



**Commissioner
for Children**
OF THE WESTERN CAPE

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CHILDREN COMMISSIONER'S CHRONICLES

JANUARY - JUNE 2023
ISSUE 01

Western Cape Commissioner for Children office turns three

The Western Cape Commissioner for Children (WCCC) turned 3 years old in June.

The past three years have been a time of great progress for our organization. We have made significant strides in staffing, identifying a permanent office, and developing programming. We are proud of the progress we have made and are excited to continue working towards our goals.

A groundbreaking hallmark of her office is that she has done this in full partnership with children since her first day in office.

Child Government Monitors are her eyes and ears on the ground to report children's lived reality and address these concerns to powerful decision-making in practice, policy, and law reform submissions.

Learning from her experience of working during COVID-19 times, the Commissioner also travels the length and breadth of the province to hear from children in rural areas. Her community children's rights workshops are a key implementation model for receiving recommendations from

children about government service delivery.

The feedback received from children is then used to shape advisories to government departments, ensuring that policies and practices align with children's rights.

In addition to these efforts, the WCCC has also focused on building the capacity of children to understand government budgets and how they impact children's rights.

By empowering children with this knowledge, they can actively participate in monitoring and advocating for their own rights.

With the arrival of staff in the Investigations and Advice branch we have been able to build standard operating procedures for dealing with complaints, enquiries, and requests for investigations.

Through our dedication and collaboration with children, we have made significant progress in advocating for and protecting the rights of children in the province. From involving children in the decision-making process to conducting research and building partnerships with other Ombudspersons for Children the WCCC is determined to create a world-class institution.



Western Cape Commissioner for Children Christina Nomdo, celebrating with Child Government Monitors as the WCCC turned three years

The WCCC's commitment to learning from other Ombudspersons for Children is evident in their study visit to the Mauritian Ombudsperson. By benchmarking their practices and building strategic links, the WCCC aims to continuously improve and make a greater impact on the lives of children.

Through our inclusive and collaborative approach, we are creating a platform for children's voices to be heard and ensuring that their rights are protected and upheld. We are confident that these accomplishments will lay the foundation for even greater success in the years to come.



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MESSAGE FROM THE CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER CHRISTINA NOMDO

Welcome to the exciting world of our newly launched newsletter, the Children Commissioner's Chronicles.

We are thrilled to introduce this special publication that is dedicated to all our stakeholders who play a significant role in the functioning of our institution.

This newsletter is launched in celebration of the three year birthday of the office of the Commissioner for Children. It's been quite a journey and with this publication we hope to keep you updated about key milestones in the office.

In-depth accounts of key happenings from January to June 2023, are detailed. You will be able to read more about our international learning with our Scottish and Namibian counterparts, get to know more about our Child Advisors, witness how and where the Commissioner shared her mandate, and much, much more.

Children Commissioner's Chronicles will be published periodically and be available on our website, also by linking into our social media platforms. We hope you are as proud of these first steps in our fledgling institution, as we are.

So, join us on this incredible journey as we embark on a new adventure with each issue of our newsletter. Let's explore, learn, and grow together!

Regards

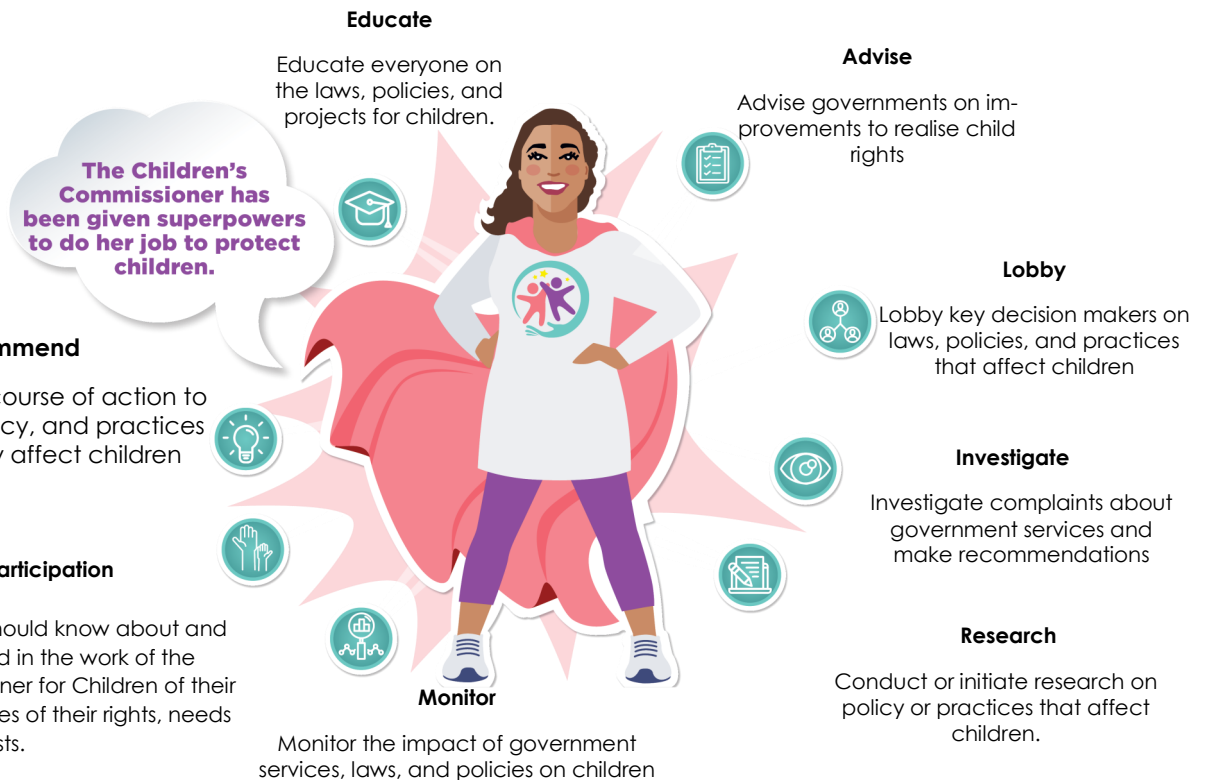
Christina. 



Childrens Commissioner WC



@ChildCommWC





Commissioner consults NGOs in the child protection sector to unpack resource constraints challenges hindering the sector



In May the Western Cape Commissioner for Children (WCCC) chaired a stakeholder consultation with key role-players in the child protection system, including the Department of Social Development (DSD), Designated Child Protection Organisations (DCPOs), and the Provincial Treasury (PT).

The aim of the workshop was to build a shared understanding of the resource constraints affecting the child protection System in the province. This was done by reflecting on the primary operational issues affecting the DCPO Sector and the funding context of

the DSD. During the consultation with the sector, the NGOs told the Commissioner for Children, Christina Nomdo, that they are at breaking point due to financial constraints.

The challenges identified by the organisations include the high turnover rate of Social Service Professionals (SSPs) which has given rise to challenges with filling vacant posts.

This, they say, consequently causes delays in effective service delivery, casework backlogs, and clients having to constantly adapt

to new SSPs.

The sector has also seen an increased demand for their services caused by an array of social ills. With the diminishing funding, from the government and private donors, the sector is struggling to keep up with this demand.

Following these engagements, a working group and a technical team were formed, comprising sector and public officials, to collectively and regularly develop mitigation strategies for the DCPOs that are on the verge of closure.



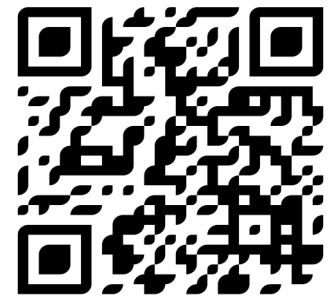
WCCC celebrates its graduate

The WCCC takes great pride in acknowledging **Aubrey Van Rooy-Brandt**, our **Children's Commissioner Officer** in the **Investigations and Advice** branch, for his remarkable achievement of obtaining his third qualification.

Van Rooy-Brandt recently graduated from UNISA with a **Bachelor of Law**, adding to his undergraduate qualifications in **Advanced Certificate in Community Development and Bachelor in Social Work**.

For Aubrey, this third qualification signifies a significant milestone in his pursuit of becoming a strong advocate for child rights. With a solid foundation in community development, social work, and now law, he possesses the necessary knowledge and skills to represent vulnerable children and their interests at the highest level of law and policy development in the country. He believes that this qualification will serve as a powerful tool in navigating the legal landscape and effectively advocating for the rights of children in need.

For those considering pursuing another qualification while working full-time, Aubrey offers the following advice: "Set the goal first. Believe in yourself. Plan, review, evaluate, and constantly monitor your progress. There is no gain without pain."



SCAN ME

Western Cape Commissioner for Children Annual Report 2021/22



The report is our reflection on a year of progress and collaboration in our mission to protect and advocate for the rights of children. Check out our second annual report to see the impact we've made and the steps we're taking towards a brighter future for every child in the Western Cape.

Or Click Here: <http://surl.li/hmusw>



Commissioner meets government officials to inspect building identified to permanently house the institution

In the near future, the Western Cape Commissioner for Children will be relocating to a new building that has been selected to serve as the permanent offices for the institution. The Commissioner recently visited the building, which is located in the Central Business District (CBD), where she met with government officials and assessed the structure. Commissioner Nomdo was pleased with the condition of the building, although it requires significant preparations, such as thorough cleaning and refurbishment, before it can be utilised.



Currently, the Western Cape Commissioner for Children is temporarily situated in the Western Cape Government building at St Georges Mall. However, there are plans to fulfil the mission outlined in the institution's 2022 strategic planning, which emphasises the need for spaces where children can engage. The new building is expected to accommodate various needs, including staff offices, conference and meeting rooms for adult stakeholders, consultation rooms, workshop spaces for children, and other child-friendly areas



From the beginning of her term, the Commissioner envisioned a child-friendly, fantasy house for the Western Cape Commissioner for Children. Three million rand was allocated in the first financial year to secure suitable accommodation for the office. When the Commissioner presented this idea to the Director-General (DG), he promptly established connections with the Department of Transport and Public Works (DTPW) to find an appropriate building. As the Commissioner does not have the legal authority to own property, it is necessary for her to be accommodated within existing government infrastructure.

The DTPW responded by identifying and presenting several options for permanent accommodation to the Commissioner, along with a Child Government Monitor. After considering various properties, the Commissioner settled on a specific one in 2020. However, complications with tenancy agreements prevented the Commissioner from occupying the chosen building. As a result, an alternative office site was identified, and the DTPW agreed to invest in a property to ensure it meets the required maintenance standards. This means that the Commissioner will be able to use the allocated funds from the WCCC budget for child-friendly refurbishments.



SCAN ME

Western Cape Commissioner for Children Communications Strategy survey: The WCCC is currently developing its Communications Strategy to help outline how it moves forward in communicating with its current stakeholders and also ensuring that it reaches out to more stakeholders and other persons of interest in the province. Please scan the QR to take part in our survey OR Click Here:

<https://shrturl.app/yOjEuF>



WE LOVE CAMPING!!!

The WCCC is hosted a Local Government Budget Training workshop from 7-13 July 2023 (during school holidays) for the Child Government Monitors and Mentors. The aim of the training was to capacitate the monitors and mentors with knowledge about local budgets, which is essential for budget advocacy for child rights. Some of the child government monitors who attended the training were previously members of the Cape Town Junior City Council, which the WCCC has established a special relationship with.

Children's right to participate in all decisions affecting their lives is one of the core principles of the international child rights frameworks articulated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. As such, the Commissioner intends for children to be involved in all aspects of the Office.





The Child Government Monitor (CGM) forum is one of the four child participation models in the office of the Western Cape Commissioner for Children's office.

The CGM forum was established in 2020 to ensure that children are involved in the work of the WCCC. This forum provides the children with opportunities to influence laws, policies and practices for children in addition to being educational and empower-

ing. The children are nominated by a child rights organisation or any other organisation working with children including Child and Youth Care Center or nominate themselves.

In this feature, **Keeping Up with the CGMs**, we will introduce you to the faces behind the CGM forum and learn more about their work as child rights defenders in the province.

Saadiq Daniel is now an 18-year-old activist and leader from Bonteheuwel. He is a matriculant at Vista Nova High School and his favorite subjects are Tourism and History. He enjoys exploring and traveling the country. He joined the CGM Forum when he was 14 years.



What inspired you to join the WCCC CGM Forum?

I was inspired by this CGM because I believe to fight for children's right and that is exactly what they are doing.

What do you enjoy most about being a CGM/Mentor/Advisor?

I really enjoy assisting the monitors and guiding them as a mentor. What makes me proud is that they put it in practice and can learn from every concept given.

What has been your significant moment as a CGM?

My significant moment was when I had the opportunity to represent the mentors and monitors of the Children's Commissioner office in Switzerland. At 17 years old this was an experience of a life time and will always appreciate Cameron Cyster, the WCCC Investigations and Advice officer who guided me and made my experience a well worth trip to remember.

What do you think are the challenges facing children/young people in the province?

The challenges are poverty, children's voices are not always being heard, gangsterism, drugs and abuse.

If you could, how would you change the world to be a better place for children?

I would change the world by allowing children to be in a safe environment, remove them from poverty and live a happy, secure life as a child should be raised. I would create free education. I would also establish a Children's Commissioner on a national level and give children over 16 years voting rights.

What is the most wonderful thing that thing that ever happened to you?

The most wonderful thing was when I met President Cyril Ramaphosa and shared my concerns about the youth. I also asked him about the voting rights and to reduce the age of voters to 16 years.



Vimbai Watwamba is a 17-year-old optimistic and hardworking activist from Plumstead. Affectionately known as Vee, she joined the WCCC in 2020 immediately after its establishment. She was 14 years. Vee is currently taking a gap year after completing her matric last year. Vee's favourite colour is yellow because she says it describes her well; it is bright and radiant.

What inspired you to join the WCCC CGM forum?

I was one of the very first few children who joined the office when it was established in June 2020. What inspired me the most was the fact that I would be in a forum that would be voicing out children's dreams and worries in lived realities.

What do you enjoy most about being a CGM/Mentor/Advisor?

I am a CGM and an advisor in the office of the Commissioner for Children. What I enjoy the most is being able to have fun with my fellow peers and also being able to voice out my opinions as a child.

What has been your significant moment as a CGM?

On 14 May 2021 I was one of the few children that did an oral submission in the national chambers on the Children's Amendment Bill, at age 15. I have it engraved in my mind and heart because it was a huge step for me as a foreign child addressing the national chambers and being one of the children that got to be the voice.

What do you think are the challenges facing children/young people in the province?

The biggest challenge I would say youth are facing in the Western Cape is lack of knowledge and not on books or street smarts but the fact that children are not aware of their rights and also don't know when their rights are being violated.

If you could, How would you change the world to be a better place for children?

If I could change the world I would love to stop the violence against foreign/immigrant children, making sure children don't have to dread being from a certain country.

What is the most wonderful thing that ever happened to you?

Meeting my Grade 9 EMS teacher who introduced me to Earl Mentor. Earl is part of a youth organisation, Peace-Jam, and at the time when the WCCC was established he referred me to Chistina. I later joined the WCCC. This all happened because my EMS teacher signed me up to the organisation, and I later met the Children's Commissioner. Basically meeting my EMS teacher is the most wonderful thing that has ever happened to me.





Namibian and Scottish counterparts visit the WCCC for a learning exchange programme

The international delegation have agreed that one of the 'world-leading' practices of the Western Cape Commissioner for Children is the connectedness and engagement with children in the communities where they live.

of Namibia recently visited the WCCC for a learning exchange programme aimed to build closer linkages between our office and these international institutions. It also aimed for them to experience the nature of our child participation portfolio.

learn lessons from the global north and south. They understood the value of the structure of children and young people in the office - consisting of Child Government Monitors, Advisory Council, Mentors, Alumni, Interns and Volunteers.

Part of the programme was hosted in Hessequa and Bitou Municipality where the Commissioner conducted feedback workshops with the children who participated in Community Rights Workshops in 2021.

The Commissioner for Children and Young People in Scotland and the staff of the Ombudsman

The three institutions share similar mandates and the learning exchange offered a unique opportunity to create synergy and

During the visit they witnessed our work during children's consultations at schools and our community child rights workshops.

They were also very impressed that Child Government Monitors are learning to monitor public budgets from a child rights approach.

Commissioner for Children and Young People of Scotland Bruce Adamson in a Child Rights Workshop in Hanover Park



Bruce Adamson and Ingrid Husselman from Ombudsman of Namibia with City of Cape Town Council Speaker Alderman Felicity Purchase



Children's Advocate in Namibia Heather Harker with Albertinia High School learners where the Commissioner conducted an RCL consultation.



Bruce Adamson, Gina Wilson, Ingrid Husselman and Heather Harker with our CGMs/Mentors and Advisors .



Children want schools to expedite the process of creating transformation plans for inclusivity

Children in the province are urging schools to expedite the process of creating transformation plans for inclusivity. They want to ensure that the learning environment is free from discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity, expression, or sex characteristics. This call for inclusivity was made in a joint submission by the WCCC, Equal Education Law Centre, and Triangle Project in response to the guidelines published by the Department of Basic Education regarding socio-educational inclusion of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) in schools.

These guidelines address important aspects such as the inclusion of sexually and gender diverse children in school admission, curriculum, co-curricular programs, uniforms, and ablution facilities. This submission marks the third policy/practice reform submission by the CGMs this year, following submissions to the Speaker of Provincial Parliament and the South African Human Rights Commission.

In their submissions, the children expressed concerns about schools not being safe for queer learners and highlighted unprofessional behaviour by teachers towards them. They mentioned that this behaviour leads to queer learners fearing coming out due to potential rejection and discrimination. The children emphasised the need for mental health counseling support in schools, fair and inclusive codes of conduct, and transformation plans for inclusivity led by school management.

The involvement of children in decision-making processes is a key focus for the Western Cape

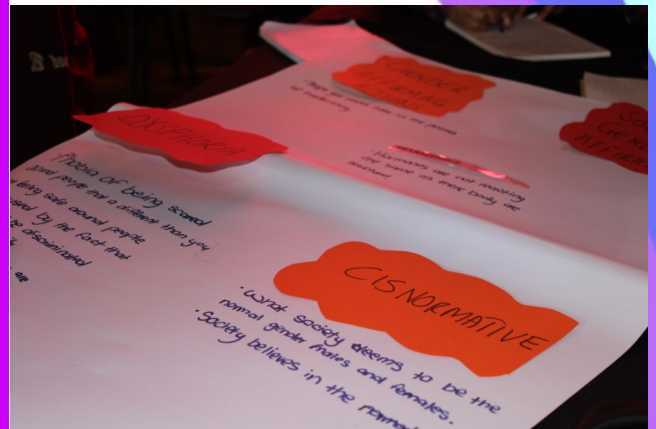
Commissioner for Children's (WCCC) office, and this submission is seen as another milestone in including children in decisions that affect them. The children's inputs were based on the five core issues included in the draft guidelines.

The children called for a dedicated curriculum that focuses on diverse learners, screenings and interventions during educator recruitments to prevent the hiring of homophobic and transphobic educators, and the importance of obtaining consent before using LGBTQI learners as examples in class.

Regarding language and terminology, the children emphasized the importance of schools establishing learners' preferred pronouns and identity markers, avoiding gender divisions among learners, and not using deadnames. They also called for inclusive policies and guidelines regarding school uniforms and dress codes, including the use of gender-neutral uniforms that allow individual expression within the school's color scheme and not limiting hairstyle or clothing choices based on gender.

In terms of school facilities, the children stressed the need for all facilities to be safe for learners to use. They suggested the inclusion of male, female, and gender-neutral toilets to accommodate all learners' preferences.

Regarding decision-making and support, the children highlighted the need for educator training and sensitization on LGBTQI-affirming education, school environments that enable open discussions about LGBTQI individuals, dedicated school committees for representation on SO-CIESC-related matters, and the importance of non-judgmental educators who seek to be allies.





The Commissioner responded to a request from **Riebeek Street Primary** in **Belhar** to conduct an awareness input on the **mandate of the Commissioner for Children and child rights**. More than 1200 enthusiastic learners from grades R to 7 participated in the question and answer session and won some cool branded items.



Judicial Head and Magistrate in the **Family Courts** in **Strand** Mrs. Da Silva hosted us in May to witness the inner workings of the court system and accompany her on a school visit. Then we moved to a special independent **primary school** running as an NGO, that caters especially for children on the **margins** - children who have lived on the **street**, are in alternative care, and were traumatised in early childhood. The school was affected by flooding in the past few days.

The Commissioner **talked and listened** to each age group of learners to understand whether the school is a positive place for them.



The WCCC attended a **Youth Day** event hosted by the Department of Community Safety and Police Oversight for various high schools in the **Delft** area as part of its Youth Month Programme. High School **learners** from grades 11 and 12 from eight different high schools within the community of Delft attended the event. The programme focused **on Gender Based Violence (GBV)** and dealing with **personal trauma** in order to bring hope to youth that have been victims of **physical or sexual violence**.

We shared the **mandate** of the Children's Commissioner. Of the six high schools present, four reported to the Commissioner that **corporal punishment** was still practiced at their schools. This information will be escalated to management of Western Cape Education Department.



The Commissioner drove 965 Km to **engage** with 52 **learners** in the **Matzikama Municipality** where she conducted **consultations** with **RCL** at **Hoërskool Vredendal** and **Hoërskool Nuwerus**. During the consultation the Commissioner learnt about the **relationship** between the RCL and adults at school. We then drove out of town and between the vineyards to spend time with Grade 7 learners at **Kleinrivier Primêr** to kickstart our **Child Happiness Project**. It was great to hear that family, sport and school makes children happy, while load shedding makes them unhappy.

