



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

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

**TAXPAYERS' RIGHTS MATTER**

**Immediate release: 9 September 2020**

**PRETORIA:** The Office of the Tax Ombud (OTO) is redoubling its efforts to create awareness about its services and protect the rights of taxpayers this filing season, with the launch of an informative digital awareness campaign #TaxpayersRightsMatter.

The campaign was launched on 1 September 2020. It positions taxpayers as being central to the OTO's service philosophy and other activities, as the organisation continues to embrace customer-centricity and improve access to its services, which include providing free and impartial assistance to taxpayers who have a tax complaint against the South African Revenue Service (SARS).

OTO Chief Executive Officer, Prof. Thabo Legwaila, says the campaign will be featured on digital platforms and in the social media space. "Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing measures, we are unable to physically engage with taxpayers and stakeholders and take our services to their doorsteps, as we have done in the past. We are adapting and have embraced digitisation with our new approach. We are optimistic that our campaign will reach more people who need to know about our services and how we protect their rights as taxpayers," says Legwaila.

He adds that the economic devastation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic will likely cause SARS to be robust with its collection measures. "We understand the economic challenges faced by individual taxpayers and businesses, and we are here to ensure that tax compliance is not an additional problem or drawback for taxpayers. Taxpayers should continue to be treated fairly and justly, to ease their compliance burden. Tax collection is under pressure,

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but it should continue to be carried out in an administratively fair manner, with correct and legislated procedures followed, and the service provided in interactions with taxpayers by SARS should not deserve reprehension. We urge and support tax compliance, and the objective of the OTO is to ensure that taxpayers' rights are not trampled on by the revenue collector," says Prof Legwaila.

He adds that, in turbulent times, when financial resources are scarce and government depends on taxes, taxpayers can be overwhelmed by the buzz about tax payments, liability and all the associated matters. "Little attention is placed on the rights of taxpayers, as taxpayers and the revenue collector place these rights on the backburner. But it is precisely at this time that the rights of taxpayers need attention and someone to champion these and ensure they are put in the spotlight. It is also noted that when taxpayers are not aware of their rights, they feel more compelled to pay their taxes than feeling patriotic – which means that morality drops and non-compliance increases," adds Prof Legwaila.

The OTO will do its utmost to protect taxpayers' rights. Our vision is to strengthen the taxpayer's trust and confidence in the tax administration system, and our mission is to be an efficient, independent, impartial and fair redress channel for taxpayers.

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 the website at [www.taxombud.gov.za](http://www.taxombud.gov.za) for more information about when and how to lodge a complaint.

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

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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."**

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