18 DECEMBER 2020
TO: ALL MEDIA

MEDIA STATEMENT

INFORMATION REGULATOR CAUTIONS THE PUBLIC TO PROTECT THEIR PERSONAL INFORMATION DURING THE FESTIVE SEASON

With the festive season in full swing, the Information Regulator (Regulator) cautions the public to be extra vigilant with their personal information at this time, as abuse of personal information can be rife during the festive season. This year our country has experienced an unprecedented number of data breaches. It is therefore important for everyone to take extra precaution to protect their personal information.

The December period is one of the busiest times in South Africa, where people travel to different provinces and holiday destinations to be with family and friends. Many people will be using online shopping to purchase goods and services for the festive season. In addition, many will be offered goods and services through unsolicited electronic communication.

“It is important for all of us to be vigilant by verifying the authenticity of businesses we do online shopping with, before we give them our personal information such as credit card information. We should also read all the offers for goods and services made through unsolicited electronic communications before clicking the ‘yes’ button,” said the Chairperson of the Regulator Adv. Pansy Tlakula.

The protection of personal information is a joint responsibility. We therefore appeal to everyone to take control of their privacy. We remind public and private bodies that if they cannot protect personal information, they should not collect it. 2021 is a significant year for the protection of personal information in South Africa. All private and public bodies who process personal information will have to be compliant with the Protection of Personal Information on 1 July 2021. We therefore urge all public and private bodies to ensure that they are POPIA compliant by that date.
The Information Regulator would like to wish everyone a safe festive season and encourages adherence to COVID-19 protocols, by practicing social distancing, always wearing a mask in public and washing hands with soap and water or using a sanitiser.

Please note that the offices of the Regulator will be closed as of 21 December 2020 and will resume its operations on 4 January 2021

Ends.

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ISSUED BY THE INFORMATION REGULATOR SOUTH AFRICA