



Western Cape Children's Commissioner supports GC26 – the right of the child to be protected from violence, including violence inflicted on animals

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South Africa's Children's Commissioner for the Western Cape *Christina Nomdo* has confirmed her support for the UN's GC26 whereby children are to be protected from violence, be it domestic, societal or inflicted on an animal.

Commissioner Nomdo says the amplification of animal welfare as part of a rights culture is to the benefit of all.

Asked for her thoughts, she said: "I have spent 30 years in the Child Rights sector and take the right of the child to be protected from violence very seriously. Cultural practices like dog-fighting and trophy-hunting are abhorrent and are introduced to children through adults, to the detriment of our children.

"The polarisation of human welfare and animal welfare does not help us as a society. A culture of rights and respect includes all living beings and there is a lot of evidence to prove that if children are taught to appreciate animals, they grow emotionally.

"What we want is to create a caring, loving society and to achieve this, we must extend that care and love to all living beings."

Ms Nomdo said that organisations like *Animal Voice* and *Nature-based Education* that work to strengthen the human / animal bond, are supporting the holistic development of a child.

"As a society, we are challenged by deep cultural norms that include harmful practices against animals. We need to counter all practices that involve the abuse of animals. So it is not only about working with children but, in addition, it is about confronting the adults who introduce children to these practices and 'normalise' them in the minds of our children. This is the harm."

COMMISSIONER

COMM. OFFICE

He grew up in a community bedevilled by frustration, anger and violence



Cian'an Danhaus
is a specialist in
Wellness Counselling at
Huis Horison, Stellenbosch.

He believes forging
relationships with animals
is central to any emotional
healing process.

Cian'an explains that he grew up in a community bedevilled by frustration, anger and violence on an almost daily basis.

"I've seen organised dog-fighting; dogs permanently tied to poles on massive chains; I've seen just about every kind of violence from as young as I can remember. I was just 5 or 6 years old when our dog Buddy crawled back to our home one day. Someone had thrown boiling water on him. He died. I think it was Buddy who propelled me to study to become a trauma and grief counsellor. Here at Huis Horison animals are acknowledged as key components of healing. Let me explain why:

"People in need of counselling want to release their emotions in privacy and therapists and counsellors do our best to afford them a 'safe' space to do so. The windows may have frosted glass for example.

"But there is no privacy that competes with the privacy of sharing emotions with an animal with whom you have forged a relationship.

"As humans we relate to each other with an ever-present veneer. In contrast, in the presence of an animal friend, the veneer falls off. Instead, with an animal friend, we can be exactly who we are, without pretense, without fear of judgment, without fear of rejection.

"With an animal we don't even need to try to articulate what we mean. We simply are, and we are accepted as we are. Fear and anxiety fall away. And herein lies the healing. Animals allow people to be who they are, become who they dream to be, and belong within a mutually loving relationship."

