



Commissioner for Children

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For Attention: Keagan Mitchell

By email: Keagan.mitchell@inl.co.za

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Commissioner for Children – Christina Nomdo

My name is Christina Nomdo. I was appointed since 1 June 2020 as the Western Cape Commissioner for Children. The mission of this Office, in my first term, is #littlevoicesMUSTcount. Children's participation in decisions that affect their lives is one of the three pillars of a child rights approach - together with protection from harm and provision of services to ensure wellbeing. In order to model child participation practice, I work alongside a group of Child Government Monitors in my Office who partner me in everything I do. They have even been involved in the recent recruitment process for staff of the Office of the Commissioner for Children.

In 2021, in partnership with the Child Government Monitors, I have decided to embark on a consultation with children about #LearninginCOVIDtimes. This project was inspired by my 5-year old niece, Gee Le Roux, who requested I ask the President if she will be able to start Grade R on time this year in the face of the raging pandemic. The Child Government Monitors and I framed the questions for the consultation, and they approached their peers to participate in the consultation. They also provided their personal inputs by answering the consultation questions.

The #LearninginCOVIDtimes consultation started by social media on 6 January 2021 and will end on 31 January 2021. It invites all learners from those who will start Grade R in 2021 to those who have completed Matric in 2020 to share their feelings and experiences from 2020 and their views and suggestions of how learning experiences can be improved during COVID times in 2021. I first engage the parents to provide permission for their children under 18 years old, before engaging the children. The inputs generated in this consultation will be shared with the Head of the Western Cape Education Department, Mr Brian Schreuder and the MEC for Education in the Western Cape, Ms Debbie Schafer.

The issue I am hearing children talk about thus far is concern for their safety and that of their families when they go back to school. They want health protocols to be strictly adhered to in schools, in order



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to be safe from COVID-19. Some express excitement to start their learning again and hope educators can make alternative methods of learning available should the need arise. So, it is important that adult duty bearers of child rights fulfil their responsibilities towards children.

Child Government Monitor – Winetha Booysen (Redelinghuys)

My name is Winetha Booysen. I am 13 years old and I live in the rural town of Redelinghuys in the Western Cape. I am about to attend to Steynville Secondary School in Piketberg, to start Grade 8. I became a Child Government Monitor in November 2020 when I was elected by the children of my community during a workshop with the Commissioner for Children.

The consultations about the Covid-19 pandemic is really important, as it keeps us updated about the learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. I really enjoy interacting with other children and learning about their experiences last year. It was really challenging to go to school last year because we had a lot of work to catch up on. The one thing that kept me motivated last year was the thought about my future.

I hope that they won't close the school's early this year because it will affect our studies. I really miss sitting with my friends during break time.

Child Government Monitor – Lukhanyo Sonyamba (Philippi East)

My name is Lukhanyo Sonyamba, currently age 17, living in Philippi East, in Cape Town. I am currently attending Rhodes High School about to start my final year, Grade 12. I am a Child Government Monitor of the Western Cape in the Office of the Children's Commissioner. I became a Child Government Monitor in the Children's Commissioner's Office in 2020, close to the beginning of the year. I was approached by the Commissioner while serving in the Nelson Mandela Children's Parliament, and we have worked together with other wonderful young people for almost a year. It means a lot to me, leading this project with the Commissioner, because I feel that my voice is heard and struggles are seen during this pandemic and it is vital we take into account what we went through to better the following academic year.

The COVID consultation is very important to gain insight on what's happening in these times we are in and how we are affected. Attending school during such a time was scary and made me anxious because you didn't know who was infected with the virus, your life and loved ones was in every decision you made, the thought of cough or sneezing felt like death. The only thing that kept me motivated is I have people looking up to me, and I can't let myself down. For God didn't bring me this far to fail. What I expect is for everything to be properly planned and sorted out strictly. I expect the school system to be upgraded and much better and efficient than last year. The teachers must have a plan or strategy to teach in a fast but effective way making sure all learners understand the work. School has changed drastically, the way we operate, the seating arrangements, the period



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times shortened, and we don't have break/interval to rest our minds and relax. Rushing everything, trying to finish the curriculum. I miss the freeness and the tension-free environment where one can walk around the corridors and have no fear of the other person, I miss the ability to greet fellow peers in such a way you greet family.

The teachers were under pressure and in living in fear, not wanting to die due to COVID. So, they acted impulsively, not wanting to come close to anyone and teaching uncomfortably. Due to that, learners suffered academically.

We are not all fast learners and due to that many found advantages and disadvantages to how things were done, me for example, I am an oral learner, so I suffered during the first 2 weeks of self-teaching.

Child Government Monitor – Saadiq Daniels (Bonteheuwel)

My name is Saadiq Daniels. I am 15 years old turning 16 in two weeks' time, In Shaa Allah. I live in Bonteheuwel, Cape Town. I am a learner at Vista Nova High, in Grade 10. I became a Child Government Monitor due to Christina, the Commissioner, who was in contact with Rx Radio. I am a radio presenter and there was selected to be one of the Child Governments Monitors. I am with this group since June or July. These consultations are very important because it gives more information about COVID. I enjoy interacting and learning from others how and what they experienced during the COVID pandemic. COVID-19 is a very deadly virus and it teaches us to be more responsible and to take care of ourselves and care for other people. Schooling was challenging as we had to be more careful and observant because we could not make close contact with our friends and one thing that was very challenging was that I had to wear a mask whole day. As an asthma sufferer, it's not easy to keep it on all the time. What kept me motivated is God will not give us something that we can't handle, and I was just thinking positively to do my work, even at home. My wish is the education system will be more stable and hope things can just be normal as usual. We attended school every alternative week and sometimes we had lessons via Google classroom and Zoom. I really miss the interaction with my peers as social distancing restricts us even from standing or sitting near to each other to have a decent conversation so everyone can hear what you say. Let's all keep safe and pray the virus will vanish soon.

Child Government Monitor – Christopher Kleynhans (Wynberg)

My name is Christopher Kleynhans. I am 17 years old and I am from Cape Town, South Africa. I attend Wynberg Boys' High School and I am currently in Grade 11. I became a Child Government Monitor through having a meeting with the Commissioner for Children where we discussed the National Youth Development Policy. I was then invited by her to become a Monitor. I feel honoured and hopeful to lead this project with the Commissioner as I see progress and an outcome of great potential.



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The consultations are very important as it helps us understand and talk about COVID-19, helping to provide a sense of assurance that there is something being done about it. That it isn't going away anytime soon, so we have to learn to adapt to our new world but at the same time we have to adapt to learn how to function in these tough times.

It is very different to the normal "vibe" seen at my school. Normally, the energy levels are high and the pupils are normally much more optimistic, but during COVID I've seen the pupils feel a lot more demotivated and have less energy to do work to the best of their abilities.

What kept me motivated was my friends. Knowing I'm going through it with them made it a lot easier.

My expectations are that hopefully things can go back to normal but keeping in mind that we are in a global pandemic, so some things won't be able to happen like they used to. We will have to adapt our traditions to accommodate the global pandemic.

Schooling has changed completely! From shorter weeks, to no assemblies to not even having sport games! I miss it and want to go back!

Coming from a very competitive school, with of vibe an energy, to now where a lot of that has been drained from the pupils. I would have to say I miss the vibe we had were we supported each other on the field or even in the classroom.

Child Government Monitor – Alessio Marcus (Mitchell's Plain)

I am Alessio Marcus. I reside in Beacon Valley Mitchells Plain. I attend Beacon Hill High school and I am currently in Grade 12.

COVID-19 consultations are extremely important purely because it provides us all with important information about the virus and reassures us that the government is indeed doing their job. I have learnt so much about COVID and how we can avoid contracting the illness by following the protocols.

It was not bad attending school during the pandemic, purely because my school established a COVID-19 Task Team to ensure all protocols were followed on the school grounds.

I was extremely motivated purely because I knew that the following year, 2021, was going to be the last school year of my life.

My expectations are that government ensures that all schools have the necessary PPEs and that every child is protected from this virus.



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Schooling has changed completely. During the lockdown and the back to the school period, we as learners were necessitated to be independent and self-learn. I miss my teachers, friends, principal and the desks 🤔 😊

Child Government Mentor – Amahle Somo (Malmesbury)

My name is Amahle Somo, an 18-year old living in Malmesbury, a town approximately an hour outside the City of Cape Town. I wrote my matric in 2020. I was nominated to be a Child Government Monitor by one of the existing Child Government Monitors, who was first a member of the Nelson Mandela Children's Parliament. I have been part of the group for almost 4 months now. Since I have turned 18, I am now a Mentor. It means the world to me to lead this project and to be part of this incredible change we're about to make.

Having to adapt to a new and different way of schooling happened so suddenly and unexpectedly. It came with a lot of confusion and fear. Being in an Afrikaans school and provided with English textbooks only, to assist with learning, doubled my workload as an English learner because there was a lot of self-studying and of course, matric has plenty of work. At some point, it felt overwhelming and it almost felt impossible because of the language barrier. There were times when I felt like giving up and repeating the year because, due to lockdown, we lost an enormous amount of time out of school. However, at my school all the COVID-19 rules and regulations were practiced well for our safety which motivated me to push until the end of my matric year.

I hope that the Class of 2021 will have a better matric year than we had, and all COVID-19 rules and regulations will be thoroughly adhered to in all schools and better learning techniques will be introduced to make this year a better academic year.

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