



### **Adrienne Bird: A doyenne in education and training will be sorely missed**

21 June 2019

The SAQA Board, management and staff extend its deepest condolences to the Bird family on the untimely passing of Ms Adrienne Bird. “South Africa has lost an influencer who contributed immensely to the establishment of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF),” says Dr Vuyelwa Toni Penxa, Chairperson of the SAQA Board.

In the early 90s, Ms Bird, who was the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA)’s Regional Education Officer for the Witwatersrand region, opened up the training agenda in NUMSA. She played a pivotal role in hearing what workers on the ground said at a time in our country when the focus started shifting from fighting apartheid to what would education look like in post-apartheid South Africa.

Workers wanted an incremental approach to learning, that is, building blocks that would allow them to become tradespeople without taking three years from work to learn a trade. This incremental learning would allow them upward mobility in work as well as education without having to enter the schooling system. The schooling system at the time was rigid and geared toward youth.

#### **SAQA’S MISSION**

*To ensure the development and implementation of a National Qualifications Framework which contributes to the full development of each learner and to the social and economic development of the nation at large*

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Ms Bird was instrumental in drafting a document that became the implementation plan for the first Minister of Labour in democratic South Africa. This document eventually led to the dissolution of the Industry Training Boards and to the establishment of the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs).

This document and further engagement by Ms Bird and her colleagues in the trade union movement led to the idea of two legs of a ladder – one being education and the other training. Further engagement with the Australian Metalworkers Union contributed to the debate around competencies and outcomes-based learning.

All this had a hand in the development of the South African NQF. Ms Bird continued to champion the cause of workers in education and training, and was part of the team that established the Quality Council on Trades and Occupations (QCTO). She was appointed the first acting CEO of the QCTO with the task of setting it up.

SAQA had planned to honour Ms Bird at the NQF 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary Reception on 24 June 2019 as one of the stalwarts who greatly influenced our NQF. We have very fond memories of Adrienne and her tireless efforts of working for the most disadvantaged sectors of society and her energy for generating new ideas. She will be sorely missed. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Bird family. May her soul rest in eternal peace.

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**ENDS**

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