

**MEDIA STATEMENT
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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June 16 reminds us that every resident has the right to be heard

Every year on June 16, South Africans reflect on the bravery of the youth who challenged injustice and asserted their right to be heard. Their actions not only altered the trajectory of our country's history but also affirmed a fundamental democratic principle: people must have a voice and those in positions of authority must listen. More than fifty years later, this principle remains central to the protection of rights, accountability and responsive governance.

While today's challenges may look different from those faced by the youth of 1976, many communities continue to struggle to have their concerns heard and addressed. Across Johannesburg, residents face recurring service delivery problems, ranging from electricity outages and infrastructure failures to poorly maintained public spaces and delays in resolving municipal complaints. When these concerns go unanswered, their impact extends beyond inconvenience and affects livelihoods, dignity, safety and public trust in government.

Access to responsive and accountable public administration is not a privilege but a constitutional right. Section 33 of the Constitution guarantees every person the right to administrative action that is lawful, reasonable and procedurally fair. When residents are unable to obtain answers or resolutions from public institutions, that right is placed at risk.

This is where accountability mechanisms such as the Office of the Ombudsman for the City of Johannesburg (the "Joburg Ombudsman") play a critical role.

As an independent office, the Joburg Ombudsman exists to ensure that residents who have exhausted normal City of Johannesburg (CoJ) complaint channels still have access to a fair and impartial process. Our role is not only to investigate complaints but also to strengthen public confidence in local government by ensuring their concerns are properly considered and addressed.

Building a culture of accountability begins with awareness. Too many residents, particularly young people, remain unaware of the avenues available to them when public services fail. This is why the office recently hosted a Youth Month Outreach activation at Alexandra High School in Region E, Ward 91.

The engagement introduced learners and educators to the Ombudsman's mandate, complaint processes and escalation procedures. More importantly, it encouraged meaningful discussions about issues affecting local communities including electricity supply challenges, the management of public spaces and broader service delivery concerns. The response from learners and school management was overwhelmingly positive, with 105 service completed during the outreach. What emerged from these conversations was a strong desire among young people to become active participants in shaping their communities and holding institutions accountable. This is precisely the kind of civic engagement our democracy needs.

The youth of 1976 demanded a voice in decisions that affected their future and today's young people deserve no less. By educating residents about their rights and available remedies, we help ensure that future generations are equipped to engage constructively with government and demand accountability when public services fall short.

As we commemorate Youth Month, residents should remember that they do not have to accept unresolved service delivery failures as the norm. The first step is always to report concerns to the City of Johannesburg's official customer service channels and obtain a reference number.

If the matter remains unresolved after these processes have been exhausted or if you believe you have suffered an injustice because of maladministration, the Joburg Ombudsman is available to assist.

For assistance or more information residents can contact the Joburg Ombudsman through 010 288 28001, complaints@joburgombudsman.org.za, www.joburgombudsman.org.za or visit head office at 48 Ameshoff Street in Braamfontein.

Because accountability begins when residents know their rights and use their voices

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