

Press Statement: The Public Service Commission Act

23 Sept 2026

The recent testimony of Professor Fikeni, PSC Chair, at the Madlanga Commission, underscores the centrality of the integrity, systems and operations of the public administration for addressing the growing crisis of organised crime, corruption and state (in)capacity in South Africa. Public sector legislation recently passed in the 7th Administration provides a foundation for moving forward with state reform and should now be built on.

The Public Service Commission Act has just been signed into law. It provides more robust protections for the PSC's independence, expands its mandate into local government, and bolsters its authority to direct executive authorities (including municipal managers) to respond to its findings in relation to the PSC's Constitutionally enshrined mandate. This includes investigating personal practices against the Constitutional and regulatory frameworks and investigating grievances brought to it by public sector employees.

The passing of the Act followed some robust and useful deliberations in the Portfolio Committee, to which the organisations listed below contributed – we congratulate the Committee and the Public Service Commission on the Act. The independence and calibre of the Commissioners and the PSC secretariat is of significance as the PSC is poised – per the National Development Plan and Professionalisation Framework – to play a role in supporting meritocratic appointment processes in the public service, and a new oversight role in local government.

It is still an open question as to precisely how the PSC should support the professionalisation of local government administrations – a debate ripe for (informed) discussion given the dire state of our municipalities. Reforming the way South Africa appoints senior municipal managers has been included as a goal in government's latest five-year Medium-Term Development Plan and the draft White Paper for Local Government – and Operation Vulindlela has added local government reform to its growing list of focus areas. We suggest there is a future role for the PSC to play in safeguarding the integrity of appointment processes, without compromising Constitutionally enshrined local government autonomy. This role should be piloted and implemented incrementally as the capacity of the PSC grows.

The Commission's work and mandate is arguably not as widely known amongst a general public as Chapter 9 bodies like the Public Protector or the Auditor-General, but it deserves attention and support of the public, and especially from reform minded civil society, relevant professional bodies, and activist academics. An independent, properly capacitated, and publicly supported PSC is a genuine democratic asset – as the citizens continued confidence in democracy is dependent on improving the capacity and integrity of the public administration.

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ENDS.