



Victory for Wilro Park Retirement Village



The Office of the Ombudsman has once again helped to restore hope in the lives of residents of the City of Johannesburg; this time in favour of senior citizens living in the Wilro Park Retirement Village situated in Roodepoort, west of Johannesburg.

Represented by Mr. Louis van der Merwe, the residents approached the Office of the Ombudsman in March 2022, after numerous attempts to escalate their grievance against Joburg Water following the rejection of their application for a 50% sewer rebate. With no success nor satisfactory feedback from the municipal-owned entity, the complaint approached our office, alleging that Joburg Water's decision to reject their application was because of the misinterpretation of relevant legislation and policy provisions relating to sewer rebates.

Our office deemed the complaint justifiable and subsequently instituted an investigation, setting parameters in terms of the desired outcomes for the complainant; firstly, for Joburg Water to implement the rebates from the date of application; and secondly to investigate if Joburg Water was in fact correct in its actions to reject the granting of the rebates which may indicate a possible act of maladministration.

The investigation produced positive results for the complainants which found that Joburg Water had indeed erred in its interpretation of the provisions used to reject the rebates application. Our analysis determined that Wilro Park Village property owners qualify for the 50% rebate for sewer in terms of Section 15 of Local Government: Municipal Property Act 6 of 2004, it was recommended that Joburg Water (1) Grant and Implement 50% sewer rebates benefit to Wilro Park Retirement Village property owners from the 2018/2019 financial year period and (2) share the report findings and recommendations with the City's

Revenue Shared Services Centre to implement the rebate on the SAP System for continued billing on the corrected 50% rebate provision.

Although it has taken the residents of Wilro Park more than three years to close this chapter (which includes a year with the Office of the Ombudsman) it's important to note that investigative work cannot be rushed but that the guiding principles should remain true and that is fairness and justice ought to bring complainants as close as possible to where they would have been had it not been for maladministration. As an office, we pride ourselves in the commitment shown by our investigative team in resolving this longstanding matter by applying a fine-tooth comb to this case, bringing victory to the plight of the residents of Wilro Park Retirement Village.

The Ombuds called to Action!

In May 2023, the Office of the Ombudsman, in proud collaboration with the Chair of Chairs office of the City of Johannesburg, visited the Donovan McDonald Old Age Home after receiving an outpouring of complaints from senior citizens, pertaining to the poor maintenance of its facilities.

In an effort to mitigate a few of the concerns raised, our office not only granted residents within the 175-unit establishment an opportunity to register their cases for investigation but also explained the process of lodging complaints; urging them to give our office sufficient time to conduct their investigation and engage with the relevant departments.

During our visit, complaints raised ranged from neglected repair work such as plumbing, burst geysers, damaged tiles, access control, and security issues stemming from criminal activities and the illegal occupation of units by non-qualifying tenants.



Image: Residents of Donovan McDonald Old Age Home





In accordance with our mandate to raise awareness of the role of the Office of the Ombudsman as a trusted mediator of service delivery, maladministration and human rights violation complaints against the city, our office provided the elderly residents with an overview of our services as well as the various communication channels available to everyone wanting to lodge a complaint with the Office of the Ombudsman.

We pledge to undertake outreach activations across the seven regions of the city and ensure that all citizens of Johannesburg receive equitable and efficient services because your rights as a resident do in fact matter.

The integrity of Information: An Efficient Digital Infrastructure

Up until February 2019, the Office of the Ombudsman had been using a manual system to process and investigate complaints. Since the marked shift in the development and implementation of the Case Management System (CMS), our office has witnessed a significant improvement in the effective management of lodged complaints, from the seamless capturing of complaints in a digital format to real-time updates throughout an investigation.

Through the simple click of a button, the CMS has helped to enhance the integrity of information and enable us as an office to efficiently protect the information of our customers by providing centralised data management and functionalities such as quick access to information and effective inter-unit/department collaboration, which help to accelerate the efficient resolution of cases.

From the first intake of a complaint, the system allows a streamlined workflow to the next levels of investigation, keeping all correspondence in one place, right up until the finalisation and closure of an investigation file.

We have done away with spreadsheets and confusing email threads – empowering our teams to work more efficiently. The CMS platform enables us to track all complaints received, measure progress, and actions are taken so that we manage compliance with our Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) timelines and ensure the effective and efficient resolution of complaints. This gives us confidence that as an office of last instance, we are able to provide an excellent service to complainants, essentially establishing residents' trust in our processes to remedy and/or offer recourse to their challenges and concerns.

This technology will be rolled out, and made accessible to the public from our website, further empowering residents to independently lodge complaints from anywhere, with 24-hour access to their cases. This means that once they lodge a complaint online and have received a reference number, they will be able to check on the progress of their complaint.

This allows transparency within the system, providing detailed feedback on the steps being taken to resolve their matter which will be updated as per SOP milestones.

For those who do not have access or cannot use digital platforms, our office will remain open for walk-ins, in our head office situated at the SAPPI Building on 48 Ameshoff Street in Braamfontein as well as regional offices across the City of Johannesburg.

Walk the Talk with the Joburg Ombudsman



To further raise awareness of residents' human right to access to efficient service delivery, the Office of the Ombudsman held a walkabout in Braamfontein on Wednesday, 24 May 2023 under the theme "Walk the Talk with the Joburg Ombudsman".

Through the active involvement of the City, the office will work closely together with the respective city departments and municipal-owned entities, to ensure the enhancement of service delivery and that residents' rights to quality of life, non-discrimination, and human dignity of the residents of the City is protected and upheld within the city.

Visit www.joburgombudsman.org.za for more information.

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