



Due dates for reports

Submission of monthly reports on a stipulated date is very important to the Office of the Consumer Protector (OCP) so as to ensure expeditious processing of payment to Advice Offices. Any delay in submission of these reports leads to late payment which subsequently affects your operations. The OCP needs the report and associated documents for onward transmission to our Finance Directorate which handles all the payments for the department. We therefore request that priority be given to the preparation and subsequent submission of these reports on stipulated dates as stated below. The due dates are as follows:

Month	Due date
August	18 August 2008
September	15 September 2008
October	20 October 2008
November	17 November 2008
December	1 December 2008
January	19 January 2009
February	16 February 2009
March	16 March 2009

Send the monthly reports to:

Mary-Ann Fransman
Office of the Consumer Protector
Ground floor, Waldorf Building, 80 St George's Mall, Cape Town, 8001
PO Box 979, Cape Town, 8000
mafransman@pgwc.gov.za
Phone: 021 483 9229
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What to include in the monthly report

The monthly reports that the Advice Offices submit to the Office of the Consumer Protector are vital in the complaints management process. The OCP needs it to keep record of complaints received and to identify possible trends that should be addressed. The reports can also serve as a tool to motivate funding for the Advice Offices.

In order to submit a complete report, Advice Offices should include the following:

1. Statistics sheets for new consumer related complaints and their current status / *Statistieke vir nuwe verbruikersklagtes ontvang en die huidige stand.*
2. Complaint registration forms / *Klagteregistrasievorms (oorspronklike moet gepos word, indien verslag gefaks was)*

3. Proof of expenses (legible) incurred, disbursements made in dealing with consumer related complaints. Receipts of payments must also be sent as proof / *Bewyse van uitgawes, dmv fakture en kwitansies as bewys van betaling.*
4. All original documents, if sent by fax, must be posted within the same week of reporting / *Alle oorspronklike dokumentasie moet gepos word gedurende die periode van verslag, al is dit gefaks.*

New consumer related complaints received after the monthly cut-off dates are to be included in the following month's report/ *Alle nuwe verbruikersverwante klagtes wat na die afsluitingsdatum ontvang word, moet by die volgende maandverslag ingesluit word.*

Erf numbers?

Have you submitted the erf number of your Advice Office to Mary-Ann Fransman at the OCP. If not, please fax it to 021-483 5872.



The OCP and the Advice Office in Clanwilliam manned an exhibition stall at the Cederberg Festival. Mr Ben van Rooy attended to consumers' queries.

Site visits to paralegal offices

The Paralegal Association reported as follows on the site visits that they undertook:

The Western Cape Paralegal Association embarked on a road trip recently with the aim of conducting site visits at various offices across the province. The intention of the site visits was to assess what the existing infrastructure at offices was, what needs existed, what training was required and how the Association could be of assistance to staff. The visit of the Association's officials was met with enthusiasm and open-heartedness by the large majority of Advice Offices. The initiative was a huge success as it provided the Association with an understanding of what important issues needed to be addressed from an organizational perspective. It also provided the Association with an opportunity to meet, interact and liaise with Paralegal Association members and clarify certain aspects regarding the role of the Association. The visits also enabled the Association to obtain the following data so as to compile a database of Advice offices:

Physical addresses of offices, place of business, structural organograms, functionality of management, existence of policies (constitution, worker contracts, financial

policies, NPO status, working conditions, funding arrangements. The primary objective was to determine how the offices operated in terms of the following:

- The level that offices operate on (standardization of work)
- Workers in the workplace
- Relationships between workers/ management
- Introduction of the Executive Committee
- Introduction of our Labour representative, Mr Alcock
- Affiliation of workers to the structure

Day 1: Our journey started in Athlone, where we were met by the office staff. Mitchell's Plain, Guguletu, Heideveld, Bonteheuwel and Elsie's River followed. Our journey at the end of that day took us to Vredendal where we slept over the night. Offices that could not be visited due to no contact were Hout Bay, Langa and Khayelitsha. Offices still to be visited in the Metro area are Atlantis, the above mentioned offices and the newly OCP funded office, Lavender Hill.

Day 2: We visited Vredendal, Klaver, Clanwilliam, Graafwater, Saldanha, Malmesbury, Porterville,

Ceres and Worcester, where we slept over for the evening on the second day. We still need to visit the Citrusdal Office. Mr Alcock had to leave on the second day due to prior commitments.

Day 3: We visited Montagu, Swellendam, Heidelberg, Riversdale, Albertinia, Mossel Bay and made our journey to Oudshoorn en route to Dusseldorp, where accommodation had been arranged.

Day 4: On the fourth day we visited Beaufort West, Nelspoort, Ubuntu, N2 South Rural and made our way back to Mossel Bay where accommodation had been booked.

Day 5: We left Mossel Bay at 10:00 in the morning, but unfortunately our schedule clashed with an OCP workshop. We could not visit the remaining offices on our schedule, namely Rivieronderend, Caledon, Cape Agulhas and Botrivier due to a number of reasons.

'We thank the Almighty Lord God that has carried us safely through our journey as no journey undertaken went without prayer.'

Issued by:
Office of the Consumer Protector,
Department of Economic Development and Tourism
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Abbreviations
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.

September 2008

WCAOA project targets the youth

Youth Day was special this year in the Cape Flats with the launch of the WCAOA's Youth at Risk project on 16 June at the Heideveld Sports Complex. About 400 guests attended a banquet to launch the project and the event closed with youth artists performing to a crowd of about 2000 people.

The Youth at Risk project, funded by the SYDAFRICA KONTAKT in Denmark, will target the youth between the ages of 14 and 25 years. The focus will be on school drop-outs, lack of recreation, lack of education, unemployment, domestic violence, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, crime, gangsterism, teenage pregnancies, HIV/Aids and access to Justice.

Ms Saania Larney from the WCAOA met with SYDAFRICA KONTAKT in Denmark during April 2007, where they discussed the identification of organisations that could manage the funding secured for youths on the Cape Flats. That led to the involvement of the WCAOA and their membership base of about 40 Advice Offices that deal with youth issues on a daily basis. The idea was to formalise existing Youth Desks within the AO's with a designated Youth Development Paralegal, with the emphasis on education, training and development.

The WCAOA will co-ordinate this R1,6 million project, with Ms Larney, as Youth Co-ordinator, managing it.

The Advice Offices that will be targeted include Atlantis, Athlone, Bonteheuwel, Elsie's River, Gugulethu, Houtbay, Heideveld, Khayelitsha, Langa and Mitchell's Plain. Delft, Hanover Park, Manenberg, Steenberg and Retreat will also be involved.

According to Ms Larney she faces the following challenges:

- Building youths as active leaders within local communities, who advocate and lobby for the betterment of the Youth Agenda.
- Securing sustainable funding for the project.
- Establishing Advice Offices in all the identified areas.

- Securing funding to broaden the project within the Western Cape.
- Securing funding to broaden the project to the rest of South Africa.
- Sustaining the project as a platform for youth in the development of activists.
- Securing commitment from all levels to drive the process.

The project may face challenges but it will begin to address the issue of capacitating and empowering our youth so that they can avoid the common pitfalls they face on a daily basis.



Staff members of the Advice Offices and the OCP attended a training session about the National Credit Act, held in Cape Town. From left were Mr Albert Nkomo, Consumer Advisor (OCP), Mr Nceba Mafongosi, Legal Advisor: National Credit Regulator, Ms Reeva Welman, Deputy Director: Complaints Management (OCP), Mr FM Ndlovu, from the office of the National Credit Regulator and Mr Andile Gweshu, Consumer Advisor (OCP).

Message from OCP

Welcome to the second edition of our newsletter! A big thank you to everyone that has responded to the newsletter. We have received plenty of positive feedback regarding the content and design of the newsletter and we will look at incorporating some of the ideas submitted to us.

Since our last edition we have been busy with implementing many of our projects and details of this will be given inside. It has also been a time when many of the offices have their AGM's and the OCP staff have been kept busy attending as many of them as possible. The AGM's provide us at the OCP with a good opportunity to meet the staff, previous management members and new management members. It also provides us with an opportunity to meet with the community and get a sense as to what consumer related issues need to be addressed. I do however wish to request that those offices that have not yet had an AGM to please make arrangements for this and to also extend a friendly invite to us at the OCP.

This second edition of the newsletter focuses on some operational issues that are of importance. It specifically contains some helpful information with regards to the monthly reporting requirements and procedures. We have included this detail so as to provide further

clarity on what our requirements are and thereby ensure that any delays in processing any of the payments is minimised.

We are facing interesting and exciting times within the arena of consumer protection especially with the pending Consumer Protection Bill which intends to offer enhanced protection to consumers. The Act, once it becomes operational, will certainly strengthen our role as a consumer protection authority but also provide a clear regulatory framework for us to work within. Also, we have moved full steam ahead with the legal formalities in order to establish the Consumer Affairs Tribunal for the Western Cape. This process will hopefully be completed soon and we hope to be able to introduce the Tribunal members to you in one of our next editions.

Thank you for your continued support, effort and hard work and I look forward to speaking to you soon!

Ashley Searle
Director: Office of the Consumer Protector
Department of Economic Development and Tourism



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Focus on Vredendal Advice Office

"The challenge when working with consumer issues is that people want to see immediate outcome, which is not always possible."

Advice Office Today would like to introduce the 28 Advice Offices funded by the OCP to the rest of the Advice Offices in the Western Cape. This will highlight how other offices are dealing with certain complaints and the nature of these complaints. For this edition the focus is on the Vredendal Advice Office.

1. What is the name of the office?

Vredendal Verbruikers- en Adviesdienste

Who is the co-ordinator?

Marthie Cloete from Klawer has been running the office for the last four and a half years. She re-opened the office again after it closed in 2002. She worked as a unionist before she got married. This explains her interest in helping people in claiming and using their rights.

Marthie is running the office with the support of Jan Filander, the office assistant, David Horn, from the HIV desk and Mario de Villiers, a volunteer.

2. Who serves on the Management Committee?

Mr K Coetzee	Chairperson
Mr L Henderson	Vice-chairperson
Mr P Boois	Treasurer
Mr D Isaacs	Additional member
Ms M de Villiers	Secretary
Ms K Kotze	Additional member
Ms M Carolus	Additional member

3. Since when has the office been in operation?

Since late 2003

4. Where is the office situated and who benefits from it?

The office is situated in the Vredendal North Community, but serves the entire Vredendal area. We also serve the rest of Matzikama that consists of seven towns, except Klawer, as they have an Advice Office.

5. What kind of consumer issues do you deal with on a daily basis?

We deal mostly with:

- Furniture related issues
- Policy related issues (funeral, etc.)
- Arrear accounts
- Loans

6. Any success story that you would like to share?

Our client, Mr P from Lutzville in Matzikama, bought a bicycle early in 2007 from Makro in Cape Town. From the second week the client experienced



The Advice Office in Vredendal is clearly branded from outside.



Lyndon Johnson, consumer educator from the Office of the Consumer Protector, conducted a workshop on consumer issues at the Vredendal Library on 24 April 2008. Grade 11 and 12's from the local school and members from the community attended the workshop. They discussed the eight consumer rights, rights and obligations in terms of the National Credit Act and how to plan a budget.



Members of the dedicated team at the Vredendal Advice Office, are from left Mr Jan Filander, Office Assistant, Ms Marthie Cloete, Co-ordinator and Mr Lionel Henderson, deputy chairperson.

problems with the bicycle. The bicycle was repaired twice, but still it continued giving problems. The client wrote several letters in his attempt to resolve the problem. Makro provided him with a second-hand bicycle while repairing his one. However, they never came back to him with his bicycle. After three months the client insisted on a new bicycle. He visited our office in March 2008 and was really desperate for help since he was struggling with this problem since 2007.

We phoned Makro and spoke to the manager. Within a week he came back to us with the good news that they would refund the client with the full amount of the original cost of the bicycle. The client was speechless when we returned with the good news. He said that it took him almost a year to solve the problem and we did in two weeks time.

7. Any challenges in your day-to-day functioning?

The challenge when working with consumer issues is that people want to see immediate outcome, which is not always possible. The clients don't like to hear that they can sometimes be wrong. When they don't pay their accounts they get into trouble and cannot understand why steps must be taken against them. They don't want to take responsibility for their actions and choices if it comes to their accounts.

8. What other issues, except consumer issues, are you focusing on?

Labour issues
Social issues
Farm worker issues
Educational programmes

9. How do you promote the service of the Advice Office in your community?

We do marketing on our local radio station twice a year. We also use the radio to market special programmes. We also distribute a newsletter twice a year in town.

10. Any future plans for the office?

The office is working on a project plan with the Scat funders to help unemployed women to start a business in arts and crafts. We also plan to do programmes with the people coming out of prison to help them to find their feet in the communities, especially in the farming communities. We have already approached the Department of Correctional Services with respect to this project.

During June Nersa hosted information sessions in Gugulethu, Elsies River and Heideveld. They invited other regulators namely ICASA, the Council for Medical Schemes and the National Credit Regulator to take part in the programme. The Advice Offices were responsible for the logistical arrangements.



Tirhani Khosa from Nersa talking to consumers at the workshop held in Elsies River.



Gugulethu Nkosi from the Council for Medical Schemes answered the consumers' queries at the workshop held in Heideveld.