

**MEDIA STATEMENT
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**JOBURG OMBUDSMAN CALLS FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF
OLDER PERSONS**

On 19 and 26 August 2022, the Office of the Ombudsman in collaboration with the City of Johannesburg (CoJ) Social Development Department will visit the Annie Burger Old Age Home and Eeufees Oord Old Age Home respectively, to address the challenges relating to the treatment of older persons within municipal-owned facilities of this nature through advocacy, awareness, and education of their basic human rights.

The Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) prohibits unfair discrimination against anyone on the grounds of, inter alia, age. In 2006, new legislation was passed, making further provisions for the protection of the rights of older persons, shifting services from primarily institutional care to community-based care. Yet despite the legislative protection of older persons, they continue to face several challenges as a vulnerable group with unique and varying needs.

While the City of Johannesburg has made substantial developments in mitigating the inequality of older people by ensuring the accessibility of service delivery and protecting their rights through the establishment of its 46 retirement villages, there is still much to be done if elder persons are to be fully integrated into society.

The main aim of local government is “to ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner”. Thus, according to Section 152 (1)(b) of the Constitution, the provision of services is an important function of every municipal government. This means that exposure to risks should be equally considered in conjunction with the socio-economic well-being of the elderly.

The mandate of the Office of the Ombudsman is to investigate any alleged acts of maladministration and human rights violations within the City of Johannesburg departments and municipal entities. And through our senior citizen engagements, our office aims to improve the quality of care received by all elders in old age homes

“From a shortage of staff, uncontrolled access control, dysfunctional streetlights, and inconsistent rubble removal to constant geyser leakages, and dilapidated roofs, we hope that through our recently signed MoUs with the various city departments and entities viz., Housing, Johannesburg Property Company (SOC) Ltd, City Power, and Pikitup, etc., we will be able to work closely together to ensure that service delivery is enhanced so that the right to quality of life, non-discrimination, and human dignity of senior citizens of the City is protected and maintained”, commented Advocate Siduduzo Gumede, City of Johannesburg Ombudsman.

The Department of Social Development for the City of Johannesburg is currently conducting an Older Persons Policy for public participation in all the seven regions of the City of Johannesburg. Amongst others, it will include interventions ranging from ensuring safety and

preventing abuse of older persons through procurement of surveillance equipment, access control, and screening of personnel when appointed to work in the old age homes, frail care centres, and retirement villages to ensuring the sustainability of facilities through monitoring of programs implemented and advocating for the promotion of social inclusion of the elderly which speak specifically to the concerns raised by senior citizens residing in the old age facilities identified by the Office of the Ombudsman.

“As the City’s Social Development Department, we strive to ensure that Older Persons are able to fully enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms when residing in any shelter, care, or treatment facility, including full respect for their dignity, beliefs, needs, and privacy and for the right to make decisions about their care and the quality of their lives”, added Matome Makgoba, Social Development Department Executive Director.

“The City of Johannesburg cannot protect and promote the rights of older persons without the support, cooperation, and active participation of the community. We wish to therefore call on all residents and officials to respect and encourage the protection of the rights of our senior citizens as contained in our laws”, concluded Advocate Gumede.

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