

Where has the time gone? This office has grown exponentially over the past few years and it is with great pride that I find myself looking back on all the challenges we have overcome and all the changes that have taken place. I have been concerned with the promotion and protection of residents' rights since my appointment as the interim City Ombudsman at the end of 2000, and it was with a great sense of honour that I accepted the position of City Ombudsman on 1 May 2005.



The office was initially established with no staff and now has 11, all of who have helped to not only expand my vision but to develop it further. The City Ombudsman has undergone a complete new re-branding as part of the new marketing strategy developed by the Corporate Marketing Department and we will soon be implementing this strategy to staff and residents. Our new slogan, "People matter, so we strive to reach a working solution" embodies how passionate we are about helping to bring about an amicable outcome to residents' problems with the City for all concerned. There may be many obstacles which lie ahead but I am confident that we will overcome them, as nothing in this world is impossible - in the words of Nelson Mandela, "It always seems impossible until it's done."

It is my hope that you will enjoy this edition of the Ombudsman writes. Have a blessed and prosperous festive season and may 2012 bring new and exciting developments.

Mbulelo Baba

Office of the City Ombudsman

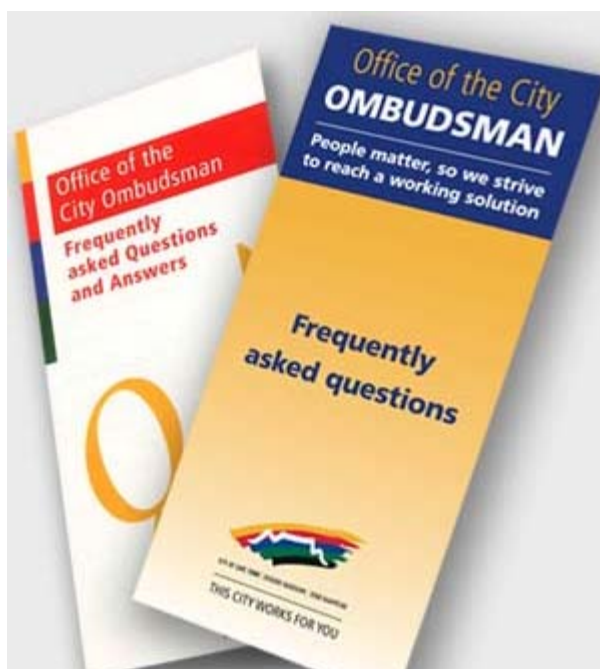
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The Office has gone blue! Introducing our new marketing strategy

The Office of the City Ombudsman has embarked on a new marketing strategy created in partnership with the City's Marketing Department. This strategy will soon be communicated to councillors, staff and residents. Our new slogan, "People matter, so we strive to reach a working solution" encapsulates our commitment to always doing everything possible to find a solution to residents' problems. The office has changed its branding colour from red to a 'warmer' blue to reflect our approach to dealing with complaints and we are hoping this 'brand rejuvenation' will enhance our customers' experience.



In with the new, out with the old: our new look brochure (right) replaces our older, red version (left)



Celebrating our heritage and our rights

We set up a stand in the Heritage exhibition arranged by the City's Arts and Culture Department from 20 to 23 September 2011 at the Cape Town Civic Centre. Heritage Day is a South African public holiday that celebrates the nation's diversity and culture and reminds us how far we have progressed. We used the occasion to tell staff and residents that they now have other avenues to follow should they be confronted with poor municipal service delivery, and that these rights were not afforded to everyone in South Africa in the period preceding 1994. We also conducted a survey linked to a daily competition to measure staff awareness levels about us and are pleased to report that the response rate surpassed our expectations. In a nutshell:

- 91% of staff have heard of the Ombudsman by word of mouth or via the web
- 83% of staff know when they can lodge a complaint with us
- 100% of staff know that we offer a free complaints handling service

We also reiterated our central tenet, which is that we must be seen as a last resort for municipal related matters, which means that residents are obliged to try to resolve their complaints with the respective department before we can intervene.





Ombudsing in local government

Mandlenkosi Mgogoshe

Although ombudsing is a fairly new concept in industry circles, it is not so in the Cape Town metropolitan area. The office was started just over a decade ago with only the City Ombudsman and his secretary as staff. Together, these two intrepid individuals handled about a hundred cases at the time and the Office soon became internationally recognised for being the first ombuds office at local government level.

Since then, our staff complement has grown to 11 and we deal with more than a thousand complaints per year (1 281 complaints were handled during the 2010/2011 financial year alone).

Our operations are underscored by the new Consumer Protection Act, which was immediately effected for large capacity municipalities on its passing in the second quarter of 2011. The City was ready as ratepayers have always had an office where they can lodge their complaints.

Ombudsing in local government can only improve service delivery within its constituent communities. It has been repeatedly proven to be the best option for mediating on impasses brought about by municipal service delivery errors as it is free, impartial, independent, flexible and speedy.

At present, only eThekweni and Breede Valley municipalities offer an ombudsman service to their ratepayers, and we strongly recommend that other South African municipalities seriously consider establishing a similar service. Ratepayers need to be given an opportunity to complain about sub-standard services - but not to the same institution which provides the service (given that they may feel this may have repercussions.)

Although not as widespread as parliamentary or industry ombudsing, the local government version is an important mechanism at the level closest to communities and should be encouraged to become an institution.



Creating awareness in the Office and the world!

16 Days of Activism for No Violence against Women campaign

The Employment Equity Department and the City Wide Gender Task Team hosted a number of activities for staff in support of the 16 Days of Activism for No Violence against Women campaign which commenced on 24 November 2011.



The focus of the activities was on education and awareness about various forms of gender based violence and their impact on productivity in the workplace. The theme for the campaign was "Peace in the homes and peace in the world, there is no excuse for abuse. Say 'No!' to gender based violence."

One of the campaign activities included a panel discussion highlighting the "Impact of Violence against Women on Productivity in the Workplace." This proved to be an open-

mindful experience in which the speakers spoke about abuse myths, current statistics, sexual harassment in the workplace and services available for victims and perpetrators.

World Aids Day

World Aids Day, a global initiative to improve awareness about HIV/Aids, began on 1 December 1988. The occasion is used by activists around the world to fight prejudice, increase the number of people being tested and improve people's knowledge about the disease.



The theme for World Aids Day 2011 was 'Getting to Zero', which sets three new targets "Zero new HIV infections. Zero discrimination. Zero AIDS-related deaths". World Aids Day provides an opportunity for everyone to take on the challenge of getting to zero.

Pink Day in Aid of Breast Cancer Awareness

In aid of Breast Cancer awareness month in October we hosted a 'Pink Hour' to raise awareness about the symptoms of breast cancer and encourage women to have regular check ups. Radha Gavondsamy, a breast cancer survivor and volunteer for CANSA (The Cancer Association of South Africa) shared her story of courage and hope and how her cancer is in remission after 40 years. Claire Matthee, a community mobiliser for CANSA also spoke to us about the risks associated with certain products such as sweeteners, re-using plastic margarine or ice-cream containers and looking out for 'smart' products with the CANSA mark.



For more information on female cancers and CANSA's Women's Health Campaign, email:

info@cansa.org.za or call the toll free Call Centre on 0800 22 66 22.



Radha Gavondsamy and Claire Matthee (CANSA) share their story



(L-R) Clarissa Williams, Carla Fredericks, Helene Coutinho (City Ombudsman's Office), Claire Matthee, Radha Gavondsamy (both CANSA), Bulelwa Siwisa, Natasha Paulse and Alicia Wilson (City Ombudsman's Office)

What we did for Mandela Day

The Mandela Day campaign message is simple - Nelson Mandela gave 67 years of his life fighting for human rights, and we can be an (almost) equal force for good if we donate just 67 minutes of our time each Mandela Day, 18 July, in support of a charity or serving our local community.



In support of Mandela Day this year, we donated money towards buying clothing and other baby essentials for the babies at [Ubuntu House](#), a halfway house for abandoned children in Goodwood.

The orphanage's house parents, Naas and Miems Vermaak welcomed us with open arms and educated us as to how they place the babies with their 'forever' parents. It takes a strong individual to be able to bid farewell to babies after growing to love them but these exceptional individuals do it with courage. We found the entire experience to be exceptionally moving and offer our salutations to people such as these.



People you should know:

Western Cape Public Protector

The Public Protector is a high level official who is independent of government and political parties and is appointed by Parliament in terms of the Constitution. He/she receives complaints from aggrieved or distressed persons against government departments, agencies or officials, and has the power to investigate, mediate, conciliate and negotiate, and issue reports which indicate any remedial action to be implemented.

Physical Address:	4th Floor 51 Wale Street/Bree Street Cape Town
Postal Address:	P.O. Box 712 Cape Town 8000
Tel:	021 423 8644
Fax:	021 423 8708

Western Cape Consumer Protector

The Office of the Consumer Protector is a provincial protection agency that aims to provide access, information, education and redress to consumers who experience consumer related disputes with regards to:

- Electrical and electronic appliance defects
- Furniture - product defects/returns/refunds
- Motor vehicles - repairs
- Financial - micro-loans, collections
- And any other related services such as electricity and water

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Top tips for green living

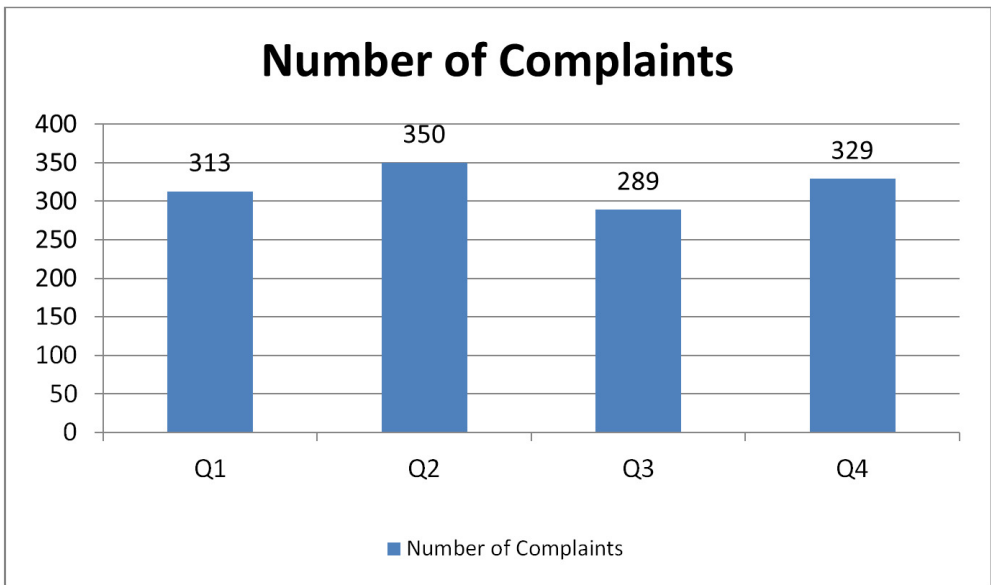
- Adjust your geyser thermostat to a lower setting during summer to save electricity costs
- Approach the City as soon as possible if you receive a high water bill (as this could be due to a leak)
- A conventional oven uses the equivalent power of 18 microwave ovens. We recommend that you rather use your microwave to cook - it's quicker and cheaper
- Shower instead of running a bath. When you shower, you use less water. This means that your geyser will need less electricity to heat the water



Statistics

Over the past financial year (1 July 2010 – 30 June 2011) the office has investigated 1 281 complaints. On average:

- 70% of these cases were resolved during the current financial year
- The turnaround time for resolving complaints was 74 days for the financial year
- 'Recommendations accepted' were 74% for the financial year
- Most of the complaints received were from the Finance and Utility Services directorates



Marketing survey - great prizes to be won!

Win one of three great prizes by completing our marketing survey below! Winners will be randomly chosen from entries which contain suggestions for content.

- **1st Prize:** 4-in-1 sports tog bag
- **2nd Prize:** Thermal mug and business card holder
- **3rd Prize:** Cooler bag, stress ball & pen

To enter, complete the questionnaire below and fax to: 086 581 7618 or e-mail it to: ombudsdirect@capetown.gov.za with 'Competition Number One' in the subject line.

OmbudsmanWrites Survey

Did you find the subject matter in this newsletter informative and useful?

Yes or No

Are the articles relevant?

Yes or No

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.



Goodbye and good luck!

We said a sad goodbye to David Phiri at the end of August. David has been with us almost since the Office's inception when he was transferred from another department within the City. He is writing a book about ombudsing and we look forward to reading it. We wish him well in his future endeavours.



Contact us

You can contact the Office of the City Ombudsman on 021 400 5487 or visit our website by clicking on the link below:

www.capetown.gov.za/en/CityOmbudsman/Pages/default.aspx

E-mail complaints

ombudsdirect@capetown.gov.za