

# editorial

## Post-election analysis

The 2009 national and provincial elections have come and gone. As expected, the results have reshaped politics. The new President has promised a marked improvement in the service delivery and performance of the public sector. Holding on to old dogmas or introducing new theories will not be his primary concern. Local government's privileged status in the Constitution may very well be one of those 'dogmas' that can be sacrificed in the name of effective service delivery. If ever there was a time for local government to prove that local discretion and decentralisation are good for development, the time is now. The new government is going to look for developmental results and effective service delivery. It will not accept the constitutional status and distinctiveness of local government as the end of the debate.

The election results are also reshaping governance arrangements, as is evident from the rearranging of the furniture at national level in the form of new ministries and departments. What will some of these mean for local government? For one thing, the Department of Provincial and Local Government is no more. Its new name, along with the beloved abbreviation 'DPLG', has been replaced by the new name: Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs.

A level of continuity is guaranteed, though, with the incumbent Minister Sicelo Shiceka maintaining his position. The appointment of Yunus Carrim as Deputy Minister will be to the advantage of local government. Mr Carrim is a respected and experienced politician. He chaired the National Assembly's Portfolio Committee on Provincial and Local Government during the formative stages of local government. He oversaw the processing of the Municipal Demarcation Act, the Municipal Structures Act, the Municipal Systems Act, the Disaster Management Act, the Municipal Property Rates Act and numerous other statutes and amendments to statutes pertaining to local government.

The impact that the new National Planning Commission will have



Photo: Jasyn [www.zoopy.com](http://www.zoopy.com)

on local government is still uncertain. However, Minister Trevor Manuel brings to the commission a keen understanding of local government, as the National Treasury has become increasingly active in regulating and monitoring local government over the past decade. In addition, Pravin Gordham, the new Minister of Finance, also has an impressive portfolio of local government involvement. Before joining SARS, he served as the chair of the Portfolio committee on Local Government and was intimately involved in the drafting of the White paper on Local Government and the ensuing suite of local government laws.

The appointments of Hazel Jenkins (Pixley ka Seme District Municipality) and Helen Zille (City of Cape Town) as premiers of the Northern Cape and Western Cape respectively confirm that mayors have upward mobility. Other notable appointments of mayors are Dickson Masemola (Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality) and Anton Bredell (Swartland Local Municipality) as MECs in the Limpopo and Western Cape governments respectively. Local government counts on them to bring their local government experience into their new provincial positions.

The new configuration also presents new challenges, particularly in the area of intergovernmental relations. Relations between the Western Cape provincial government and the City of Cape Town may no longer be dominated by rivalry between political parties, but intergovernmental relations should work even between governments controlled by different parties. Sound intergovernmental relations and the effective use of the intergovernmental relations architecture is crucial, particularly in a multiparty context. A new trial for the intergovernmental relations system is waiting: a DA-controlled Western Cape will put national-provincial intergovernmental relations to the test. The onus is on the incumbent politicians and their administrators to live up to the promise of cooperative governance.

Jaap de Visser  
Associate Professor  
Local Government Project  
Community Law Centre, UWC