

30 May 2024

To: Universities South Africa

To whom it may concern

Re: Testimonial in support of UKZN Street Law Project

The Denis Hurley Centre is a multi-faith NGO working in the heart of Durban with some of the most marginalised communities – homeless people, refugees and migrants, drug users and the young unemployed. Since 2018 we have been delighted to work closely with the Street Law Project from UKZN.

Street Law provides an opportunity for 4th year LL B students at UKZN to work with a local community to learn how to apply law 'on the ground'. Each year between 30 and 40 of the students opt for the Denis Hurley as their placement location and, in small teams, they spend a certain number of hours spread over a semester working at the DHC. In particular, they provide a 'drop in' table for some of the 250 homeless people who visit our centre every day.

The results have been extraordinary in a number of ways:

- In some cases, homeless people have been enabled to apply for grants to which they are entitled, to obtain IDs, or to fill in application forms for training programmes.
- In a few cases, homeless people have been given an informed opinion about some legal matter which is worrying them, for example in relation to employment or a will or a road accident.
- In other cases, homeless people have been given a chance to relate an experience of being a victim of crime and learn what is needed in order to file a formal complaint.
- Over time we have been able, thanks to the statements collected by the law students, to build up a picture of a pattern of human rights violations (often at the hands of the police) suffered by homeless people, that we have then publicised through traditional and social media.
- In all cases, simply by the law students being there and listening to their stories, homeless people have benefited from being taken seriously and treated as valid citizens by people with whom they would not otherwise engage.

- In turn, we know that the stories that the law students hear are then spread more widely (with confidentiality duly observed) which shifts perceptions of homeless people from being perpetrators to being victims of crime and helps build empathy more widely in society.
- We have heard specifically from law students involved how this experience has radically affected them and made them aware of the gap between the theory and practice of the law for poor people in South Africa; in some cases it has inspired them to look at ways of directing their own careers more towards the common good.

We are pleased to have had this opportunity to positively impact both homeless people and a new generation of lawyers.

In the Lord



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