



**Mr André Viviers - Member of the South African Council for Social Service Professions**

As we watch the news one realises that the world is upside down in more ways than one. There are wars, conflicts, political rhetorics that sounds scary, and for many of us we got an update on our geography – we learned about the Strait of Hormuz. A very small little piece of the planet, to be specific 167 km in length and 33 to 39 km. Despite its size, the world learned that this small volume of water holds power that impact the world – profoundly.

As we celebrate International Child and Youth Care Work Week 2026 under the theme “Caring, Connecting and Advocating in Troubled Times” and the role of the child and youth care work profession across the globe, you may wonder why I start my message with a reference to the Strait of Hormuz. It reminded me this morning that we should never underestimate our power to influence the world and often the world for one child. No matter where you are in this world, whether in the deep rural Northern Cape, glittering city lights of Johannesburg or a community in the middle of KwaZulu-Natal.

- Never underestimate your spheres of influence to make an impact.
- Never think that the role you play in bigger ecosystem of development and therapeutic care of children is too small for impact.
- Know that your work with a child now, has an influence far beyond what you will ever realise.
- It does not matter where you practice, understanding and practicing (knowledge, skills and ethics can change the destiny of children.
- Even in the moments when you feel the challenges may be too much, find the courage and power to change the discourse.
- You may not realise your strength, impact and influence until it is actually challenged.

The Strait of Hormuz, as we have found out in recent weeks, provides also a way to regulate who gets through to the rest of the world, and who not. In some this is also what professional regulation is about – deciding who are allowed to practice a profession. Child and youth care work, as with social work, is a regulated social service profession in South Africa and we should reflect on the purpose and value of being regulated. Particularly, what does it mean for the profession and the clients (children in the main) being served when allowed to practice?

Firstly, being regulated is not about paying registration and annual fees! At the very heart of being a regulated profession lies recognition of a profession that requires prescribed (by law) qualifications that meet the required standards before a person is allowed to enter the profession (register) either as a child and youth care worker or auxiliary child and youth care worker. It is about safeguarding the public in that the regulation of your profession confirms that you have the required competencies to practice as a child and youth care worker or auxiliary child and youth care worker.

Regulation also means that it is prescribed by law who may practice with professional autonomy (i.e., child and youth care workers) and who has restrictions in terms of practice and are required to work under the direct supervision of a professional (i.e., auxiliary child and youth care workers). Regulation means that there is a legal obligation with regards to the professional conduct of a child and youth care worker and auxiliary child and youth care worker, including adherence to the profession’s code of ethics. Being regulated also gives the profession the legal sanction, within the respective scopes of practice, to provide professional care, connection, and to advocate when the children are faced with adversity, challenges, and sometimes placed at enormous risk, whether in a local community or a war-torn country.

Wishing all child and youth care workers, auxiliary child and youth care workers, student child and youth care workers and student auxiliary child and youth care workers a reflective and thoughtful International Child and Youth Care Work Week 2026. Find your power (knowledge, skills, attitude, commitment, purpose), like “a” Strait of Hormuz, and use it to impact positively on the lives of children.

[The use of the Strait of Hormuz is purely symbolic and not intended to be political neither should it be assumed to be.]

**Honouring the Heart of Child and Youth Care Work**

**NON NOBIS - Not for ourselves**



**Mr Donald Nghonyama - Chairperson of the Professional Board for Child and Youth Care Work**

As we commemorate International Child and Youth Care Workers Week, I address you not only as the Chairperson of the Professional Board but as a colleague who understands the profound weight and the immense honour of the work you do. This year's theme, "Caring, Connecting & Advocating in Troubled Times," speaks directly to the soul of our profession in South Africa today.

**Reflecting on Our Journey: A Growing Footprint**

It is important to pause and recognize how far we have come. Our profession has evolved into a versatile and essential pillar of the social service landscape.

Today, Child and Youth Care Workers are making a measurable impact across diverse settings, including:

- The Education Setting: Supporting learners and ensuring schools remain spaces of holistic development.
- The Community Setting: Reaching children in their own homes through innovative models like the Risiha Community Prevention and Early Intervention programme.
- The Residential Care Setting: Providing therapeutic life-space work for those in alternative care.
- The Health Setting: Assisting children by providing child care services navigating chronic illness and healthcare challenges.
- The Justice Setting: Serving as vital court intermediaries, ensuring the voices of children are protected within the legal system.

**Acknowledging the Road Ahead**

While we celebrate these milestones, we do so with a sober mind. We acknowledge the many challenges that still await us—from the struggle for fair recognition and OSD alignment to the critical need for professional-level supervision.

It is for all of us to continue the advocacy that has brought us to this stage. The progress we see today is the result of those who spoke up when the profession was invisible. To continue this momentum, we must remain united and operating with guidance of our regulations.

**Our Worth Defined by Our Standard**

In these "troubled times," the greatest tool for our advocacy is the quality of our work. I urge you to continue practicing at the highest standard. When we do our work with precision, ethics, and deep care, our worth is not just claimed—it is felt. When the difference we make in the life of a child is undeniable, our professional value becomes undeniable.

**A Message of Gratitude and Resilience**

To the Child and Youth Care Workers and Auxiliary Child and Youth Care Workers across our provinces: Thank you. Thank you for your resilience and your commitment to the standards of our profession, even when resources are limited. Most importantly, thank you for always putting the child at the centre. Your ability to maintain a child-centred approach in the midst of systemic challenges is what defines you as a professional.

You are the guardians of our nation's future. We honour your service, we hear your concerns, and we celebrate your invaluable contribution.

Wishing you a restorative and proud International Child and Youth Care Workers Week.



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