



FROM THE ANGLICAN ARCHBISHOP OF CAPE TOWN
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Submission to the Inquiry on Free and Fair Local Government Elections during COVID

The Anglican Church in Southern Africa supports the upholding of the South African Constitution in the holding of General Elections every five years. The last Local Government Elections (LGE) were held on 3 August 2016. This means that the next elections are scheduled to take place between August and November 2021 (according to the Constitutional mandate).

Every election, however, is subject to it being free and fair. Any threat to the integrity of an election, leading the general population to doubt the outcome, has the potential to cause political and economic instability. It is key that political parties and Independent candidates have the opportunity to campaign and convince voters to consider voting for them. Candidates must have equal and unencumbered access to voters, while voters must have the right to vote without any threat.

Circumstances such as civil war, exceptionally violent protest, fire, significant storm or any force majeure rendering voting impossible can threaten the freeness and fairness of an election. Currently we are faced with a global pandemic that has caused much hardship and suffering. The uncertainty of the trajectory of the pandemic creates the greatest challenge to the 2021 LGE.

If an election merely involves voters going to a Voting Station to cast their vote and then leave, observing COVID 19 protocols, it can be managed in a free and fair manner. For an election to take place as required by our Constitution, political parties and candidates should commit to the same protocols in their campaign plans. If this cannot be guaranteed, the risk of elections becoming "super-spreaders" will be a price too high to pay. Political parties and candidates should subscribe to COVID 19 health protocols in their campaigns if an election is to continue.

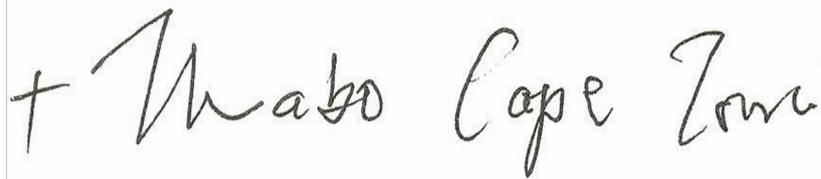
The Anglican Church in Southern Africa expresses its support for the IEC and Justice Moseneke to guide the nation. We acknowledge the work done by the IEC to prepare for the elections in exceptionally challenging circumstances. We pray for the safety of electoral staff.

Any decision to postpone the 2021 LGE, since it requires a constitutional deviation, is a weighty decision. We offer our prayers and support for a process of integrity to guide our nation through this period of our history, a process that takes account of all the necessary factors: the legalities that have to be observed, the science of the pandemic and the overriding importance of respect for the sanctity of life.

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It is incumbent on all of us to work together to ensure that stability and democratic practice remains our fundamental unifying force in these challenging and unprecedented times.

We thank the inquiry for inviting the views of civil society on this matter.

A handwritten signature in black ink, enclosed in a thin black rectangular border. The signature reads "+ Mabo Cape Town" in a cursive, flowing script.