



Paralegals back on track

The Western Cape Paralegal Association is back on track after experiencing a few hick-ups towards the middle of last year. According to Mr Ben van Rooy, the chairperson, a meeting was held in Clanwilliam in December where a new committee was elected and the members committed themselves to serve the association and the community.

The association is governed and managed by the following committee:

1. Chairperson: Mr Ben van Rooy (Co-ordinator: Clanwilliam Paralegal Advice Centre)
2. Vice-chairperson: Oscar Kumalo (Co-ordinator: Mossel Bay Advice Office)
3. Secretary: Ms Anna Markus (Co-ordinator: Malmesbury Advice Office)
4. Assistant secretary: Mr Brian Alcock (Co-ordinator: Athlone Advice Office)
5. Treasurer: Ms Lucille February (Bonteheuwel Advice Office)

According to Mr van Rooy, the main drive of the association, that was initiated in late 2006 and launched in May 2007, is to represent the rights and interest of individual paralegals and to bring justice to the previously disadvantaged communities that they represent. The association also plays an integral role in enhancing access to justice, developing capacity and increasing awareness. They are also responsible for the building and sustaining of offices that are currently without resources and funds, assisting co-

ordinators and workers with governance and operational requirements of the offices and building a culture of human rights between workers and the Management Committees.

Some of the issues raised at a meeting of the Western Cape Paralegal Association held in Mossel Bay on 5 April were the following:

1. The chairperson needed feedback on the surveys distributed to the offices in order to compile a proposal for possible funders.
2. Representatives were requested to identify which offices were active and which were not active.
3. The treasurer will identify cut-off dates for the payment of membership fees. The membership fees will be R240 for the year 2009.
4. The association expressed its gratitude towards the OCP for the grant of R20 000.
5. The Management will visit the offices in the various regions during 5 to 9 May 2008.
6. The next meeting will take place between 5 and 9 May 2008.
7. The executive meeting with regional representatives will take place in Uniondale on 7 June 2008.
8. A general meeting with all paralegals will take place on 4 and 5 July 2008.

Association boosts development and human rights

Message from Mr David Maans, chairperson of the Western Cape Advice Office Association (WCAOA):

Community-based Advice Offices in the geo-political province of the Western Cape, representing a broad range of interests, have over a long period worked together in a broad alliance concerning their common interest in human, development and socio-economic rights, in particular access to justice.

Due to the decrease in donor funding available to the sector and the increase in the demand in South Africa for organised and structured support for the development of a human rights culture and the delivery of a comprehensive, quality paralegal service, it was decided by delegates attending a World Consumer Rights Day conference, hosted by the Office of the Consumer Protector, that a steering committee should be elected to investigate the possibilities of a representative body comprising of management committee members.

The first ad-hoc committee failed dismally and a year later, at Wilderness, on 15 March 2005, another interim structure was elected by delegates. With the financial, administrative and logistical support from the OCP to the ad hoc committee, led by David Maans as Convenor, the committee could execute their mandate.

After intense meetings and workshops the association was officially launched in Beaufort West with about 53 advice offices within the geo-political province of the Western Cape in attendance.

The Committee elected was Chairman: David Maans (Beaufort West), Deputy: Rev Tommy Solomons (Elsies River), Secretary: Saania Larney (Heideveld), Deputy: Willemien Floris (West Coast), Treasurer: Deon Prinsloo (Mosselbay), Central Karoo: G. Lottering, Eden: Nicky Valentyn,

Overberg: Pastor Kroukamp, Metro: Pastor Santi Malgas, West Coast: Adelle de Bruyn.

The WCAOA conduct its activities and collect contributions on a provincial basis and operate as a provincial body throughout the geo-political province of the Western Cape.

Our Vision

Henceforth, our vision is a democratic South Africa, within which human rights and dignity, equality and the rule of law are accessible, respected and upheld within the context of a vibrant society.

Disadvantaged communities and in particular vulnerable and marginalised groups will experience the reality of socio-economic rights through empowerment and development.

Our Mission

Our Mission is to manage and develop the capacity of the association and its affiliates in order to improve the quality of service delivery and legal advice in their respective communities.

The association's work is guided by principles of democracy, development, self reliance, empowerment and justice.

Our Objectives are:

To represent our affiliates on all policy matters with government, donors, civil society and other agencies that seek to promote and protect the rights of civil society, particularly the poor and marginalised.

To build a culture of human rights at local, regional, provincial and national level.

To ensure that local, provincial and national government fulfils its human rights duties to communities and individuals.

To lobby government at all levels, as well as other stakeholders, to recognise the work of the association's affiliates in changing the poverty status of a majority of people, particularly in farming, rural, semi urban and township communities and the various employment sectors.

We aim to reach our objectives by virtue of:

Case handling, consumer; labour; justice; safety and security; land and housing; social development related issues. Human Rights awareness and education. Advocacy and lobbying. Networking and research.

Since its inception in 2006, the WCAOA employs a co-ordinator and had its provincial office at the Multi purpose in Elsies River. Currently the Office of the Consumer Protector is funding the operational budget of the WCAOA as well as 27 individual advice offices.

We also managed to source funding from a Danish funder organisation called, South Africa contact. This project is called 'Youth at Risk' and is aimed at the youth of the Cape Flats. Ten Advice Offices are involved in this three year project and ten youth's will be trained as youth development workers and will receive a stipend of R1000 per month whilst in the project.

The co-ordinator of this project is Saania Larney.

We recently had our 2nd Annual General Meeting at the University of the Western Cape, with Mr Ashley Searle from the Office of the Consumer Protector as the keynote speaker.

OCP
Office of the Consumer Protector

WCAOA
Western Cape Advice Office Association

AO
Advice Office

PGWC
Provincial Government of the Western Cape



ADVICE OFFICE TODAY

Advice Office Today is a newsletter focused on the Advice Offices in the Western Cape, funded by the Office of the Consumer Protector.

May 2008

Exciting developments at OCP

A message from Mr Ashley Searle, Director: Office of the Consumer Protector, Department of Economic Development and Tourism:



A warm welcome to all advice office staff and management committee members to the very first edition of our newsletter, Advice Office Today! We at the OCP are excited about this latest development especially since it will contribute to improving communication between us and the advice offices. The newsletter will also enable us to exchange ideas on a number of issues of common importance and furthermore provide you with a voice to raise issues and ideas with us.

The past financial year has truly been a hectic but rewarding one for us at the OCP. In the year that has passed we have seen a number of exciting developments at the OCP. One of these developments was the appointment of a number of new staff members within the OCP. As you know I was one of these appointments together with the following officials: Martie Carstens, Glynis Appels, Andile Gweshu, Albert Nkomo and Shumeeze Jones.

The increase in the OCP's staff complement has enabled us to embark on some ambitious projects especially in the arena of marketing and consumer education. We are proud of the fact that we have conducted a record number of consumer education and marketing campaigns in 2007-2008. The vast majority of these campaigns have been focused in areas and regions where the need for consumer education was most prevalent. We will continue to enhance this area of our service and will in this year be relying on the support and assistance of advice offices during our education and marketing campaigns. Our complaints management unit has, as usual, continued its trend of dealing with more complaints than the previous year. Not only has the numbers of complaints increased but also the percentage of complaints successfully resolved by the dedicated team within complaints management. I am sincerely grateful to all the staff within the OCP for contributing towards the success of all of our projects.

I am also especially grateful towards each and every advice office that is supported by our office. I have had first hand experience of the levels of commitment and dedication of advice office staff and management committee members during my first few months at the OCP. One of the events during which this commitment shone through was the World Consumer Rights Day celebrations that took place on 15 March 2008. The majority of these events were successful and the objective of taking the event to our communities was achieved. Yes, there were a few glitches and teething problems but on the whole most events were ones that we

could be proud of. The painstaking planning, organising, arranging and mobilising by those involved was sincerely appreciated by us at the OCP. We will shortly be discussing the various options for the 2009 World Consumer Rights Day event and hope that you will provide us with your ideas on this topic so that we have an even better event next time round. This newsletter can serve as the mechanism whereby we receive your feedback and ideas on this topic so feel free to contact our editor Martie Carstens. Once again a big thank you to all advice office staff and management committee members for your contributions over the past year. Long may it continue!

One of the other important initiatives for this year relates to our much anticipated Consumer Tribunal. This year WILL also see the operationalisation of the Tribunal and we anticipate that the first hearings will be held towards September-October. We have taken the first steps in establishing the Tribunal and notices calling for nominations for Tribunal members will be published towards the end of May 2008. Please look out for these notices and encourage any suitable candidate to apply.

I also have to express my thanks to the Executive Management team of the Western Cape Advice Office Association and the Paralegal Association. The past year has seen both institutions finalise certain organisational matters and I am certain that this year we will see both institutions knuckle down to meeting the objectives they have set. The co-operation between the OCP and these institutions will be enhanced during this year and together we will continue to strengthen the advice office programme. We have some interesting projects planned and we will liaise with both institutions in this regard.

We at the OCP are looking forward to the new projects for this year as we believe that it will strengthen and enhance an already well oiled machine. I am certain that we can rely on your co-operation and assistance in the months to come and together we will prove that Batho Pele and service delivery are not merely catch phrases but actual standards which we operate by and enforce.

First newsletter for Advice Offices

Welcome to the first edition of *Advice Office Today*, a newsletter from the Office of the Consumer Protector (OCP), Western Cape Department of Economic Development and Tourism, aimed at the Advice Offices in the province.

The main objective of this newsletter is to facilitate communication between the OCP, the Advice Offices, the Western Cape Association of Advice Offices (WCAOA) and other roleplayers, such as the Western Cape Paralegal Association.

The content will include educational material, examples of case studies, operational information and other important information that needs to be communicated to the AO's. But we also see it as a two-way communication medium. Representatives of AO's are encouraged to write to us. You are welcome to send suggestions on the content

and any information that you want to share with the rest of the AO's.

The WCAOA and other associations will also use the newsletter as a tool to communicate important dates and other information.

The first edition will be in English, but we are open to any other suggestions.

We plan to issue six editions of this newsletter during the current financial year. Kindly note the deadlines for copy to reach the OCP.

Deadlines for copy to reach OCP
17 June, 18 August, 20 October, 17 November 2008 and 9 February 2009.

The first edition focuses on the World Consumer Rights Day celebrations, but we need you to fill that space in the next issue with news from the

AO's. Talking about WCRD, please send us your comment on the way that we have celebrated it this year and suggestions on how to celebrate it next year.

You are welcome to contact me directly with any queries or suggestions. The success of this newsletter depends on the co-operation of all involved in consumer advice.

I am looking forward to hear from the AO's. Let us show the world what the value of our offices in the province is.

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World Consumer Rights Day celebrated

Today it is more important than ever to know what your rights as a consumer are and how to enforce it. The Western Cape Department of Economic Development and Tourism's Office of the Consumer Protector (OCP) celebrated World Consumer Rights Day on the 15th of March by hosting six events in various communities in the province. World Consumer Rights Day is celebrated annually in solidarity with consumer movements internationally.

This year the focus of the OCP was on creating awareness amongst the communities of the Western Cape of their rights as consumers. The 27 consumer Advice Offices funded by the department were all involved in the celebrations.

All the events identified with the National Consumer Forum's theme for World Consumer Rights Day, namely "Consumer Rights and the fight against Poverty".

The focus of the events was on consumer protection, but with enough entertainment to make it an enjoyable day. Events took place in George, Ashton, Riversdale, Vredenburg, Beaufort West and in the Metropole.

In our society, consumers are overloaded with excessive marketing of goods and services and need the necessary skills to make rational decisions. Available resources, personal values and possible alternatives are some of the aspects to consider when making a decision to purchase

goods or services.

Our citizens are all consumers in some way or another. Knowing your rights and responsibilities as a consumer, is one of the important aspects in the fight against poverty. It happens just too often that the poorest consumers are the ones getting the raw deal in scams and quick fix loan offers.

All of us need to manage whatever is within our disposal income more efficiently. The most vulnerable amongst us especially need to be empowered and know how to stand up for their rights as consumers. Consumers who are able to judge and make competent decisions about their financial transactions will contribute to economic development and the fight against poverty.

Louville, Vredenburg



The WCRD event organised by the Advice Offices in the West Coast took place in Louville, Vredenburg. Attending the event were, from left, Anna Markus, Co-ordinator: Malmesbury Advice Office, Reeva Welman, Deputy Director: Complaints Management, OCP, Dawn William, Chairperson: Malmesbury Advice Office, Lillian Zimri, Secretary: Clanwilliam Advice Office and Ben van Rooy, Co-ordinator: Clanwilliam Advice Office.



Students from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology assisted with the monitoring of the event at Louville.

Beaufort West



The WCRD at Beaufort West had a high attendance and was very well organised. There was enough opportunity for consumer education and it was also an enjoyable event with entertainment and something to eat for all. They also had a fruitful question and answer session. Representatives of the Beaufort West, Laingsburg and Prince Albert Advice Offices with officials from the OCP were amongst those who made a success of the day.



Dancers entertained the crowd at the WCRD celebrations in Beaufort West.



Bongeka Mbambo (left) and Andile Gweshu (right) from the OCP informed the consumers at the Beaufort West event about their rights.

Riversdale



Raymond Heunis (left), from the MPCC, Mary-Ann Fransman, from the OCP and Koos Saayman, co-ordinator: Riversdal AO at the event in Riversdale. Unfortunately the venue had to be changed from the stadium to an indoor venue due to the unexpected rain. But the OCP staff reported that it was still well attended and that all enjoyed the event and, of course, the nice food!



Mary-Ann Fransman, from the OCP, took questions from the floor at the WCRD event in Riversdale. Eden Fm's live broadcast from the event made it a very special occasion.

Metro region celebrated at Vangate Mall

The WCRD event for the Metro advice offices was held at Vangate Mall. The OCP, as well as the respective advice offices within the Metro region, were marketed through the celebration of the day's events. The key note speakers were Mr Imeraam Mukkadam, from the Rights for Food campaign, who spoke about the issue of price fixing and Mr Willie Simmers, from the Mitchell's Plain advice office, who informed consumers about saving electricity. Glynis Appels, from the OCP, spoke about the role of the OCP.



The rest of the program was filled with a variety of artists. Throughout the morning the MC announced the role of the OCP office and informed consumers about the toll free number. After the event all advice office staff and OCP staff enjoyed lunch together.

The OCP staff who attended the event reported the following after the event:

“The event was well planned and the dedication and commitment of the advice office staff in planning and making the event a success was appreciated.”

“The event was preceded by intense marketing of the OCP and the Advice Office in the Mall, two days before. The support of family members of Management and Co-ordinators was evident.”

Ashton



The day was celebrated in a festive way in Ashton. A band and drummers marched through the streets and gathered the community as far as they went. They all ended up in the town's civic hall where the awareness talks about consumer rights continued. Elroy Matthys (wearing the black T-shirt), co-ordinator of the Montagu Advice Office and his helpers made sure that everything ran smoothly.



Anwar Swartz (left) and Connie Smit, consumer advisers from the OCP in Cape Town, visited the community of Ashton on WCRD to inform them about their rights as consumers.

George



As part of the WCRD celebrations the OCP visited Vlakteplaas in the Oudtshoorn district to raise awareness about consumer rights.



Manala Botolo, from the National Credit Regulator, talking to Cosatu shop stewards at the workshop in George.



The WCRD celebration in George was well attended and the informal businesses and SMME's of the region also took part.