



OFFICE OF THE
TAX OMBUD
Ensuring fairness

MEDIA STATEMENT

**ISSUED BY THE OFFICE OF THE TAX OMBUD
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

SEVEN YEARS OF ENSURING FAIRNESS

For Release: 1 OCTOBER 2020

PRETORIA: Today, 1 October, marks seven years since the inception of the Office of the Tax Ombud (OTO) – a period that has seen the Office not only make a significant impact in promoting awareness about the rights of taxpayers, but also in the protection of those rights against any possible abuse by the South African Revenue Service (SARS); as a result, the period has been characterised by improved fairness in the South African tax administration system.

Tax Ombud Judge Bernard Ngoepe says the role the OTO has played in the country’s tax administration should not only be measured by its impact on the taxpayers’ morale, but also by its impact on the money saved to them. *“How many businesses could have been shut down, homes sold and families left destitute but for the OTO’s intervention? The fact that on average over 80% of complaints received have been ruled in favour of taxpayers is a clear indication of the need for this Office. This is also demonstrated by the fact that the revenue collector implemented about 90% of our recommendations in the past three years. Our commitment ensures that taxpayers do not pay a cent more or a cent less than what is due. To us, saving a taxpayer R500 is just as important as saving a business some millions”,* says Judge Ngoepe.

He adds that the OTO has provided access to tax justice to thousands of taxpayers who could not afford to take SARS to court as litigation is expensive. *“We have been providing independent, impartial and free recourse to taxpayers and we are motivated by the support we have been getting from stakeholders,*

including taxpayers, Parliamentarians, Recognised Controlling Bodies and even SARS itself. They have acknowledged our positive contribution towards the country's tax administration system by helping restore some trust in it. This bodes well for revenue collection, and although we are proud of our achievements, we are aware that a lot more still needs to be done. We look forward to the next seven years and hope that with the continued cooperation of SARS and the support of the government and other stakeholders, we will be able to maintain our excellent service in contributing towards building an efficient tax administration system", says Judge Ngoepe.

The extension of Judge Ngoepe's term of Office has provided stability and continuity in the institution. While the Office is grateful for the support so far, more still needs to be done; in particular, by ensuring that the OTO is structurally independent of SARS. It is a call that is also made by stakeholders. We will continue to call on the government to speed up the process. Such independence is necessary for the credibility of the OTO as an institution away from SARS; it would be good for tax morale and a culture of tax compliance.

Taxpayers can contact the Office of the Tax Ombud on 0800 662 837 or complaints@taxombud.gov.za or visit the website at www.taxombud.gov.za for more information about when and how to lodge a complaint.

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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 that operates 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."
