards were also bestowed on the best performing students who were granted bursaries by Cogta. The four students were S.S Mpondo, Fanele Mafuna, Peyelo Manamathe, and Mphikeleli Jele.

The winners in other sub-categories were: Best Priority Project: Thutela Bokgolo Construction; Best Informal Settlement – Upgraded Project: Group 2 Trading; Best youth contractors: Rehauwe Construction; Best Woman Contractor: Naturena Rocks and Best Rental Stock Project: Porcore Land and Property Development

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