



**OFFICE OF THE  
TAX OMBUD**  
*Ensuring fairness*

**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**ISSUED BY THE OFFICE OF THE TAX OMBUD**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CALL TO UTILIZE FREE AND IMPARTIAL SERVICES OF THE TAX OMBUD**

**PRETORIA:** As a result of the huge demands on the Fiscal because of the COVID-19 virus pandemic, we have possibly entered a period during which tax collection dynamics are going to change, in particular between the taxpayer and the revenue collector, SARS. Understandably so, a lot of money is going to be needed. Delayed payment of tax refunds and failure to adhere to set timelines for attending to objections and appeals are just some of the problems taxpayers sometimes encounter when dealing with the South African Revenue Service (SARS). The Office of the Tax Ombud (OTO) is ready to help resolve such issues. The OTO reminds taxpayers that it continues (even during COVID-19 lockdown restrictions) to provide free and impartial assistance to taxpayers who have tax complaints against the revenue collector, and calls on them to utilize the service.

Tax Ombud Judge Bernard Ngoepe says taxpayers should comply with and respect South African tax laws. However, when taxpayers find that they are not being treated fairly by SARS, they should not hesitate to lodge their complaints against SARS with the OTO. He reiterates that the OTO will continue protecting taxpayers' rights by ensuring that their legitimate complaints are attended to and resolved promptly.

*"Many taxpayers generally feel intimidated and accept substandard services from SARS, often losing millions of rands as they fear lodging complaints with the OTO; this should not be happening especially when this office is there to assist them. Just two months ago when we launched the Tax Ombud Annual Report 2019/20, we revealed that we had helped secure over R116 million for the top 10 tax refunds, money that could have been unfairly lost to SARS. We are committed to ensuring that taxpayers only pay what is due and not a single cent more,"* says Judge Ngoepe.

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*“We have helped reverse unfair decisions made by SARS on numerous cases, including the lifting of stoppers on taxpayers’ bank accounts and ensuring that the revenue collector attends to objections and appeals timeously, fairly and professionally. We urge taxpayers to utilize our services to see what difference we make to their lives, as we have done for thousands of others we assisted over the past seven years,”* adds Judge Ngoepe.

Recently the OTO secured over R73 million in refunds and R6 million in interest payments from SARs on behalf of a taxpayer who had lodged a complaint with the OTO. Judge Ngoepe says this case and many others illustrate that the services of the OTO are vital in helping improve the country’s tax administration system. Although we have a fruitful working relationship with SARS, we have no qualms about making findings against the revenue collector, as we have done many times in the past; equally, we do not shy away from making a finding against a taxpayer where appropriate. We are impartial. We are encouraged that SARS respects our decisions and about 97% of the time implements our recommendations. We are committed to ensuring that there is a healthy balance between taxpayers’ rights and obligations on the one hand, and SARS’ powers and responsibilities on the other hand.

*“We urge taxpayers with tax complaints against SARS (not against their employers or other parties) to lodge them with our office so that we can assist them,”* says Judge Ngoepe.

Taxpayers can contact the Office of the Tax Ombud on 0800 662 837 or [complaints@taxombud.gov.za](mailto:complaints@taxombud.gov.za) or visit our website on [www.taxombud.gov.za](http://www.taxombud.gov.za) for more information about when and how to lodge a tax complaint. Walk-ins to the office are still suspended until further notice.

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#### **Notes for Editors**

##### ***About the Office of the Tax Ombud***

**The Office of the Tax Ombud is a redress channel for taxpayers, operating under a legislative mandate.**

**This mandate is set out in the Tax Administration Act no 28 of 2011. “The mandate of the Tax Ombud is to review and address any complaint by a taxpayer regarding a service matter, or a procedural or administrative matter, arising from the application of the provisions of a Tax Act by SARS.”**

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