

MEDIA STATEMENT
**UNPACKING THE TAX OMBUD
ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22**

ISSUED BY THE OFFICE OF THE TAX OMBUD
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NINE YEARS OF ENSURING FAIRNESS

PRETORIA: OTO celebrates nine years of ensuring fairness by helping hundreds of taxpayers secure their refunds from SARS. This includes R215 million in top 10 tax refunds collectively paid to taxpayers through the intervention of the OTO.

This is one of the many highlights discussed at the launch of the Tax Ombud Annual Report 2021/22 with stakeholders earlier today. The unpacking of the report corresponds with the OTO's ninth anniversary, celebrating its role in ensuring fairness, promoting taxpayer rights and helping improve the country's tax administration system. The OTO has continuously provided a free and fair avenue for resolving taxpayers' complaints against SARS and has received praise for helping improve service delivery within the revenue collector, while also acknowledging the work that still needs to be done.

Acting Tax Ombud Prof Thabo Legwaila said he was pleased that the OTO had

made a tangible difference in taxpayers' lives, helping resolve 1 561 taxpayer complaints during the reporting period. "We are excited that our intervention helped secure more than R215 million for the 10 highest-value refunds paid to taxpayers. However, our services are more than just about securing refunds; we believe we have helped save businesses, homes and jobs while ensuring ordinary taxpayers are treated with respect."

Prof Legwaila said the OTO was passionate about promoting and protecting taxpayer rights and tax compliance, hence the publication of the Compilation of Taxpayers' Rights, Entitlements and Obligations. "We believe that over the past nine years, the OTO has helped restore taxpayer trust in the tax administration system. For example, during the reporting period, SARS implemented 98% of our recommendations, confirming the importance of the Office of the Tax Ombud as an independent and impartial institution."

First Tax Ombud

Prof Legwaila, who was last week appointed the Acting Tax Ombud following the ending of Judge Bernard Ngoepe's term of office, said: "The establishment and development of the Office of the Tax Ombud from inception to where it is now is undoubtedly an outstanding achievement. This was achieved through Judge Ngoepe's selfless and dedicated commitment to service to the public. The staff of the OTO and the South African public, particularly the taxpayers, have been tremendously privileged to have an individual of his calibre serving as the Tax Ombud."

Expressing gratitude to Judge Ngoepe for his impeccable leadership, Prof Legwaila said he had been generous with his time and wisdom. "Most, if not all of us, have learnt lessons, not only of professional life and providing quality service to the public, but also great life lessons, which we will keep and continue to practice. We wish him all the best in his continued service to the country and its people," added Prof Legwaila.

During Judge Ngoepe's tenure, the OTO had many milestones, including conducting systemic investigations and releasing two reports that helped SARS address many challenges faced by taxpayers. Among others, the reports compelled SARS to stop the practice of withholding verified taxpayers' refunds without valid reasons. Judge Ngoepe also cultivated mutually beneficial partnerships with numerous stakeholders in the tax sphere, particularly Recognised Controlling Bodies, SARS, the media and taxpayers.

Prof Legwaila said the OTO would intensify its awareness programmes through platforms such as stakeholder engagements and digital communications tools. The OTO had so far reached more than 30 million television viewers and listeners through its awareness campaigns. "We have also embraced digitisation, which has promoted taxpayer-centricity by allowing taxpayers to lodge complaints directly online, including on their mobile devices, without having to print and sign forms."

Whilst the OTO is celebrating its ninth anniversary, it has committed to pursuing excellence and exemplary service delivery, ensuring that more people know about its service and utilise its free services.

[Access the annual report here](#)

For more information, visit www.taxombud.gov.za.

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