

**16 August 2024**

**Dear Stakeholders,**

We write to address the current backlog in dispute resolution at the Community Schemes Ombud Service (CSOS). Over the past financial year 2023/2024, there has been a significant increase in the number of disputes lodged with CSOS, resulting in a backlog of over 3,000 cases. This situation has arisen due to several key factors:

- 1. Increased Number of Disputes:** Financial challenges faced by many owners and schemes have led to a rise in the use of our free dispute resolution service. Additionally, court rulings mandating that disputes within CSOS's jurisdiction must be referred to us have further contributed to the influx of cases.
- 2. Process Automation:** The manual processes currently in place, particularly within the dispute resolution process, have created bottlenecks at the assessment and adjudication stages. To address this, we are preparing to deploy the CSOS Connect platform, an automated system by October 31, 2024. This automation will reduce turnaround times and increase efficiency in handling disputes.
- 3. Adjudication Capacity:** Although disputes are managed by both internal and external adjudicators, the previous panel of external adjudicators ended in December 2023. To address the backlog, we have appointed part-time adjudicators and are increasing allocations to all adjudicators to expedite the resolution of arrear levies and urgent disputes, as identified in the CSOS Practice Directive on Disputes.

“We want to assure you that we are taking decisive steps to address the backlog and improve our service delivery,” says Acting Chief Ombud, Ms. Kedibone Phetla.

Working closely with the newly appointed Acting Adjudicator General, Abe Masilo, we are expanding our capacity by



bringing in additional part-time adjudicators and optimizing our processes to ensure quicker resolution of cases. We are also aware of concerns regarding individuals including former employees exploiting the CSOS processes for personal financial gain, which has further exacerbated the financial strain on some schemes. These unethical actions not only undermine the integrity of the CSOS but also place unnecessary financial burdens on our stakeholders

We want to emphasize that CSOS services are freely available, and there is no need for go-betweens to approach us on your behalf. We strongly advise stakeholders **not to pay for services that are available for free at CSOS.**

We understand the frustration that this backlog may cause, and we are committed to resolving it as swiftly and efficiently as possible. Our long-term solutions, including the deployment of the dispute resolution module on CSOS Connect and the ongoing engagement with stakeholders, will ensure that we are better equipped to handle the growing demand for our services.

We assure our stakeholders of an effective dispute resolution process and kindly ask for your patience during this time. However, should you need any updates or have concerns regarding disputes lodged, please do not hesitate to make inquiries.

CSOS is committed to responding to stakeholder queries in line with the standards set out in our Service Charter. We will acknowledge receipt of your query within two working days and provide you with progress updates within five working days of receiving the query. For telephonic inquiries about pending disputes, you can expect feedback within 24 hours.

Additionally, for dispute-related matters, please feel free to reach out to the following CSOS Senior Managers for Dispute Resolution:

- **Renusha Mahabeer: KZN, FS & MP | Email: [renusha.mahabeer@csos.org.za](mailto:renusha.mahabeer@csos.org.za)**
- **Thora Sikholiwe: WC, EC & NC | Email: [thora.sikholiwe@csos.org.za](mailto:thora.sikholiwe@csos.org.za)**
- **Charmaine Johnstone: GP, NW & LIM | Email: [charmaine.johnstone@csos.org.za](mailto:charmaine.johnstone@csos.org.za)**

You can also contact our call centre at **0800 000 653** for further assistance.

Thank you for your continued support and understanding as we navigate these challenges. If you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to reach out.

**ENDS**