
Foreword

The legal framework within which negotiated environmental agreements will be enacted offers an alternative to the traditional re-active and punitive measures to achieve environmental compliance; the new, negotiated approach is aimed at providing mechanisms which encourage co-operation and rewards for compliance. Effective implementation of any law is at best a challenging task within most countries; within a relatively young democratic country, this task may at times seem insurmountable.

Although democracy is a slow moving, dynamic process, South Africa seems to be at a juncture where the effective implementation of the law is being tested against a multitude of economic, social and political issues. More importantly, however, is an understanding that there may be pockets of society that are reluctant to embrace change. This reluctance is not necessarily founded only in political beliefs, but in how business is conducted, service is provided by government officials and environmental practices are implemented. This reluctance may result in either apathy or passive rebellious behaviour, possibly handicapping potentially robust legislation. It is against this context that this research project has to be interpreted.

While an argument can be made that attitudes can be governed by legislation (particularly through legislation that encourages change and equitable treatment), individual perceptions and attitudes cannot easily be controlled. The real conundrum emanating from this research project is whether South African society is mature enough for regulation which is underpinned by self-regulatory behaviour.

The research journey into the Metal Finishing Industry in Kwa-Zulu Natal is narrowly defined and reflects challenges confronting a certain sector of stakeholders involved in this industry. However, there are important lessons that have been learned which can be extrapolated to other sectors involved in the water sector and possibly elevated to a strategic framework. The findings and recommendations are aimed at supporting the effective implementation of existing legislation through co-operation, which in turn can be a catalyst for changing the negative attitudes that currently permeate business, industry and government in terms of service delivery.