



CLOSE-OUT REPORT- PROFESSIONALIZATION OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONERS (CDPs)

PURPOSE

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Council with a consolidated historical account of the matter concerning the professionalisation of Community Development Practitioners (CDPs) and Assistant Community Development Practitioners (ACDPs), including its evolution, progress reported by the Employer and relevant statutory stakeholders, and the current status of the matter.
2. The report further seeks to establish whether the original purpose for which the matter was tabled before the Council has been substantially addressed and whether the item should be formally closed and retired, or alternatively repositioned/re-purposed to address outstanding matters that remain relevant to the parties.

BACKGROUND

3. The professionalisation of Community Development Practitioners has been a matter of engagement between the Employer and organised Labour for several

years. The matter originated from concerns regarding the formal recognition, professionalisation and appropriate regulatory framework for Community Development Practitioners (CDPs) and Assistant Community Development Practitioners (ACDPs).

4. The matter was premised, among other things, on the need to establish a structured process towards the professionalisation of these occupational categories, including the development of an appropriate legislative and regulatory framework, consultation with affected stakeholders and the establishment of an appropriate statutory mechanism for professional registration and regulation.
5. Over the years, the matter has progressed beyond its original formulation, particularly with the involvement of the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP), the development of the Social Service Practitioners (SSP) Bill and subsequent work relating to the establishment and constitution of a Professional Board for Community Development Practitioners.
6. Given the extended period over which the matter has remained on the Council's agenda, it is necessary to consolidate the historical developments and establish a definitive position regarding the future of the item.

EVOLUTION OF THE MATTER

2019 Financial Year

7. The matter was formally submitted by the National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union (NEHAWU) on 11 March 2019.

8. NEHAWU indicated that the matter had initially been raised by the Employer in 2016 through a bilateral process between NEHAWU and the National Department of Social Development (NDSD). The intended process was to establish a joint task team to facilitate a process towards the professionalisation of both ACDPs and CDPs.
9. The NDSD had also obtained support from the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) to undertake consultations with relevant stakeholders within the sector, including organised Labour.
10. Against this background, organised Labour requested an update on the status of the professionalisation process and sought clarity on the extent to which consultations had taken place.
11. Specifically, the Employer was requested to provide information relating to:
 - 11.1. the number of provinces in which consultations had been conducted;
 - 11.2. the dates on which consultations had taken place;
 - 11.3. the outcomes of the consultations; and
 - 11.4. the stakeholders who had participated, including organised Labour, ACDPs, CDPs, provincial departments and private/non-governmental organisations within the social development sector.
12. The Employer committed to provide a progress report on the professionalisation of community development professionals during 2019.

2020 Financial Year

13. During the 2020 financial year, organised Labour reiterated that the objective of the process was to establish a structured pathway towards the professionalisation of ACDPs and CDPs.
14. The Employer reaffirmed its commitment to provide a progress report on the matter. The Employer agreed to make the requested progress report available to organised Labour on 04 February 2020.
15. The matter therefore remained focused primarily on obtaining clarity regarding progress with the professionalisation process and the commitments previously made by the Employer.

2021 Financial Year

16. During 2021, the Employer reported that the process had progressed to the legislative phase.
17. It was reported that a draft Social Service Practitioners Bill was before the Office of the Chief State Law Advisor (OCSLA) for pre-certification.
18. The Employer further indicated that the intention was for the Bill to be submitted to Cabinet during the 2021/2022 financial year, followed by the development of regulations during the 2022/2023 financial year, with the regulations envisaged to be finalised by 2024.
19. This represented a significant development from the initial consultations and indicated that the professionalisation process was being pursued through a formal legislative and regulatory framework.

2022 Financial Year

20. During 2022, the Employer provided a written progress report on the professionalisation of Community Development Practitioners.
21. The progress report demonstrated that the matter had continued to evolve and that the professionalisation process was being advanced through the relevant institutional and legislative structures.
22. The report forms part of the historical record of the matter and should be read together with subsequent updates provided to the Council and its structures.

2023 Financial Year

23. During the 2023 financial year, further progress was reported in relation to the registration and verification of CDPs.
24. The SACSSP launched an online registration process for CDPs, which was open from 01 July 2022 to 30 September 2022.
25. The registration and verification data were subjected to quality assurance processes, and the online registration and verification forms were compiled and automated for purposes of developing the CDP voters' roll.
26. At the same time, the Social Service Practitioners Bill remained under consideration and refinement between the Department of Social Development (DSD) and the Office of the Chief State Law Advisor.
27. The process had therefore progressed beyond a conceptual discussion regarding professionalisation towards practical institutional arrangements relating to

registration, verification and the establishment of an appropriate professional regulatory framework.

2024 Financial Year

28. During 2024, the Employer reported that the Social Service Practitioners Bill was still being refined and that engagements between the Department of Social Development and the Office of the Chief State Law Advisor remained ongoing.
29. While the legislative process had therefore not reached finality, the matter continued to be pursued through the relevant statutory and governmental processes.

2025 Financial Year

30. During 2025, the SACSSP provided a presentation regarding the establishment and constitution of the Professional Board for Community Development Practitioners.
31. This development was particularly significant in the context of the original objective of the Council item, as it demonstrated movement towards establishing a dedicated professional regulatory structure for CDPs.
32. In addition, an extensive stakeholder integration webinar was undertaken, together with an SACSSP online registration workshop aimed at facilitating the transition and integration of affected social service professionals into the emerging professionalisation framework.
33. These developments indicate that the professionalisation process has substantially evolved from the original bilateral Labour-management discussions

into a broader statutory and professional-regulatory process involving the relevant government department and SACSSP.

CURRENT STATUS – 2026

34. During 2026, the parties recognised that the matter had remained on the Council's agenda for an extended period and that there was a risk that the item could lose its original purpose and intended outcome if it continued indefinitely without a clearly defined deliverable.
35. The Office of the General Secretary (OGS) has consequently undertaken to consolidate the historical developments into a formal close-out report for consideration by the Council.
36. The Employer is expected to provide an updated roadmap setting out the current status of the professionalisation process, including any outstanding legislative, regulatory, institutional or implementation matters.
37. The updated roadmap will enable the parties to determine whether substantive outstanding matters are falling within the mandate of the Council that require continued collective bargaining engagement.
38. The OGS is also in the process of strengthening the provincial reporting mechanism to ensure that outstanding local implementation matters, including challenges relating to registration and/or deregistration, are properly identified, recorded, escalated and resolved through the appropriate structures.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

39. An assessment of the historical record demonstrates that the professionalisation matter has undergone significant development since its initial tabling.

40. Key developments include:

40.1. the establishment of a structured process towards the professionalisation of ACDPs and CDPs;

40.2. consultations involving relevant stakeholders within the sector;

40.3. the development and refinement of the Social Service Practitioners Bill;

40.4. engagement between the Department of Social Development and the Office of the Chief State Law Advisor on the legislative framework;

40.5. the establishment of mechanisms for the registration and verification of CDPs;

40.6. the development and automation of registration and verification processes;

40.7. progress towards establishing a dedicated Professional Board for Community Development Practitioners;

40.8. stakeholder integration and registration workshops facilitated through the SACSSP; and

40.9. ongoing efforts to identify and address implementation challenges at provincial and local level.

41. These developments demonstrate that the matter has progressed materially from its original conception as a Labour-management engagement item and has increasingly become embedded within the statutory and professional regulatory processes of the social development sector.

MATTERS REQUIRING FINAL CONFIRMATION

42. Notwithstanding the progress outlined above, the following matters should be confirmed before the item is formally closed:

- 42.1. the current status of the Social Service Practitioners Bill and its legislative process;

- 42.2. the current status and mandate of the Professional Board for Community Development Practitioners;

- 42.3. the status of the registration and professional recognition of CDPs and ACDPs;

- 42.4. any outstanding regulatory requirements affecting the implementation of professionalisation;

- 42.5. any outstanding transitional arrangements affecting employees currently occupying CDP and ACDP posts;

- 42.6. outstanding registration, deregistration, verification or related implementation challenges at provincial level; and

- 42.7. whether any of the outstanding matters fall within the mandate of the PHSDSBC and therefore require continued engagement through the Council or its relevant chambers.

ASSESSMENT

43. The historical record indicates that the original intent of the matter was to secure a structured process towards the professionalisation of CDPs and ACDPs and to obtain accountability from the Employer regarding progress towards that objective.
44. Over the intervening period, significant institutional and regulatory developments have occurred. The process has moved from bilateral Labour-management discussions to formal engagement involving the Department of Social Development, the Office of the Chief State Law Advisor and the SACSSP.
45. The establishment and constitution of a Professional Board for Community Development Practitioners represents a particularly important development in relation to the original objective of professionalisation.
46. The continued retention of the original item on the Council's agenda, without a clearly defined outstanding deliverable within the Council's mandate, may create duplication between the Council's collective bargaining responsibilities and the statutory functions of the relevant regulatory institutions.
47. It is therefore important that the Council distinguish between:
 - 47.1. matters relating to the statutory and professional regulation of CDPs, which properly reside with the relevant government and statutory structures; and
 - 47.2. employment-related matters arising from the implementation of professionalisation, where such matters fall within the scope and mandate of the PHSDSBC.

48. This distinction will ensure that the Council does not inadvertently assume responsibility for functions that properly reside with the Employer, Department of Social Development, SACSSP or other statutory bodies.

RECOMMENDATION

49. It is recommended that the Council:

- 49.1. **NOTES** the historical development and progress of the professionalisation of Community Development Practitioners as set out in this report.
- 49.2. **NOTES** the significant developments that have taken place since the matter was initially tabled, including the legislative process, registration and verification initiatives and progress towards the establishment of the Professional Board for Community Development Practitioners.
- 49.3. **NOTES** that the professionalisation process is now substantially located within the relevant statutory, legislative and professional regulatory structures.
- 49.4. **DIRECTS** the Employer to provide the Council with a final and updated roadmap confirming the current status of the professionalisation process and identifying any outstanding matters.
- 49.5. **DETERMINES**, upon consideration of the updated roadmap, whether any outstanding matters fall within the mandate of the PHSDSBC and require continued collective bargaining engagement.
- 49.6. **RESOLVES** that, where no substantive outstanding matter within the Council's mandate remains, the item be formally **closed and retired from the Council's agenda**; and

49.7. **AGREES** that any future employment-related matters arising from the implementation of the professionalisation framework should be tabled as a **new and clearly defined agenda item**, rather than reopening the historical item.

CONCLUSION

50. The professionalisation of Community Development Practitioners has been a longstanding matter that has evolved significantly since its initial tabling.
51. The historical record demonstrates that the matter has progressed through various stages, including stakeholder consultation, legislative development, registration and verification processes and the establishment of institutional arrangements towards professional regulation.
52. While certain aspects of the broader professionalisation process may remain subject to finalisation by the relevant statutory and governmental structures, the original purpose of the Council item should not be allowed to become open-ended.
53. The appropriate approach is therefore to bring the historical item to a clear point of closure, subject to confirmation of the current roadmap by the Employer. Where outstanding matters relate directly to the employment relationship and fall within the mandate of the PHSDSBC, such matters should be addressed through a clearly defined and appropriately scoped new agenda item.
54. This approach will preserve the institutional history of the matter, provide accountability for outstanding commitments, prevent duplication of statutory functions and ensure that the Council's agenda remains focused on matters falling within its mandate.

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Mr Mpumelelo Sibiya

PHSDSBC: General Secretary

20 August 2026