



OFFICE OF THE
TAX OMBUD
Ensuring fairness

MEDIA STATEMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TAX OMBUD CELEBRATES 8 YEARS OF FAIRNESS BY INTENSIFYING TAXPAYER RIGHTS AWARENESS

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Pretoria: The Office of the Tax Ombud's (OTO) eighth anniversary celebration today, 1 October, coincides with the launch of its 2021 educational campaign to intensify awareness about taxpayer rights and promote tax compliance during the current tax season of the South African Revenue Service (SARS).

Tax Ombud Judge Bernard Ngoepe describes the eighth anniversary as a "milestone" that should be celebrated as it not only marks eight years of pursuing excellence in service delivery but also the beginning of another year filled with new opportunities to make a more meaningful contribution to the country's tax administration system.

"I am extremely pleased with what this institution has achieved in such a short period of time. We have provided a free and impartial platform to help resolve taxpayer complaints, and our interventions on numerous complaints against SARS have saved taxpayers millions of rands. It is not only businesses that have received refunds through our intervention but also ordinary citizens, who have the right to be treated fairly and with respect," says Judge Ngoepe.

He adds that the support the OTO has received from stakeholders, including taxpayers and members of the Recognised Controlling Bodies, has been outstanding. "While some institutions may have very little to show after almost a decade of existence, we have made tangible contributions in the tax administration system. A former Minister of Finance commended our work as having helped SARS turn the proverbial corner and become a better institution. With the skills

and the drive we have, we believe we have made a positive contribution to the improvement of the country's tax administration system by promoting tax compliance through protecting taxpayers' rights."

Tax collection pressure must not infringe taxpayers' rights

1 October 2021 also marks the launch of the OTO's taxpayer rights awareness campaign, which takes place at the height of the SARS tax season. With the continued COVID-19 pandemic and loss of jobs, SARS is under pressure to collect more taxes to provide much-needed services. Judge Ngoepe says the need to collect more taxes should not infringe on taxpayers' rights.

"The challenges facing our country calls for increased tax compliance but not at the expense of taxpayers' rights. It is a given that our government should collect more taxes to meet the growing social needs, including those caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent wanton looting and destruction of property. Increased tax compliance is not only required but also necessary. We call on all taxpayers to pay what is due, and we in turn commit to continue doing everything possible to ensure that taxpayers are not forced to pay a cent more than what is required."

The OTO's education and awareness campaign, themed #TaxpayersRightsMatter, reiterates the Office's service delivery philosophy and promotes taxpayer rights. Judge Ngoepe says the campaign is vital as it will ensure that more taxpayers know about the OTO and the free and impartial assistance it provides to those with complaints against SARS. "Over the years, we have intensified our campaign to promote awareness about the OTO and taxpayer rights which we are mandated to protect. We call on all to pay taxes due; it is both legal and morally right. Pay your taxes and make a difference to the country and its people."

Judge Ngoepe once again warns that corruption compromises tax compliance, with some taxpayers threatening to boycott paying taxes because of that. "I believe more people would willingly pay taxes if they knew that their taxes would be used to help make the lives of all people better."

Taxpayers can contact the Office of the Tax Ombud on 0800 662 837 or complaints@taxombud.gov.za or visit our website on www.taxombud.gov.za for more information about when and how to lodge a tax complaint. Walk-in visits to the Office are still suspended due to the Covid-19 pandemic 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 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.
