



## IEC under fire (again)

This month we have chosen the IEC as our "person" of interest in local government; with the latest news from the highly contested Metsimahollo by-elections ([municipaliq.co.za](http://municipaliq.co.za)) alleging vote-rigging and putting the organisation's credibility under threat ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)). This Personality of the Month considers the IEC's track record in local government and why it matters so much.

### The slur of "Tlokwefication"

It is intriguing that despite the legal issues that arose in the run-up to the August 2016 local government elections (LGE), brought to light by irregularities in the voters' roll in hotly-contested Tloke by-elections ([municipaliq.co.za](http://municipaliq.co.za), [municipaliq.co.za](http://municipaliq.co.za), [municipaliq.co.za](http://municipaliq.co.za)), that the LGE results went uncontested.

Logically there is limited room to "jimmy" the system (by bussing voters from one constituency to another, for instance) in an across-the-board election as voters can only vote once, but in a limited area (such as a single municipality or ward) surrounded by a large potential pool of possible voters, there's no doubt the potential for vote-rigging or manipulation is significantly increased. So, as in Tlokwe before it, allegations of vote-rigging should not be dismissed out of hand.

The IEC's credibility came under fire last year when it became evident that millions of South Africans do not have verified addresses, with arguments about the logistical complications of such verification countered by the ability of other institutions (financial and cellular) managing to comply with FICA and RICA requirements in this regard.

So it is a concern that a year after the 2016 LGE it is being alleged that vote-rigging is once again underway in Metsimahollo ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com), [ewn.co.za](http://ewn.co.za)) with the SACP alleging that of the 5000 special voter names submitted to the IEC over 1000 were those of dead people ([twitter.com](http://twitter.com)).

It is also a concern that the IEC found it necessary to dismiss its presiding officer in one of the Metsimahollo voting stations after a complaint by the EFF that she was not "inking" voters and was giving voters three ballots instead of two ([www.affonline.org](http://www.affonline.org)).

This comes on the same day as security flaws in the IEC's online portal to verify voters' details - in time for a June 2018 deadline - were identified; allowing the potential to manipulate and create profiles exposed ([mybroadband.co.za](http://mybroadband.co.za)).

The IEC urgently needs to address these flaws and investigate claims in Metsimaholo to ensure that a crucial part of local government democracy functions.

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