

7

GETTING GOVERNMENT CLOSER TO THE PEOPLE

1. This is one of those oft used, ringing phrases to 'justify' an existing Government's policies. It is when one tries to logically unpack the policies that all kinds of practical difficulties crop up.
2. It could mean that representatives of Government make a policy of engaging sectors of civil society, or it could mean that Government selects experts from society to advise it on effective policy implementation. "Or it could mean that sectors from civil society petition" Government on specific issues which they want to have attended to etc etc.
3. None of the above are unimportant. However none of them have automatic constitutional standing unless specifically stipulated by law. This is seldom the case. The simple question is: What recourse does a voter have to call Government to account on any issue? Again one can argue that it depends on the electoral system within which a voter can cost a vote.
4. The current electoral system is known as a "Closed list Proportional System". Basically the list that is drawn up that ensures someone goes to Parliament, is drawn up by the Party Leadership. The voter has no say who a member of Parliament will be. In fact the voter cannot call to account any currently elected member of Parliament. The ANC tries to address this problem by allocating voters to constituencies that is selects, but these constituencies have no legal standing whatsoever and are simply party political statements.

5. To bring Government closer to the people through an electoral system means creating a formally and legally constituted electoral system. The system proposed by the Cabinet Appointed Electoral Task Team proposed a multiple member constituency system where South Africa would be divided into +/- 70 geographic constituencies and from each could come no less than 3 and no more than 7 member of Parliament. Such a system could play a profound role in bring Government closer to the people. Why? Because the voter will be able to physically identify members of Parliament from his/her constituency to come and give account.