



Commissioner for Children

IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Sarah Roberts formally assumes office as the new and second Western Cape Commissioner for Children

Today marks a significant milestone for the protection and promotion of children's rights in the Western Cape, as Sarah Roberts officially assumes office as the province's second Commissioner for Children. Roberts succeeds Christina Nomdo, the inaugural Commissioner, and will serve a five-year term.

The Western Cape Commissioner for Children is an independent governance institution mandated to protect and promote the rights, needs and interests of children in the Western Cape province by working with the departments of Education, Health, Social Development, as well as Cultural Affairs and Sport. The Commissioner for Children reports to Provincial Parliament on activities, functions and progress on objectives. The institution plays a vital role in amplifying children's perspectives, influencing policy decisions, and holding the government accountable for the services provided to children in the province.

Roberts brings more than three decades of experience in the legal field. For the past 14 years, she served as Acting Magistrate in the Family and Children's Court at the Blue Downs Magistrates' Courts. In this role, she worked daily with legislation central to children's wellbeing, including the Children's Act, Maintenance Act, Child Justice Act, Domestic Violence Act, Births and Deaths Registration Act, and the Schools Act, applying these laws to protect the rights of children and families.

Her work as a Magistrate also involved close collaboration with partners critical to children's welfare, such as the Department of Social Development, Child Protection Organisations, the Department of Education, the National Prosecuting Authority, the Office of the Family Advocate, Legal Aid South Africa, and the South African Police Service. In addition, she has engaged with organisations supporting refugees and unaccompanied minors, including the UCT Refugee Centre and the Scalabrini Centre, contributing to conferences in Cape Town in both 2023 and 2024.

About the Western Cape Commissioner for Children: The Western Cape Commissioner for Children is an independent governance institution in the Western Cape. The Commissioner is mandated to protect and promote the rights, needs and interests of children in the province by working with the departments of Education, Health, and Social Development, as well as Cultural Affairs and Sport. The Commissioner for Children reports to the Provincial Parliament on activities, functions and progress on objectives.

As the only Children's Court Magistrate serving the Kuils River/Blue Downs jurisdiction, Roberts has long been a trusted advocate for children in some of the province's most vulnerable communities. She now brings this same commitment, expertise, and compassion to her role as Commissioner for Children.

Roberts said with this new responsibility, she sees a valuable opportunity to create a meaningful impact on the lives of children in the Western Cape. She emphasised her enthusiasm for collaborating with children and engaging various stakeholders within their communities

"Over the years, I met the most amazing and talented children. But hearing and seeing the neglect and abuse they suffer day after day made me realise that the voice of the child is not always heard and that listening and protecting them must start with me. I want to explore community-based platforms that enable children in that specific community to be heard and address their issues," she said.

Having served as a Children's Magistrate, Roberts said she had identified several critical issues impacting the well-being of children in the Western Cape, as brought before the court.

"These challenges, however, extend beyond the purview of the four social sector departments overseen by the Western Cape Commissioner for Children. This recognition underscores the importance of cultivating and strengthening strategic relationships with these additional departments and other organisations providing services to children to ensure a comprehensive and collaborative approach to child welfare," Roberts said.

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