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OUTRAGE OVER RACE-RELATED DONOR FORM QUESTIONS

The Western Cape Blood Service is under pressure to revise its donor questionnaire amid criticism for asking racial information

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THE Western Cape Blood Service (WCBS) is reviewing its donor questionnaire following pressure from People Against Race Classification (Parr) to change the requirement to state your race when donating blood.

The service said they now plan to add an 'other' option, and is considering a 'prefer not to say' option.

Parr had flagged their concerns with the WCBS through several letters, saying they took offence that the questionnaire to be completed by those who want to donate blood asked for racial information.

"I have been a blood donor in this country for many years. I am not a Coloured, Black, Indian or White person. Why don't you also add an option for a person not to complete his race data? Or why not add more ethnic identities like, Khoi-San, Zulu, Afrikaner, Pella, etc. The arguments regarding the need for this data is commonly known but not accepted. The WCBS is part of the science and medical fraternity, has no obligation to report on which blood was donated by which race. The necessity to know a person's race has no medical implication on what patient could use whose blood. You have no legal leg to support this practice. The Population Registration (Registration Act of 1911) has repealed all uses of race criteria," Parr founder Glen Snyman wrote.

On March 13, Parr's action team visited the Western Cape Blood donation Service's Head Quarters in Cape Town where they held a demonstration with placards in hand calling for the race blocks on the donation forms to be removed.

Initially the organisation in a letter responding to Snyman's concerns on March 27, outlined the reasons why it collected the data and also noted that the matter was discussed at a board meeting.

On June 2, WCBS CEO, Greg Bellin wrote another letter, stating that the board had explored whether there may be any ethical issues around asking the race of blood donors and had engaged with a "respected bio-ethicist".

"We have also fully considered your position, and decided the following: when next we revise the blood donor questionnaire options regarding race, we will add a block called 'other', and we are considering adding another block called 'prefer choose not to say'. We will add further information about why we ask for the race of blood donors, on the blood donor questionnaire, on the Service's Privacy Statement (which all blood donors sign), and on WCBS's website," said Bellin. Approached for comment yesterday, WCBS spokesperson Marlie Carl said the organisation

did collect race data but was open to continuous engagement. "Race data is still collected. However, we are reviewing the blood donor questionnaire and plan to add an 'other' option, and we are considering a 'prefer not to say' option as well. Blood donors who wish to not disclose their race may freely donate blood. We do not discriminate based on race or gender. We welcome constructive dialogue and remain open to continuous engagement and improvements.

"Every decision we make, including the information we request from blood donors, is... grounded in both medical science and ethical responsibility. We ask blood donors to self-identify their race so that we can select donations for extended testing for additional blood group systems (other than the ABO and Rh systems). This enables us to provide blood-group compatible blood products to multi-transfused patients such as those with thalassemia, and sickle cell disease - as well as to identify donations of rare blood types, which are reserved in a national repository for patients with rare blood types," said Carl.

Snyman and this was still not enough. "This is a small 'victory' for PARC. The WC Blood Service agreed to amend their blood donation questionnaire form by adding to the race options the 'other' box, and also an option for people to 'not disclose their race. However, we will continue our fight to have all the race blocks removed from all forms," he said.

Stellenbosch University, Emeritus Professor in Health Systems and Public Health, Udi Chikita said there is no "credible genetic or biological foundation for these categories".

"Racial classification, particularly in South Africa, is a social and political construct, not a scientific one. It emerged from a brutal system of segregation and inequality, not from any meaningful understanding of human biology. To continue relying on these categories in medicine, especially in something as sensitive and vital as blood donation, is to perpetuate a deeply harmful legacy devoid of any scientific basis.

"Proponents argue that such data may help match rare blood types. But even where this is medically relevant, ancestry-based screening, not racial identity, is the appropriate approach. 'Race' is simply too crude, inaccurate, and politically loaded to serve as a stand-in for complex biological or genetic markers. More importantly, the use of race on medical forms undermines patient trust. Most people filling out these forms have no idea why the information is being collected or how it will be used. In a country still grappling with the trauma of institutionalised racism, this is not a trivial issue. Medical institutions must be held to the highest standards of ethical transparency and scientific validity."



FAMILY and friends carried the liver with the body of jazz improviser and acclaimed photographer Rashid Lombard yesterday (See Page 3). | **IAN LANDSBERG** Independent Newspapers

Employers gain flexibility in choosing EAP for employment equity

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EMPLOYERS will have the option to use the applicable national or regional Economically Active Population (EAP) population as an instrument when developing employment equity (EE) plans.

At a recent EE workshop held in Sandton, Department of Employment and Labour deputy director, Muelo Lefika said employers will have this option when developing EE Plans and setting annual numerical targets in their workplaces.

He added that when developing EE plans and setting annual numerical targets in their workplaces in terms of legislation, designated employers must take into account the workforce profile, the relevant five-year sectoral numerical targets, and the applicable EAP.

"The five-year sectoral numerical targets are key milestones towards achieving the equitable representation of the different designated groups within

the four upper occupational levels in an employer's workforce in relation to the demographics of the applicable EAP and for persons with disabilities," said Lefika.

This comes as the Department is forging ahead with legislative amendments to the Employment Equity Act (EEA). These amendments have their origins in 2019, when the Department, in collaboration with the Commission for Employment Equity (CEE), began sector-specific engagements aimed at setting employment equity (EE) targets. The goal was to accelerate transformation in the workplace. These efforts culminated in the Employment Equity Amendment Act No. 4 of 2022, which officially came into effect on January 1, 2025.

However the changes have been met with mixed reactions as the DA has taken government to court to challenge the amendments, while others have raised concerns about applying national targets at the expense of regional demographics.

According to Lefika, a designated employer will incur "no penalty or any

form of disadvantage if there are reasonable grounds to justify its failure to comply with any target".

The union federation Cosatu welcomed the option for employers to choose which demographics to apply when setting their targets.

"Cosatu engaged with the Department of Employment and Labour extensively on the 2023 amendments to the Employment Equity Act at Ndifac as well as with Parliament. We support these amendments, in particular the provisions recognising regional demographic diversity and enabling employers to utilise them or national demographics depending on their own footprint as an employer. This is critical as the demographics of Limpopo differ widely from those of the Western and Northern Cape and those differ significantly from KwaZulu-Natal.

"Enabling employers to utilise regional demographics is important to ensure local workers enjoy full worker opportunities and also to ensure work-

places represent South Africa's full diversity. This is especially important for provinces like the Western and Northern Cape where coloured workers are the largest demographic group and similarly in provinces like Gauteng and KZN. Employment equity includes all South Africans, of all racial, gender and disability categories," Cosatu Parliamentary Coordinator, Matthew Parks said.

The National Coloured Congress (NCC), which had called to meet with minister Ntombi Zosana Mbhe over the issue, added that without proper consideration of provincial demographics, it risks the further marginalising of Coloured communities.

"The Constitutional Court has ruled you can't implement national demographics, regionally. All the labour department is doing is making it easier for businesses with vested interests to discriminate. As the custodian of employment equity, the labour department should do its job," NCC leader, Fadiel Adams said.

Gerda Steyn aims for a hat-trick at the 2025 Comrades Marathon



Gerda Steyn

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GERDA Steyn is set to continue her dominance of the Comrades Marathons this weekend when she lines up for the 86th running of The Ultimate Human Race, looking for a third consecutive victory. Yet, while the glory of a hat-trick is sure to spur her on to a fantastic run down from the KwaZulu-Natal capital Pietermaritzburg to Durban, the Hollywood Athlete Club's runner is inspired by more than just catching the headlines and being celebrated as a superstar.

Steyn runs to leave a legacy that will reverberate long after she has hung up her running shoes. "For me, the aim is to establish a legacy and to ensure that I'm not just here to win and then disappear off the track," she said, during the elite athletes pre-race media conference yesterday. It's very, very important that for

everyone watching, especially for young girls who may be thinking about having a career in sport - they see that you can do it year on year. That's what drives her to keep producing spectacular results in the roughly 50km world-famous ultra that she has already won five times, and for which she holds the records for both the Up and Down runs. Because of that, there is no risk of complacency creeping in for the last from Pietermaritzburg, who respects her achievement even though she beats them at a canter year in and year out.

"That's what is very important for me, and as every year I approach it like it's the first time. "I become a novice, as if I have nothing to fall back on, and I make sure I stay sharp and also excited about every race that I do. Yes, I've won the race three times, but I am still learning, and I am still a student of the race.

"Before I think about anything else - how tough the race is and how hard my

competition is. I ask myself every time how can I get the most out of Gerda!"

"How can I be better than I was this time last year?"

That excitement was palpable as Steyn spoke of her rivals in glowing terms. "I know my competitors well. There is very strong competition from the ladies sitting here, and more who are not here," she said. I know more or less their capabilities. I know what they've done in the past, and I am a 100% clear about what my challenge is."

Alexandra Moombe, the Russian who won in Steyn's absence back in 2022 and a regular gold medalist, can run a 2:50 marathon, for example.

Moombe, a call has long been made for Comrades to raise the prize money to R1 million, and while she acknowledges that elite athletes make a living from running, Steyn is content with what the race pays its winners.



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by Nicola Daniëls

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CONFIDENTIAL DONOR QUESTIONNAIRE

DONOR LABEL

DATE STAMP

SERIAL NUMBER

Section 1 | Personal Details

First-time donors: Complete all sections in full.

Repeat donors: Only complete this section if your personal information has changed.

Please circle the relevant answers where applicable, eg YES NO

SURNAME:						FIRST NAME:						
TITLE:	Prof	Dr	Mr	Mrs	Ms	Male			Female			
DATE OF BIRTH:	D	D	M	M	Y	Y	Y	Y	AGE:	RSA ID NUMBER:		
HOME / POSTAL ADDRESS:						FOREIGN PASSPORT NUMBER:						
						TELEPHONE NUMBER (HOME):						
						TELEPHONE NUMBER (WORK):						
POSTAL CODE:						CELL PHONE NUMBER:						
EMAIL ADDRESS:												
LANGUAGE:	English		Afrikaans		ETHNIC GROUP:	Asian	Black	Coloured	White			
PREFERRED PLACE OF DONATION:												
I consent to receive notifications and reminders from WCBS.						Yes		No				
If yes, please select by which method (<i>you may select more than one</i>).						SMS		Phone call		Email		
I understand that all calls received from WCBS will be recorded for quality purposes.												
I understand that although I indicated my preferred method(s) of communication above, WCBS will contact me via telephone after my first donation.												
I understand that I can withdraw my consent at any time by contacting WCBS.												
I understand that I will receive the WCBS blood donor newsletter if I select email.												
I hereby declare that I would like to enrol as a blood donor.						DONOR SIGNATURE:				DATE:		

 Your 1 donation could save up to 3 lives. Thank you for donating blood today!

VERTROULIKE SKENKERVRAELYS

SKENKERETIKET

DATUMSTEMPEL

REEKSNOMMER


Afdeling 1 | Persoonlike Besonderhede

As jy vandag vir die eerste keer bloed skenk: Voltooi al die afdelings van die vraelys.

As jy gereeld bloed skenk: Voltooi hierdie afdeling slegs as jou persoonlike besonderhede verander het.

Omkring asseblief die relevante antwoorde waar van toepassing, bv. JA NEE

VAN:						VOORNAAM:																	
TITEL:	Prof	Dr	Mnr	Mev	Me	Manlik						Vroulik											
GEBORTEDATUM:		D	D	M	M	J	J	J	J	OUDERDOM:		RSA ID-NOMMER:											
HUIS-/POSADRES:												BUITELANDSE PASPOORTNOMMER:											
POSKODE:												TELEFOONNOMMER (HUIS):											
EPOS ADRES:												TELEFOONNOMMER (WERK):											
TAAL:						ETHNIESE GROEP:						SELFOONNOMMER:											
Engels						Afrikaans						Asiaties		Swart		Bruin		Wit					
PLEK WAAR JY SOU VERKIES OM TE SKENK:																							
Ek gee hiermee toestemming om kennisgewings en herinneringe van WKB te ontvang.												Ja			Nee								
Indien ja, omkring een (of meer) van die volgende.												SMS		Telefoniese oproep			Epos						
<p>Ek verstaan dat alle oproepe wat ek van WKB ontvang, vir kwaliteitdoeleindes opgeneem sal word.</p> <p>Ek verstaan dat, alhoewel ek hierin aangedui het watter kommunikasiemete(s) ek verkies, WKB my na my eerste skenking telefonies sal kontak.</p> <p>Ek verstaan dat ek my toestemming enige tyd kan onttrek deur WKB te kontak.</p> <p>Ek verstaan dat ek die WKB-nuusbrief sal ontvang indien ek epos gekies het.</p>																							
Ek verklaar hiermee dat ek as 'n bloedskenker wil registreer.												SKENKER SE HANDTEKENING:						DATUM:					

 **Jou 1 skenking kan tot 3 lewens red. Dankie dat jy vandag bloed skenk!**