



## Kingmaker extraordinaire: AIC

The African Independent Councillor (AIC) makes an unusual (legal) person of the month after threatening to cripple the delicate coalitions that allow the ANC to rule Ekurhuleni and Rustenburg. Both are clearly highly significant councils for the ruling party, especially Ekurhuleni - the ANC's remaining metro foothold in Gauteng. This Personality of the Month unpacks the background of the tiny AIC (which secured only 0.78% of municipal votes nationally in August) and considers its chances of success in leveraging its kingmaker role to secure the re-demarcation of Matatiele back into KwaZulu-Natal.

### A party formed in protest to provincial boundaries leveraging local support

The AIC was formed in 2005 to oppose the incorporation of Matatiele into the Eastern Cape - a cause it lost in a Constitutional Court challenge in 2006 ([ewn.co.za](http://ewn.co.za)), but sticks to vehemently. The Party has come to the fore with its slender voter support (1.64%) that secured Ekurhuleni for the ANC.

Disillusioned by the ANC's failure to engage on the return of Matatiele to KwaZulu-Natal ([ewn.co.za](http://ewn.co.za)) after the cancellation of a meeting scheduled for earlier this month, the AIC is threatening to rescind its support if a decision to return Matatiele to KwaZulu-Natal is not made by the end of March ([www.iol.co.za](http://www.iol.co.za)). At the time of last year's horse-trading, the AIC also had other demands (tarring of roads in the Eastern Cape, the re-opening of Maluti College and the improvement of the road between Matatiele and Lesotho, [ewn.co.za](http://ewn.co.za)).

It is noteworthy that Ekurhuleni was also won by the ANC with the help of the PAC, the Patriotic Alliance under Grayton Mckenzie, and Independent Ratepayers Association of SA under Izak Berg ([www.iol.co.za](http://www.iol.co.za)), which won 0.42%, 0.27% and 0.24% respectively - not enough on their own to boost the ANC's 48.64% into majority terrain.

One could not blame the ANC for at least some bitterness with speculation that a number of ANC supporters confuse the Party with the AIC given its similarity in name and logo ([en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org)), and its place on the ballot list.

Like Khutsong residents, the demand in Matatiele has little to do with local government and is driven by the view that provincial health and social services would be better in KwaZulu-Natal than in the Eastern Cape. In echoes of a David Cameron Brexit gamble, the AIC alleges that former Minister of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Sicelo Shiceka, held a referendum on the issue in 2009, but unlike Brexit, withheld the results ([www.iol.co.za](http://www.iol.co.za)). It is interesting, however, that the AIC secured only 7.12% of total votes in Matatiele (while the ANC won 73.56%).

The problem for the ANC is not only the questionable legitimacy of the AIC in representing the people of Matatiele (never mind Ekurhuleni or Rustenburg) but also that it has no direct control of the legislative process required for a constitutional amendment to redemarcate Matatiele. In addition, if it does decide to proceed to support a campaign for the redemarcation of Matatiele it will have to convince Parliament and the public at large that this is in the country's best interests and not just political expedience. But the wily AIC knows how high the stakes are and it is likely that we will not have heard the last of this curious personality.

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