



2024 Highlights

As we conclude the last month of 2024, we reflect on an exciting year that carried a few notable accomplishments such as the launch of our newly promulgated [Ombudsman By-Law 2023](#) and the renewal of our MoU with the office of the Public Protector. Both these outcomes are a win for the residents of the City of Johannesburg as they will assist our office to assert the democratic values of human dignity and equality and ensure the preservation of those constitutional rights.

Our focus this year was, and continues to be, providing fair, independent, and accessible dispute resolution services for the residents of the city, hence, we also elevated our efforts in respect of consumer education, marketing and increasing the visibility of the Office by embarking on several projects, including conducting a brand awareness survey, outreach projects and attending various consumer education workshops as well as the City of Johannesburg Legislature's Community Based Planning sessions.

From the Ombudsman and his team, we wish to thank our stakeholders whose continuous support as valued partners enables us to touch thousands of lives beyond racial and social class limitations. A special mention to our clients for putting their trust in us - *You are why we do what we do.*

Wishing you a joyful holiday season and a happy New Year!

Help keep the (street)lights on this holiday season

In February 2023, our office identified vandalised streetlights along the Malibongwe Drive in Cosmo City's Lion Park and after observing the huge safety risk the non-functionality of these lights posed on all road users, we then initiated an own-instance investigation. The case was subsequently closed in June 2024 after repairs were actioned by the municipal-owned electricity utility, City Power.

Unfortunately, such incidents are widespread across the City of Johannesburg, but more prominent in the Roodepoort, Randburg, Hursthill, Lenasia, and Reuven Service Delivery Centres (SDCs), with Malibongwe, Kibler Park, Golden highway and the M2 highway offramp which have been classified as hotspots.



Images: Vandalised streetlights (pre-own-instance investigation) and City Power technical team onsite

Vandalism not only poses a significant threat to the functionality of essential infrastructure but also threatens the safety of the city's residents, increasing the risk of accidents and compromising the overall well-being of our communities.

While the city continues to improve security measures to keep criminals away from damaging its infrastructure, the extensive nature of the network across the city makes effective policing extremely difficult.

In the spirit of active citizenry, we implore residents to report unlawful activities such as theft, illegal connections, meter bypassing, and tampering etc. to help protect our city's infrastructure and maintain safer communities by contacting City Power's anonymous toll-free line 0800 116 166.

Joburg Ombudsman's reflects on World Toilet Day



19 November 2024 marked the annual World Toilet Day, a United Nations observance campaign, which aims to address the global sanitation crisis. Under the theme, "Toilets - A Place for Peace", it highlighted how inadequate sanitation systems affected countless lives. According to the UN, about 3.5 billion people still do not have access to safe sanitation facilities, including 419 million who practise open defaecation and a further 1 000 children under the age of five reported to die each day from diarrhoea related to inadequate sanitation and contaminated water sources.

However, the [General Household Survey, 2023](#) released in May 2024 by Statistics South Africa, reported that access to improved sanitation (flush toilets and pit toilets with ventilation pipes) increased from 61,7% in 2002 to 83,3% in 2023 yet, despite this improvement, communities like the informal community of Dark City in Region G, continue to be subjected woefully inadequate sanitation services that expose them to significant health risks i.e., disease transmission from the use of pit latrines.

"Period Poverty - An average young girl typically misses four to six days of school a month - that's an annual loss of about 60 learning days - due to the absence of safe, hygienic and dignified sanitation facilities even at school."

South Africa does not lack policies to address the issue of pit toilets. In truth, the National Sanitation Policy (2016) provides guidelines and support to municipalities for sanitation service delivery and to eradicate pit toilets.

Policies do exist - we just need to advocate for their successful implementation and ensure that there are budget provisions to realise their existence.





Outreaches continue to reach thousands of residents

The Office of the Ombudsman often conducts outreaches across Johannesburg to help communities learn more about their human rights in relation to municipal services and how we can advocate to protect those rights.

Our office has always prioritised the needs of the residents of the city and throughout the year, we have been providing services to people who may not have otherwise had access to them in the past, by visiting the seven administrative regions of the city and assisting to address several pain points within the city's departments and/or entities.

Through our outreaches, we have had a positive impact on the residents (more especially senior citizens living within old age homes) who are now not only aware of our services but also their basic right to access to efficient and equitable municipal services.



Image: Ombudsman Civic Education Session

When we conduct these programmes, we frequently come across disgruntled individuals who have been left with very little hope after having exhausted the city's internal complaints handling processes. For example, in a desperate attempt to address their longstanding matters with the city, the residents from Ennerdale and Lenasia recently "fenced in" our ambassadors and demanded to be directly addressed by the Ombudsman, with the hope that the problems they experience incessantly in the area can be resolved.

With some facing water disconnections, "air billing" and dilapidating infrastructure in city owned facilities, our ambassadors often find themselves having to engage with residents who face heart-wrenching psychosocial challenges, by offering them the support they need - which is sometimes lending a sympathetic ear - in very trying conditions at the front line.

Our office deals with various types of complaints and through our outreaches, we have been able to reach thousands of residents from the respective regions, each with their own unique set of challenges.

International Ombudsman Summit 2024, Hong Kong

To celebrate its 35th anniversary, the Office of The Ombudsman, Hong Kong is currently hosting the first International Ombudsman Summit in China, where it will conduct a series of activities from 2 – 4 December 2024.



Image: General Masondo (SANDF), Advocate Kholeka Gcaleka (Public Protector of SA) and General Oswald Reddy (former Major General in the SAPS).

Under the theme of "Ombudsman in a Changing World: Learning from the Past; Preparing for the Future", the Ombudsman for the City of Johannesburg, Advocate S'du Gumede will gather alongside Ombudsmen from around the world, local and international professionals and academia, to share their respective insights, knowledges, experiences, challenges and best practices and explore the future development of Ombudsmanship.



Holiday Office Hours

Please note that our office will be operating on skeleton staff this festive season and customers are encouraged to make use of our digital channels to lodge their complaint(s).

However, walk-ins are still welcome during our standard operating hours from 08h00 – 16h00 on weekdays, except for the 16th, 25th, and 26th of December 2024 as well as the 1 January 2025 which are all public holidays.

- **Helpdesk:** 010 288 2800
- **WhatsApp:** 081 365 0225
- **Email:** complaints@joburgombudsman.org.za
- **Socials:** @jhbombudsman (X) & Joburg Ombudsman (FB)

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