



MEDIA STATEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OMBUDSMAN OFFICE OPENS ITS DOORS TO JOBURG RESIDENTS

Joburg's Executive Mayor Cllr. Mpho Parks Tau this morning cut the ribbon to the doors of the Office of the Ombudsman for the City of Johannesburg and officially declared it open for business amid much anticipation from the City's residents.

Complaints can now be lodged with the Ombudsman, Advocate Siduduzo Gumede. A number of avenues are available to residents who want to lodge a complaint against the City. They can visit the office in Houghton or e-mail: info@joburgombudsman.org.za

Walk-in complaints will be accommodated at the Ombudsman's Office, situated at the Isle of Houghton, Wildsview II at 36 Boundary Road, Houghton Estate. Residents will be assisted through the process and can be assured that complaints can be made in the language of their choice. Complaints will be kept confidential.

Online complaints can be made by logging onto the official website of the Office of the Ombudsman www.joburgombudsman.org.za and by downloading, completing and submitting the complaints form provided.

Further avenues for residents to interactively communicate with the Ombudsman are through the social media channels under the Twitter handle [@Joburgombudsman](https://twitter.com/Joburgombudsman) and Facebook at the same name, Joburgombudsman.

Complaints must be in writing. There is, however, a call centre number for follow-ups and general enquiries and a team of eager agents have been operating at the call centre during its live testing phase and they are ready to assist residents with their enquiries.

Residents have been advised that the Office of the Ombudsman is an office of last instance. This means that residents must first take their complaints through remedial avenues already available to them in the City before escalating these to the Office of the Ombudsman.

Agents at the call centre will be able to advise residents on whether they have exhausted all options available to them and help them to lodge complaints.

Advocate Gumede stressed the importance of being accessible and available to Joburg residents and that in weeks to come the Office of the Ombudsman would embark on public engagements and roadshows to ensure that he reaches residents in all the seven regions of the City of Johannesburg.

He plans to start opening satellite offices in the Regions later on in 2015, so that the services of the Ombudsman will be readily accessible to people, without them having to travel too far from where they live.

Johannesburg is the first Municipality in Gauteng to launch an Office of the Ombudsman. The process began during engagements between Executive Mayor Cllr Mpho Parks Tau and the Public Protector, Advocate Thuli Madonsela, whose office has handled an increasing number of complaints against the City.

Complaints have ranged from billing issues, planning permissions or disputes, traffic fines, poor compliance with municipal by-laws, informal trading, hijacked and abandoned buildings. The Ombudsman will engage with the Public Protector's office on these matters and he will handle all new cases related to the City of Joburg going forward.

"It is great to see the culmination of the work of the City's Legislature, its Councillors and Departments and the many processes they have had to follow come together today in this way", said Advocate Gumede.

The Ombudsman will resolve some of the long-standing complaints against the Municipality which residents have struggled to have resolved using the normal channels of recourse.

He will mediate and conciliate disputes, investigate acts of maladministration or corruption and ensure that the rights of the public are upheld in terms of The Constitution.

Some of the milestones achieved were the public participation process where citizens were consulted about the Establishment of the Office of the Ombudsman; the adoption of the by-law which governs the Office and its functioning, the appointment of Advocate Gumede, several benchmarking exercises and the setting-up of his new office.

A brochure with further details about the role of the Ombudsman and the by-law can be downloaded from www.joburgombudsman.org.za

ENDS

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