The spheres of Government

South Africa has three spheres of government, namely:

1. National Government
2. Provincial Government
3. Local Government

Government has the responsibility to make policies and laws about the rights and responsibilities of citizens and the delivery of government services. Government collects revenue (income) from taxes and uses this money to provide services and infrastructure that improves the lives of all the people in the country, particularly the poor.

The Constitution of South Africa sets the rules for how government works. There are three spheres of government in South Africa:

- National government
- Provincial government
- Local government

The spheres of government are autonomous and should not be seen as hierarchical. The Constitution says: The spheres of government are distinctive, inter-related and inter-dependent. At the same time they all operate according to the Constitution and laws and policies made by national Parliament.

The government machinery is made up of three parts:

- The elected members (legislatures) – who represent the public, approve policies and laws and monitor the work of the executive and departments.
- The Cabinet or Executive committee (executive)– who co-ordinate the making of policies and laws and oversee implementation by the government departments
- The departments and public servants – who are responsible for doing the work of government and account to the Executive

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The Judiciary is also defined as part of government, but they are independent so that courts can protect citizens without being influenced or pressurised by government. The independence of the Judiciary is a cornerstone of constitutional democracy. It guarantees the supremacy of the Constitution. We do not deal with the Judiciary here since they are not formally part of the policy-making or implementation machinery of government.