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 NACCCW

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHILD CARE WORKERS

Professional Board of Child and Youth Care (PBCYC) Developments

Merle Allsopp

The NACCW has received many calls from child and youth care workers across our country this year asking what is happening with the Professional Board for Child and Youth Care Work (PBCYC), and it is very pleasing to see that our sector is so engaged with the important process of registering with our statutory regulatory body.

We can be proud of the fact that so many of our sector – the last we heard was over 7000 – have voluntarily put their names forward to be counted into the registration data base. We have fought for this recognition consistently over the two decades of South Africa's democracy, and the fact that so many of our people have responded to the call to register with such enthusiasm, demonstrates that our advocacy efforts have indeed reflected the voice of the field. At many points over this extended period our admonition that child and youth care workers want to be registered have been greeted with skepticism. Many simply did not believe that child and youth care work was ready to be recognized as a profession. But the overwhelming response by the child and youth care sector to the call for registration has proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that statutory regulation was what the field had been waiting for.

Now, registration is compulsory if one is to practice as a child and youth care worker in any setting, residential or community. Indeed the Deputy Minister of Social Development, Hendrietta Bogopane-Zulu when opening a new child and youth care centre recently, made it very clear that registration with the South African Council for Social Service Professions was a requirement and not an option for child and youth care workers. So it remains our collective responsibility to encourage all of our colleagues who have not yet registered to do so.

It is also our responsibility to ensure that people reregister in this the second year of statutory regulation.

But in the light of this wonderfully enthusiastic beginning to the era of professional child and youth care work it seems that the office of the Council is not making it easy for registrations and reregistration is to take place. Confusing messages have been sent out to members, and it is very hard to know what to do to register when it is not easy to get through to Council on the phone. Indeed, some colleagues indicated that they recently drove all the way from Kimberley to Pretoria in order to sort out their registration particulars – only to return without having made any progress. This is a very disappointing state of affairs. However, we must be aware that as of August 2015, the term of the Professional Board for Child and Youth Care came to an end, and that as of November 2015 the term of the Council came to an end. This means that the Council's secretariat, the office, is currently functioning without direct oversight from its governing body. This is not an irregular situation in respect of the Social Service Professions Act which allows for the termination of the functioning of both of these bodies before elections for the new bodies have taken place. This gives rise to a situation where, if the elections take a long time to be completed, an extended period of time can elapse before the inauguration of the next Council and Professional Board.

As it turns out, this is not an ideal situation, and is a direct result of the way in which the Act is written. I remember being part of the consultation processes that took place when the Act was drawn up, and at that time it was not envisaged that this would be a problem. But in the implementation of an Act one often experiences the glitches that were not apparent in the crafting stage. Clearly it is not ideal to have our Council for Social Service Professions and our Professional Board for Child and Youth Care – as well as our Professional Board for Social Work – non-functional for an extended period of time.

This issue is one of the many issues that the child and youth care field needs to advocate to have changed. Although we

have reached a significant goal in achieving statutory regulation, it is our duty to continue to advocate for refinements that will render the statutory regulation process as effective as possible in promoting the child and youth care profession. It is anticipated that there will be a new Social Service Professions Bill developed over the coming few years, and child and youth care workers will need to input into this proposed legislation to ensure that it works as well as possible, and that we avoid a situation where we do not have our Professional Board for Child and Youth Care, providing oversight and directing the process of regulation.

At the time of going to print the inauguration date for both the Council and the two boards was set for the 21st June, and the five year term of office for the bodies will begin at that point.

There is much to be done by the PBCYC in this term of office. For those who have not received the communication from the Registrar of the SACSSP, the following six people have been elected to the Professional Board for Child and Youth Care. They are as follows: Dr Lesiba Molepo, Ms. Zeni Thumbadoo, Ms. Pat Maquina, Mr Lucky-Boy Jacobs, Mr Fransisco Cornelius, and Ms. Merle Allsopp. The following child and youth care workers have been elected to serve on the Council for Social Service Professions: Rev Barry Lodge, Mr Alfred Harris and Mr Donald Ngonyama. We are yet to be appraised of who it is that the Minister for Social Development Honorable Minister Bathebile Dlamini has appointed to serve on the PBCYC or on Council, but trust that the Minister will have made wise decisions.

The time of waiting is now over. The PBCYC is to begin its work again, and we look forward to steady progress for the child and youth care field coming about in this coming term of office. We have committed and energetic child and youth care workers representing our field. I am sure you will join me in wishing them well for a productive term of office where the dignity, integrity and strength of child and youth care work are actively promoted. █

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