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## PARC CHALLENGES RACE CLASSIFICATION ON SCHOOL APPLICATION FORMS

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**GEORGE NEWS** - People Against Race Classification (PARC), an Oudtshoorn-based organisation, is calling on the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) to remove race classification from learner application forms for school admission.

In a letter dated 1 September, Parc called on Western Cape Education Minister Jaco Londt to "immediately amend" the race classification criteria on learner enrolment forms.

Glen Snyman, the group's leader, said they do not want to be classified by race. "Children do not belong in race boxes."

Snyman said the Population Registration Act of 1950 was repealed in 1991, and there are no objective scientific or legal criteria for determining a person's racial group.

"A person's racial classification should not be imposed upon them by the state," the letter said.

The organisation is especially concerned about children from mixed-race families and what category parents are expected to choose when completing forms. He also had a group of parents sign a petition list to support his claims.

**"No child should be forced into an 'Other' category simply because the existing racial classification system cannot accurately or appropriately accommodate them,"** said Snyman.

Bronagh Hammond, director of communication for the WCED, said all provincial education departments require the collection of race information on learner admission forms.

This is in line with national reporting and planning requirements and the information is used for statistical, monitoring and equity purposes.

**"Importantly, race is not used as a criterion for admission. Schools may not discriminate against learners on the basis of race, and no learner may be refused admission for electing not to disclose this information.**

"All admissions processes must be conducted in accordance with the Constitution and applicable education legislation, which safeguard the rights of every learner to equitable access to education."

In a letter addressed directly to Parc in response to their concern, the department also said race-based information helps the government to identify inequalities, monitor transformation and direct resources where they are most needed.

Parents may also choose not to indicate their race. "No learner may be denied admission to any school, solely on their refusal to identify which race category they belong to," the WCED stated.

Four members of PARC also recently visited the WCED's Eden and Central Karoo District Office in George to raise their concerns locally, but were referred back to the provincial office.

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Four members of PARC at the WCED district office in George: From left to right is: Mervon Ewerts, Ricardo Coericius, leader Glen Snyman and Abraham Hendricks.