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GAUTENG CONSUMER COURT STRENGTHENS COMMITMENT TO PROTECT CONSUMER RIGHTS THROUGH INAUGURATION OF NEW MEMBERS

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The Gauteng Consumer Court, a cornerstone of justice for consumers in the province, has taken a significant step forward with the inauguration of its new panel of its members. This milestone reinforces the dedication of the Gauteng Office of Consumer Affairs to ensure consumer rights are upheld, grievances are redressed, and justice prevails.

The Gauteng Consumer Court stands as a vital institution that adjudicates unfair business practices and disputes that may arise in the marketplace between consumers and suppliers. With its primary mission being to safeguard the interests of consumers, the court plays a pivotal role in maintaining a just and equitable economic landscape.

According to the Consumer Affairs Act, the court is composed of five distinguished members, including a chairperson who possesses substantial legal experience, ensuring a foundation of wisdom and integrity. The other four members bring their specialised knowledge in areas such as consumer advocacy, economics, and commerce, ensuring a comprehensive and well-rounded approach to dispute resolution.

The swearing-in of these newly appointed members signifies a reinvigorated commitment to the values that underpin the court's existence. Each member has a unique background and adds to the court's collective ability to navigate complex consumer-related matters and make informed and unbiased decisions.

Gauteng Economic Development MEC Tasneem Motara, under whose portfolio the consumer affairs fall, had this to say: "The Gauteng Consumer Court is a vital pillar of our commitment to protect and empower consumers across the province. The diverse backgrounds and expertise of the new members reinforce our determination to provide a platform where every consumer's voice is heard and their rights are staunchly safeguarded. This inauguration marks a significant stride towards a fair and just marketplace for all."

The newly inaugurated members include individuals with exceptional qualifications and a proven track record in their respective fields. Their dedication to consumer rights and their commitment to upholding the principles of justice position them as valuable assets to the Gauteng Consumer Court's mission.

As the court embarks on this new chapter, it reaffirms its dedication to building a society where consumer concerns are not just acknowledged but also thoroughly addressed. The Gauteng Consumer Court, with its reinvigorated panel of members, stands resolute in its pursuit of justice, fairness, and the protection of consumer interests.

The new members are:

- **Chairperson:** Zandile Mpungose - LL.M (Commercial Law), Certificate (Corporate Law) was the previous alternate chairperson.
- **Member:** Adv. Malesela Phukubje - LL.B, Diploma (Company Law).
- **Member:** Paul Lepekola Samuels - LL.B, Diploma (Investigative and Forensic Accounting), Advanced Certificate (Alternative Dispute Resolution), Certificate (Mediation and Arbitration).
- **Member:** Diane Reinette Terblanche - LL.B.
- **Member:** Adv. Matsobane Gabriel Mello – LL.B, Certificate (Corporate & Ethics Governance Engineering and Construction and International Contract).

The alternate new members are:

- Prof. Maria Aletta Du Plessis – Ph.D., previous chairperson of the Gauteng Consumer Court and current alternate chairperson.
- Phillippina Aletta Opperman - Honours Consumer Science
- Simon Matleshe Seima - LL.B

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