



Siyashesha Leadership Incubator NPC  
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### **About ACTIVATE!**

ACTIVATE! Change Drivers is a Network of more than 4000 Active citizens with the capacity to drive change for the public good across South Africa. The network connects youth who have the skills, sense of self and spark to address tough challenges and initiate innovative and creative solutions that can reshape our society. Activators have a shared purpose, commitment and responsibility to forge a better, more just South Africa for the public good and for themselves.

### **Overall Comments**

The Network welcomes the opportunity to make comment and inputs on whether the upcoming elections will be free and fair. The Network also recognises and acknowledges the importance of engaged citizens and empowered youth activism that can both support and hold government accountable. It is with this in mind that we make this submission to further amplify youth voices, especially at grassroots level

We acknowledge the importance of ensuring that the elections take place in a manner that we as a collective consider to be free and fair. In so doing we need to factor in that covid-19 might negatively hamper these elections in that regards.

We also implore the IEC to also consider that entire electoral cycle and not just voting day when it comes to the upcoming elections. Voter education is quite key, given the low voter turnout among the youth, the IEC needs to focus a lot of its efforts into ensuring that we young people are educated about voting. Voter education can also be done in partnership with Civil Society Organisations and the 9 Legislatures.

Observer education is also quite key for the organisations that will be accredited to have observers.

*Watch this space.*

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The Network is not homogenous therefore we will provide inputs into why we think the elections will be free and fair as well as reasons we would render them not to be

**Reasons why we would consider the elections “free and fair”**

- We have had multiple by-elections during the pandemic and that has played out quite well managed on the part of the IEC.
- Covid-19 protocols are observed for the voters, volunteers and staff. The IEC must ensure that trained personnel are appointed to ensure a safe and fair election. Political party representatives, observers are the to make sure that the elections are fair
- If the IEC considers having the elections take place over a number of days, 3-5 days and not the traditional 1 day. It's quite important that the IEC looks at alternatives an unlearn the traditional way of facilitating elections
- Low infection rate among young people and the vaccination of senior citizens is complete.
- Speeding up the vaccination programme
- The IEC should consider introducing online voting alternatively introduce ballot by Post Office
- Voting requires one vote alone
- The IEC should also explore what amount of people can vote at any given time and divide everyone in slots, against capacity. Larger voting stations can have 50% while smaller voting stations can have 30% capacity
- Encouraging more special votes, increasing capacity to administer special votes
- Communicate its strategic plan that we can input into

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**Fears and concerns that might render the elections to not be free and fair**

- Low voter turnout induced by fear of infection
- Covid-19 regulations such social distancing, which will affect citizens who often require close assistance in casting their vote
- On the other side we have serious issues of vaccination. We only have a minor number of elder citizens that have been vaccinated while forgetting to also prioritize on youth because they have a huge impact as major electorates
- Possibilities of a new variant
- Preparation and training of IEC staff to ensure that covid-19 protocols are adhered to
- Reduced number of observers due the number of people that might be required in the voting stations

**Contributors:**

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