

MEDIA STATEMENT

For Immediate Release

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**GAUTENG OFFICE OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS WARNS YOUTH OF RISING MOBILE
PHONE SCAM**

The Gauteng Office of Consumer Affairs (GOCA) urges the Youth to be vigilant against a rise in cellphone scamming in the consumer market. Fraudsters and scammers are increasingly preying on unsuspecting consumers and swindle them out of their airtime and money.

“During our awareness campaigns, consumers reported that they received phone calls from people who pretended to be the network service providers and told them that they have won cellphones. Consumers were then expected to recharge airtime and send it to these criminals before receiving the cellphones. Unfortunately, the unsuspecting victims then openly purchased the airtime and sent it to the criminals, but never received the cellphones”, says Mr. Morapedi Machakela Acting Director: Education, Awareness and Stakeholder Relations.

For instance, Ouma Raphadu from Pretoria became a victim after she had “won” what she believed was a cellphone and R1000 voucher. “The person who phoned me pretended to be a network service provider and requested that I send R80 worth of airtime to him, to get the prizes I have won. After sending the airtime, his phone rang unanswered and was turned off at a later stage. That is when I realised it is a scam”, says Raphadu.

Mr Machakela further urges the youth to be vigilant and never trust anyone who calls them pretending to be from the network company. Network service providers do not contact people and ask for airtime, their personal and security details.

The Gauteng Office of Consumer Affairs (GOCA) was established by the Gauteng Department of Economic Development (GDED) to protect and promote consumer rights in the Gauteng Province.

GOCA will commemorate Youth Month 2022 by empowering the youth about consumer rights and responsibilities in the consumer market.

Below are consumer tips from GOCA:

- **Getting unwanted emails, SMS's and calls selling you products?** You have the right to restrict unwanted direct marketing by informing suppliers of goods and services to stop sending you advertisements. Suppliers are also not allowed to share your information with third parties.
- **Beware of scams.** If you're buying something online, spend a few minutes checking it – start by finding its terms and conditions, the company's address and also check to see what people have said about the company. It's worth looking for reviews on different websites – don't rely on reviews the company has put on its own website.
- **Scammers may pretend to be legitimate employers / service providers.** Some scammers may advertise fake job opportunities so that you share your information with them, and then they use that information for fraudulent activities in the consumer market and some may ask for an advance fee to provide the service.
- **Do not participate or promote pyramid and related schemes** that are offering interest rates of 20% and above the South African Reserve Bank-regulated repo rate.
- **Buy local.** By buying local, we retain and may even re-create some of the jobs that were lost due to the pandemic.
- **There are nine consumer rights.** Know your consumer rights, exercise them and transact confidently in the consumer market.

The Gauteng Office of Consumer Affairs investigates and resolves consumer complaints for free of charge. Lodge a complaint should you feel unsatisfied with the supplier of goods and services.

Consumers are encouraged to report any complaints to consumer@gauteng.gov.za or for telephonic enquiries contact - (011) 355 8006

For more details and media enquiries please contact:

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