

## **Social Service Practitioners Advocacy Network Newsletter**

### **Fourth Edition: 25 March 2010**

Paula Proudlock, Khululwa Seyisi, Lucy Jamieson, Bee Williams, and Prinslean Mahery  
Children's Institute, University of Cape Town

#### **Contents**

1. SA Council for Social Service Professionals elections update
2. Development of the Social Service Professions Policy
3. Update on the Social Service Professions draft Bill
4. Working Group meeting
5. Subscribe to the network

#### **1. SA COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL SERVICE PROFESSIONALS ELECTIONS UPDATE**

##### *Nominations*

The following individuals were nominated to serve on Council through the SSPAN network:

- Ashley Theron - Child Welfare SA
- Joan van Niekerk - Childline
- Thulane Gxubane - University of Cape Town
- Kathy Scott - NACCW
- Petra Burger - National Council for Persons with Physical Disabilities
- Bridget van der Merwe - Cape Town Association of Persons with Physical Disabilities
- Elwin Edgar Gallant - NACCW

Only two of these individuals have been successfully nominated and appear on the ballot paper: Gxubane Thulane Eric and Elwin Edgar Gallant. The rest of the nominations were rejected by Council for various procedural reasons ranging from the nomination fee being deposited in a wrong SACSSP account to photos not being received with the nomination form.

The final candidates nominated and eligible to be voted onto the Council (formally on the ballot paper) are:

- Thulane Eric Gxubane
- Elwin Edgar Gallant
- Jacques Herman Botes
- Alani Esterhuysen
- Winnie Grove
- Susanna Louw
- Laetitia Petersen
- Diaane Mamiki Ramabhakele
- Eleanor Ross

### *Voting*

The South African Council for Social Service Professionals (Council) published a notice of the elections for members to the Professional Board for Social Work (PBSW) and the Council. Elections were to be held from 01 February 2010 to 03 March 2010 by closed postal ballot.

Towards the end of February and early March we received information from SSPAN members that a number of social workers had not received their ballot papers. There were also reports of unregistered social workers receiving ballot papers, duplicated registration numbers and incomplete ballot forms. A number of organisations that employ or represent social workers (NACOSS, NAWONGO, SAASWIPP and the SAVF) have written letters of complaint about these irregularities to the Council and the Minister.

Council has published two election closing date extension notices on their website. The first notice extended the closing date from 03 March to 12 March 2010 and stated that, if social workers had not received their ballot papers yet, they must please send an email to [mail@sacssp.co.za](mailto:mail@sacssp.co.za). The second notice extended the date again to 29 March 2010, and an email was sent to some social worker organisations informing them of the further extension. A meeting between Department of Social Development (DSD), SACSSP and representatives from NAWONGO, NACOSS and SAASWIPP was held on 19 March 2010 regarding the handling of the elections. The following decision was taken:

1. The closing date for the elections remains **29 March 2010 at 16H00**.
2. The SACSSP is willing to courier ballot papers to organisations that will organise the social workers in their employment collectively to cast their votes. Due to the short period of time left, you are requested to inform the offices of the SACSSP immediately with the details of your social workers. Email [mail@sacssp.co.za](mailto:mail@sacssp.co.za) or fax 0866078563.

While the extension of the election period is welcomed, this step does not address the problem of evidence that the “voters roll” is not up to date and accurate. The SAVF wrote a letter to Council asking for an audit of the voters roll and the election process to address these problems and to ensure a fair election. This request has not yet been responded to adequately. The SAVF has requested that other organisations support their request for an administrative audit by sending letters directly to the Minister. We advise that if you send such a letter it needs to contain evidence of the irregularity - i.e. names, registration numbers and attempts made to get ballot papers in time.

We also suggest that you send your letter of complaint to the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). The person to contact at the IEC is Moses Pitso on (tel) 011 644 7451; (fax) 011 644 7448 (cell) 079 350 2638 or [pitsom@elections.org.za](mailto:pitsom@elections.org.za) (and please cc Brian Heuvel at the IEC head office on [heuvelb@elections.org.za](mailto:heuvelb@elections.org.za)). The IEC Gauteng office says that organisations need to lodge formal complaints with them in writing for the IEC to get more involved. They would prefer if it could be co-ordinated – i.e. it is best if the big representative bodies send them letters of complaint together with evidence of the irregularities.

## **2. DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOCIAL SERVICE PROFESSIONS POLICY**

The national Department of Social Development and the Council published an advert calling for an appointment of a service provider to develop the Social Service Professions Policy on behalf of the Department and the Council. The Constitution obliges the government to take steps to consult the public whenever it is drafting policy: Section 195 (1) (e) states, “People's needs must be responded to, and the public must be encouraged to participate in policy-making”. Recognising that members of the Social Service Practitioners Advocacy Network are deeply affected by this policy and have an interest in its development, members of the SSPAN Steering Committee wrote to the Department of Social Development in September 2009 to call for public consultation on this important policy. To date there has been no reply.

The terms of reference (TOR) for the service provider were published on the SACSSP website and they included:

### *3.1 Review the following:*

- *The current Social Service Professions Act, 110 of 1978, as amended, and identify areas that require policy changes.*
- *Documents that guided the process of the review of the Act and make a summary thereof.*
- *The Social Service Professions Bill to ensure that identified challenges/shortcomings are covered.*

### *3.2 Develop a Policy on the Social Service Professions and ensure that its provisions are responsive to the needs of all social service professionals and practitioners.*

*3.3 Interview/Consult relevant stakeholders in ensuring that all aspects of the social services policy are included.*

*3.4 Participate in National consultative workshops arranged by National Department of Social Development and the SACSSP.*

*3.5 Provide feedback to the National Department of Social Development and the SACSSP, responsible for the process after every deliverable.*

The closing date for submission of a proposal by a service provider was the 31 January 2010 and the project was to be completed by 31 March 2010. So despite the fact that the TOR calls for a policy that is “responsive to the needs of all social service professionals and practitioners” and that requires the service provider to consult stakeholders, the short timeframe would have given the service provider less than two months to develop the policy. It is questionable how consultation of all relevant stakeholders and civil society could be done in less than two months.

The Department informed us in mid-March that they had not yet finalised the service provider appointment; yet they were still expecting delivery of the first draft of the policy by the end of March. The Children's Institute is writing to the Minister asking her to ensure that the Department fulfils its constitutional obligation to consult with the public and that any such consultation is done within a reasonable timeframe that allows for meaningful participation.

### **3. UPDATE ON THE SOCIAL SERVICE PROFESSIONS BILL**

The national Department of Social Development presented their strategic plan to the Portfolio Committee for Social Development on the 02 March 2010. The strategic planning document says that the Social Service Professions Bill will be re-drafted in 2012 and tabled in Parliament in 2014. If this is accurate, it would mean that the Bill is “on ice” until the policy development process described above is successfully completed.

This change in the timeframe for the Bill means that SSPAN members have to re-strategise. The SSPAN Steering Committee recommends that, for 2010, SSPAN members should focus on:

- ensuring that the Council and PBSW elections are free and fair;
- actively participating in the policy development process (consultative workshops should be organised by the Department and SSPAN will be able to pay the travel costs of some SSPAN members to attend these workshops);

- engaging pro-actively with members of Parliament and executive officials who will be responsible for making the decisions on the policy and the Bill (e.g. taking them on tours to see different types of social service practitioners in action, inviting them to workshops and conferences where the issues will be discussed).

Please let us know if you have any ideas for site visits for decision-makers or upcoming workshops to which decision-makers could be invited.

#### **4. WORKING GROUP MEETING**

The Working Group meeting is planned for May. The purpose of the meeting was originally to discuss the Social Service Professions and Occupations Bill and to devise a strategy of ensuring that the occupational groups write submissions on the Bill. In light of the new developments, the Steering Committee will re-think how best to utilise the Working Group meeting space.

#### **5. SUBSCRIBE TO THE NETWORK**

If you subscribe to SSPAN you will receive policy briefs and progress updates. You will also become part of the broader network of organisations and individuals from civil society and government interested in participating in the making of the Social Service Professions Bill and the new policy development process.

A subscription form is attached to this email and also available on the Children's Institute website: [http://ci.org.za/depts/ci/plr/pdf/bills/SSPAN SUBSCRIBER FORM.doc](http://ci.org.za/depts/ci/plr/pdf/bills/SSPAN_SUBSCRIBER_FORM.doc)

If you like to continue receiving updates, please complete the form and return it to Bronwen Williams on fax 021 689 8330 or email to [bee.williams@uct.ac.za](mailto:bee.williams@uct.ac.za)

For more information on any of the above topics, please call Lucy Jamieson on 021 689 5404.