

# CMR NOORD / NORTH

T: (012) 460 9272/3/4 (Head Office) E: [cmr@cmrn.co.za](mailto:cmr@cmrn.co.za) F: (012) 460 8531

✉ PO Box 2037, Groenkloof, 0027 NPO Nr: 015-917

Chairman: Ds. D.H. Janse Van Rensburg | General Manager: Dr. R. Aylward

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## FROM THE OFFICE OF THE GENERAL MANAGER: CMR NORTH

REINSTATEMENT OF THE CPO STATUS OF CMR NORTH IS NOT ONLY A WIN FOR THE ORGANISATION, BUT ALSO FOR THE VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES AND CHILDREN IT SERVES

**6 July 2022, Pretoria. Yesterday, the High Court made an interim order in favour of CMR North, following its urgent application to have its child protection organisation (CPO) status reinstated due to the revocation by the Department of Social Development (DSD) on 8 June 2022. The reinstatement is done pending adjudication of the CMR North's review application. This positive outcome is not only a big win for CMR North, but also for the vulnerable communities where the organisation renders much-needed social work services.**

Social work is a specialised field that involves work aimed at improving the social functioning of individuals, families and communities. Non-statutory social work services typically include prevention and early prevention programmes for family preservation purposes, as well as poverty alleviation and community development programmes. Statutory social work services specifically apply to child abuse and neglect. According to the Children's Act, any person who suspects that a child may be abused or neglected must report it. These cases may be either reported to a police official or a social worker who works for a CPO such as CMR North, who may apply the administrative functions of the law to address it. A CPO is a non-profit social welfare organisation that is registered with and designated as such by the DSD as prescribed by the Children's Act.

To protect children against abuse and neglect, all the parties involved in these child protection services have to work closely together, including social workers and organisations, the South African Police Services (SAPS), the DSD and the Children's Court. To terminate partnerships that are instrumental in the rendering of these services, or that compromise the level of service that is rendered in any way, is an injustice to the very children, individuals and communities who depend on

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**VOS Community Centre**  
012 341 2318

**Child Centre**  
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**Derdepoort**  
012 800 4866  
**Valhalla**  
012 660 2366  
**Wonderboom**  
012 567 4551

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015 516 5115  
**Messina (Musina)**  
015 534 0245  
**Warmbad (Bela Bela)**  
014 736 2557



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these services. "For this reason, we are exceptionally grateful that our CPO status has been restored through an interim High Court order" says Dr Ronel Aylward, General Manager of CMR North.

CMR North has been in existence for more than 86 years, and its current designation as a Child Protection Organisation (CPO) has been renewed in 2020, which is valid for a five-year cycle, until 2025. Over the years, the CMR North has been a key partner to the DSD, to help ensure the effective execution of both non-statutory and statutory social work services in the designated areas within which it operates. In addition, CMR North has been frequently commended by the DSD for the good work that the organisation renders.

The revocation of CMR North's CPO status follows an unfounded statement by the DSD that the CMR North voluntarily withdrew its CPO status, as well as a recent procedural quality assurance audit that was conducted by the provincial DSD, which contains findings that were vague. To date, the DSD has not provided the CMR North with the necessary documents and records to support any allegations, despite CMR North's requests, and as such the organisation was not given a fair opportunity to discuss these findings with the DSD or to respond to them.

CMR North's track record however speaks for itself. Due to the typically volatile and traumatic nature of the environment in which social work is done, it is only natural that some complaints will be lodged from time to time. Over the past 25 years however, none of the charges brought against the organisation have led to convictions of any of the fulltime, part-time, or contracted social workers of CMR North who were implicated in any of these instances, and they were exonerated of any charges of misconduct.

A few cases that have been finalised in the past, have recently been featured again in the media, and when contacted by the media, the CMR North has clearly indicated that the organisation is not unwilling to comment, but was not able to comment right away. The reason for this is two-tiered.

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Firstly, as part the ethical responsibility of the organisation and in line with the Children's Act, exceptional care and consideration must be exercised when releasing information about children in the public domain to protect these children's dignity and identities. If the details of a vulnerable person or child's case is discussed in public, it can subject them to even more trauma than they already experienced. In addition, it is of the utmost importance that children who are still under the organisation's care are reassured that the CMR North will treat their information with confidentiality at all times.

Secondly, CMR North is busy with legal proceedings in response to some of these accusations, that will be dealt with once all the parties concerned have had an opportunity to place their version before court in order for the court to adjudicate on same. As per the advice of CMR North's legal counsel, the details of these may also not be discussed in public at this point.

"Essentially, the interim High Court order for the reinstatement of CMR North's CPO status is the first of many expected triumphs," says Dr Aylward. "We are humbly confident that as soon as justice has taken its full course, the reputation of the CMR North will be cleared and the integrity of the organisation will be fully reinstated."

## Ronel Aylward

Algemene Bestuurder/General Manager: CMR  
Noord/North  
BA (MW), MBA & DTech (Organisational Leadership)

NPO NR: 015-917

E-pos / E-mail: [manager2@cmrn.co.za](mailto:manager2@cmrn.co.za)

Tel: (012) 460 9272x2

Faks / Fax: 086 5967 403

[www.cmrn.co.za](http://www.cmrn.co.za)

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