

MEDIA RELEASE

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ORGANISATION FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES CONDEMNS POLICE BRUTALITY

The Western Cape Association for Persons with Disabilities condemns in the strongest possible terms the incident where 2 officers of the City of Cape Town Metro police appeared to manhandle a male wheelchair user to the point that he was tipped out of his wheelchair, of which a video clip has been circulating on social media.

It seems that the man had been attending a peaceful march to protest against a lack of municipal services. While it is unclear what the circumstances were which led to the incident, the humiliation and disrespect experienced by the man at the hands of these police officers is unacceptable.

Mrs Elmien Grobbelaar, Provincial Director of the Association says: "We are currently in the middle of Disability Rights Awareness Month (DRAM) which ends on 3 December, the International Day for Persons with Disabilities, which raises awareness of the rights and challenges of persons with disabilities. It saddens us to see that certain individuals in society continue to treat persons with disabilities as second class citizens, instead of simply human beings. Certainly, if the man had broken the law then he should be arrested and face the consequences of his actions, but every person has the right to be treated with dignity and respect but there is simply no good reason to degrade someone.

The Association acknowledges the apology from the Mayor of Cape Town, Mr Dan Plato, and welcomes the suspension of the 2 officers pending an investigation, but asks how similar situations will be prevented in the future?

"Negative views of disability still exist, fuelled by stereotypes and misperceptions," says Erica du Toit, Coordinator for Sensitisation & Awareness at the Association. "The only way this can be broken down is through education; sensitising the general public on disability, particularly the role society plays in disabling an individual with an

impairment. We shouldn't have to be training people how to treat persons with disabilities as they are human beings and should be treated as such."

The Association will be engaging with the City of Cape Town to constructively address these issues and assist in sensitising the public service to disability so as to prevent a reoccurrence of similar incidents in the future.

Background information on Western Cape Association for Persons with Disabilities

For the past 83 years Western Cape Association for Persons with Disabilities (WCAPD hence forward) is passionate about striving towards an inclusive society in which persons with disabilities are equal and active citizens. WCAPD has been committed to social development of persons with disabilities in the Western Cape and Southern Cape.

24 APD Offices in the Western and Southern Cape provide an inclusive service to all persons with disabilities. This may include (but is not limited to) sourcing mobility devices, dealing with social issues within the home, arranging for home care, caring and stimulating children with severe disabilities, protective work centres or lobbying for accessibility in the community. Services are free of charge and open to anyone who needs help.

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