

# Ombud appointed for consumer goods and services

The establishment of an ombud's office in Johannesburg on Wednesday, 13 March 2013, to handle advanced consumer complaints against consumer goods and services providers is expected to iron out challenges in addressing and resolving disputes between consumers and providers speedily.

The newly launched Consumer Goods and Services Ombud was set up by members of the consumer service industry and regulatory body at a time when the National Consumer Commission has battled to address hundreds of thousands of complaints advancing to its offices in Centurion manned by some 70 staff members and the Ombud is also expected to ease this pressure.

The Consumer Goods and Services Ombud aims to formalise the processing of consumer complaints and finding means to address complaints other than legal processes.

At the launch acting Commissioner of the National Consumer Commission Ebrahim Mohamed welcomed the Consumer Goods and Services Ombud saying it would resolve complaints while the commission promoted informal means of dispute resolution and enforce functions assigned to it by the Consumer Protection Act.

"This is a positive step because it (the Consumer Goods and Services Ombud) will be present in all provinces which means extension of consumer protection mechanisms," Mohamed said.

Executive director of the Aerosol and Manufacturers Association and former head of legal and regulatory affairs at the Consumer Goods Council of South Africa Nick Tselentis said the formation of the Ombud was a means of building of the guidelines of the Consumer Protection Act.

"The process needed full time assistance from the industry whose efforts varied in terms of service standards to the consumer. In case of disputes consumers find it frustrating when they do not get answers from retailers regarding a complaint," Tselentis said.

Tselentis said the next step would be for the Ombud to formalise a board and to appoint an Ombudsman who will operate from an office in Randburg.

Chris Jacobs the call centre manager said an office of 125 people had been set up in Cape Town to perform the functions of the Ombud until it was established.

This office received up to 500 calls a month and also deals with the customer care department of some of SA's biggest brands including Tiger Brands, Jacobs said.

The appointment of an Ombudman is expected by the end of April.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>