



# Recommendations Structures

## Cabinet

The communications and information economy sector is key to the management and direction of modern government and the ability of South Africa to address development concerns. By bringing the people of South Africa, wherever they may be and whatever their current disadvantage, into the information economy, we empower society as a whole. In a very real sense, therefore, the information economy will play a critical role in assisting the elision between the 'two worlds' of South Africa into 'one world' in which we can all relate to each other.

### CABINET COMMITTEE ON THE INFORMATION ECONOMY

The structures involved in the communications and information economy are heterogeneous, both within and outside government. Successful development will thus depend on good co-ordination, particularly between government departments and with other structures in society engaged in the building of the information economy.

The recommendations of the Task Group reflect this. The issues cross all boundaries in our society. Because of this, Cabinet needs to develop a special and inter-ministerial focus on the information economy and its requirements. This will ensure that national direction and oversight are maintained.

We therefore propose:

#### **Recommendation 1**

A Cabinet Committee on the Information Economy be established to ensure top level consideration and inter-ministerial co-ordination of all relevant aspects in this sector.

#### **Recommendation 2**

The Cabinet Committee be led by the Presidency in order to ensure integrated and coherent development of policy and strategies.

Ministries involved in this committee could include: Posts, Telecommunications and Broadcasting; Arts, Culture, Science and Technology; Education; Public Enterprises; Finance; Trade and Industry; Public Service; Environment and Tourism; Foreign Affairs.

The new Cabinet Committee would help ensure that there is good co-ordination between ministries in all matters relating to communications and information.

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CABINET COMMITTEE

The areas to be encompassed by this Cabinet Committee on the Information Economy will include:

- the building of a dynamic and competitive telecommunications industry that can address the needs of business, consumers and development;
- the building of dynamic radio and television industries that are critical to nation-building, business, culture and development;
- the building of a dynamic communications service within all structures of government;
- the development of a strategy for marketing South Africa internationally;
- the development of a national information policy that brings South Africa and all its people into the global information economy;
- the development of policy and the active promotion of accessible 'plain' language throughout government.

# THE GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATIONS & INFORMATION SYSTEM (GCIS):

## A new structural framework for government communications

The development of a new policy and structural framework for South Africa's Government information system, through all three tiers of government, will depend on a system that is comprehensive, integrated, streamlined and structured for delivery.

We have called this new modernised system the Government Communications & Information System or GCIS.

The GCIS is the term used to describe the entire infrastructure of government communications and information. It is thus the operational framework for the new proposed system. It is therefore proposed that:

### **Recommendation 3**

A comprehensive Government Communications & Information System (GCIS) be established within which framework all government communication & information will be co-ordinated.

The GCIS has been designed to maximise the capacity of the existing government communication 'system', restructured in a fundamental way in order to achieve the goals and objectives of the new system. Thus, it will focus on the:

- development and strengthening of relationships within government at all levels, and,
- development and strengthening of partnerships between government and civil society, in order both to increase government capacity and the capacity of civil society.

Thus:

### **Recommendation 4**

The GCIS be designed in a way that is geared to the optimisation of relationships and partnerships within and between the structures of government, as well as between government and civil society.

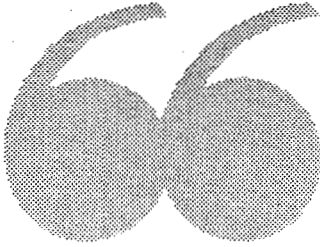
The GCIS should be centrally co-ordinated from as close to the Presidency and Cabinet as possible. In other words, the voice that speaks to the public should be the voice of government itself. Thus it is proposed that:

### **Recommendation 5**

The GCIS be co-ordinated from the Presidency.

### **Recommendation 6**

The Head of the GCIS also be the Head of Communications in the Presidency.



### **Recommendation 7**

The Head of the GCIS maintain close links with & communicate decisions taken by Cabinet - both to the outside world and within the GCIS communication structures.

Effective co-ordination must facilitate but not centralise the information flow.

The second principle governing the GCIS is, therefore, that communications/ information should be delivered by the level of government closest to the consumer of that information. Centralised co-ordination is required for the coherent provision of support services and the harnessing of energies in a co-ordinated, streamlined and cost-effective manner.

This means the information and communication capacity of departments, provinces and local councils must be strengthened through a variety of means.

The emphasis in the GCIS is therefore on co-ordination from the centre and implementation at local level. Thus it is proposed that:

### **Recommendation 8**

The GCIS communicate/deliver information from the level of government closest to the consumer or user of that information.

### **Recommendation 9**

The GCIS develop an infrastructure to ensure coordination between national departments (horizontally), between the three tiers of government (vertically) and between other government bodies and parastatals (laterally).

## THE SCOPE OF THE GCIS:

### Three areas of Government communications

It is proposed that the GCIS encompass three broad areas of government communications: media liaison, communication services and support, and provincial and community liaison. Thus, it is proposed that

#### **Recommendation 10**

the GCIS encompass three main areas:

- Media Liaison
- Communication Services
- Provincial and Community Liaison<sup>55</sup>

### MEDIA LIAISON

The first area involves the co-ordination of government statements/communications to the outside world, as well as relations with the media as a whole. This requires a considerable improvement in the ways in which relations between government and media are built and maintained, and is vitally important if the government is to communicate its policies and priorities to the population.

A strong focus on effective media relations is a common feature of most well-run government information systems.

Practical and regular co-ordination at all levels is required. It is therefore proposed that:

#### **Recommendation 11**

A weekly (post Cabinet) national meeting of liaison officers be held, chaired by the Head of the GCIS.

#### **Recommendation 12**

A series of forums be established in order to ensure regular meetings to co-ordinate government messages at various levels throughout government.

#### **Recommendation 13**

A regular meeting between the head of the GCIS and the proposed provincial forum of communicators be formalised in order to maintain a critical link between national and provincial government.

### COMMUNICATION SERVICE AGENCY

The second component of the GCIS is the establishment of an agency within government to assist in the delivery of professional communications in an economical and streamlined manner

It is proposed that the agency be called the Communication Service Agency (CSA)

The CSA will support the development of excellence and professionalism within the GCIS and in delivery of information by government to the South African people.

55. See Annexure 22.

The mandate of the CSA is to act as a centre of excellence and professionalism for a number of core communication activities within government. It will provide and facilitate these services itself where appropriate and will also actively support the development of capacity building for its clients.

The CSA will be staffed by a core group of professional marketing and media professionals with highly developed skills in the communications and information fields.

The CSA, as a specialised professional agency, will access, bulk buy and otherwise purchase services on behalf of departments, communities and other bodies including provincial and local government. It will also operate a minimum number of essential services. Functional elements of the existing SACS will be subsumed under CSA management where appropriate.

The selection of services included in its mandate will, however, be based on explicit criteria - services which only government is in a position to provide. One of the essential elements of this will be the facilitation of a development information service.

The selection of such services will be reviewed and assessed from time to time so as to avoid unnecessary expansion or 'bloating' of the structure, and to maintain cost effectiveness and economy at all times.

The CSA will not deal with the content of messages, nor be a voice of government.

It is therefore proposed that:

**Recommendation 14**

The second function of the GCIS be performed by the CSA, a small, specialised and highly professional agency designed to provide, facilitate, access and purchase selected communications services on behalf of government, using bulk buying and other cost saving mechanisms.

**Recommendation 15**

The operation of the CSA be cost-effective and streamlined, and that it be evaluated against management by objectives criteria currently being adopted by government in all its agencies.

**Recommendation 16**

Overall co-ordination be maintained by the Head of the GCIS to which the CSA will be accountable.

## PROVINCIAL AND LOCAL LIAISON

The third component of the GCIS addresses directly the need for highly focussed information programmes targeted at communities. This will require support for, and liaison with, a national network of co-operating partners including provinces, local authorities and community organisations and community media.

To facilitate this, we propose the establishment of a system of liaison with provinces and, through provinces, with local structures.

Specifically this will involve the creation of a network of forums in order to ensure channels of communication and the free flow of information vertically between tiers of government.

It is therefore proposed that:

**Recommendation 17**

The third function of the GCIS be to support a national programme of development information delivered inter alia through the CSA.

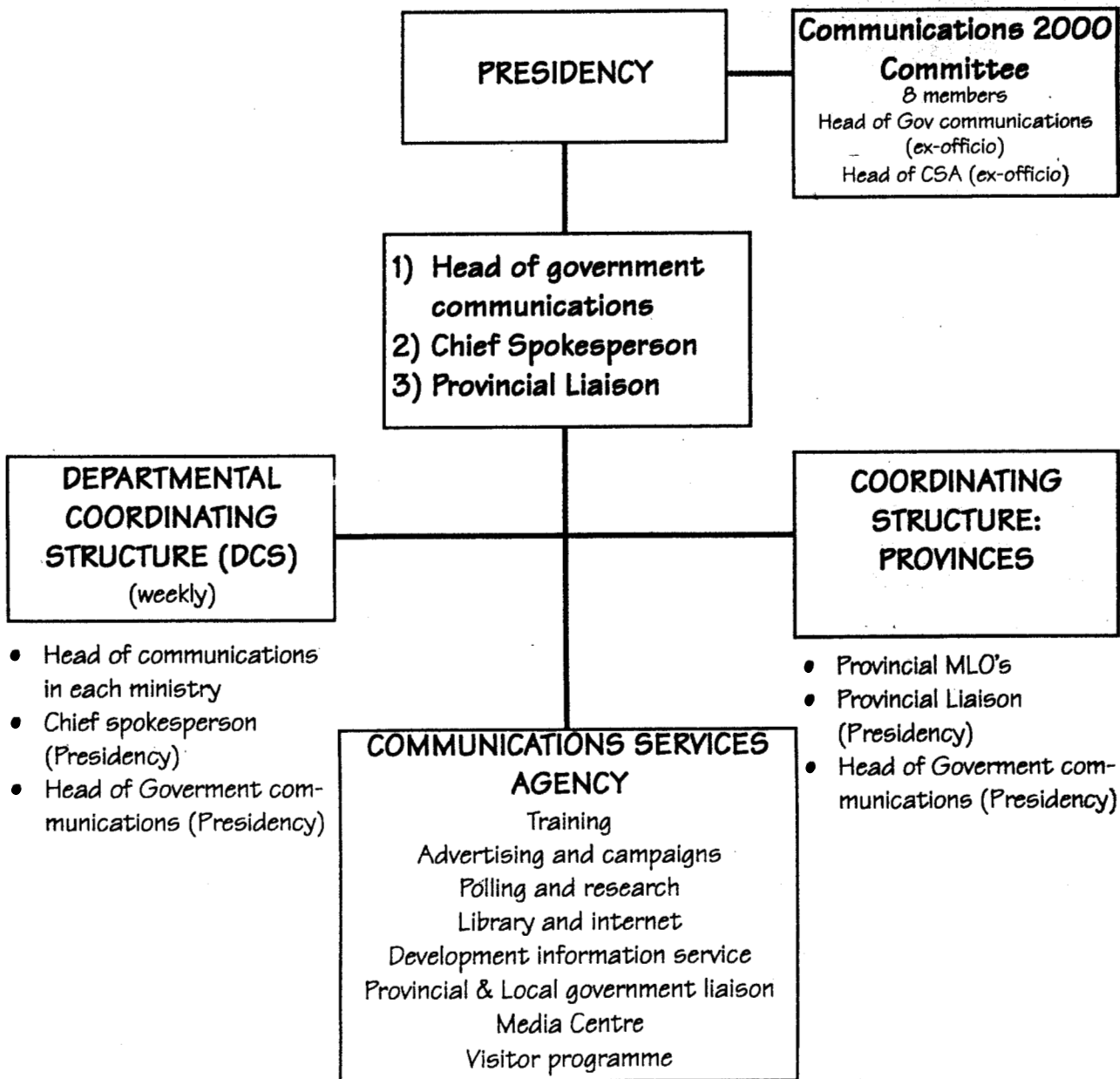
**Recommendation 18**

A system of networking between tiers of government be developed to facilitate this.

**Recommendation 19**

In order to build co-operative relationships between tiers of government, a regular consultative forum between the current forum of provincial communicators and the head of the GCIS be established.

**GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION SYSTEM (GCIS)**



A central principle of this function will be liaison, cooperation and partnership with the various role players (government, parastatal and professional) involved in the development of information systems and allied networks in South Africa and beyond.

#### **Recommendation 20**

It is proposed that communications officers responsible for provincial and community liaison work in partnership with information providers and disseminators in government, parastatals and civil society.

The principles involved in the National communications structure, ie, centralisation of the communications function in the President's office with a co-ordination mechanism involving ministries, should also be applied to provincial and local government communication. By this is meant that at provincial level, communication should be co-ordinated from the Premier's office which should co-ordinate the activities of the communicators in the various Executive Council portfolios in the same way as at national level. Advertising and purchase of materials, etc, and the outsourcing of projects should as far as possible be conducted through the CSA to obtain the benefits of bulk-buying and discounts.

The same principles should apply to the larger cities and towns with their own information departments which should be centered on the Mayor's or other appropriate elected representative's office and where the same CSA bulk-buying benefits will be used as far as possible and if appropriate. If this is not possible — the danger is that the CSA will become over-burdened with a plethora of requests — the bulk-buying principle should be decentralised to provincial level where the size of the budget (with that of the local government offices) will enable discounts to be secured. The processes in the smaller cities and towns vary so much that it has not been possible for the Task Group to formulate procedures and structures for them. However, it is proposed that the general principles applying to the national and provincial government structures should be applied at this level.



# FROM APARTHEID TO DEMOCRACY:

## Restructuring Government communications

Research, international investigation and wide consultation indicate that the restructuring described above will do much to prepare the ground for the better delivery of information and effective communications. In order to effect this restructuring, a number of key changes are required:

### THE PRINCIPLES GUIDING THESE STRUCTURAL CHANGES ARE:

- efficiency and cost effectiveness
- professionalism
- political control of the communications process
- credibility and transparency

### MINISTRIES AND DEPARTMENTS

In accordance with the principles set out above (central co-ordination, local implementation), the Ministries/Departments should author their own communications strategies and manage daily news under the co-ordinating eye of the GCIS.

Some restructuring is, however, required in respect of the present relationship/responsibilities of ministries and departments.

A significant feature of the current system is the separation of responsibilities between the ministry and department. This has led to divided responsibility and, in many cases, the lack of a unified communication strategy. Considerable friction has arisen from this structural arrangement. In the longer term it contains the potential for continued division, thereby resulting in the inefficient communication of policy.

In addition, the government has both a duty and a right to present the case for its policies and actions and this advocacy role needs to be strengthened. This requires that the minister take the lead in developing and managing the communications strategy through the ministry.

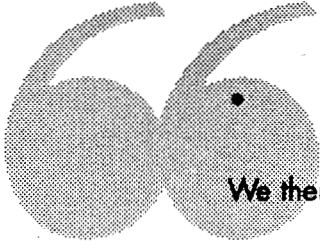
We propose, therefore, that:

#### **Recommendation 21**

The management and direction of the communications line function be transferred from the departments to the ministries, reporting directly to the minister whose responsibility it will be to determine overall communications policy in respect of her/his ministry and department.

We further believe that the minister should be free to select an individual of the necessary seniority to act as his/her head of communications as happens in other countries. This appointment can be made either from the public service or by contractual arrangement. In this regard, we note that:

- the scale of remuneration should reflect the key importance of this position;
- where the appointment is made on a contract basis (for the term of office of the Minister), the remuneration should also reflect the lack of security for an appointment which is tied to the minister's tenure;



the appointment should, however, be made in line with the overall professional requirements for heads of communication in the new system.

We therefore propose that:

**Recommendation 22**

The minister shall have the responsibility of appointing a head of communications, either as serving public servant or on a contract basis. This person, who should meet the professional standards developed for the GCIS, should have a status reflecting the key importance of the position as chief communications officer for the relevant ministry or department.

All other communications functions in the department/ministry should report through the ministerial head of communications who shall be directly accountable to the minister. In this way, the ministry will have the freedom to work directly with communications and liaison staff in the department.

It is important that the close co-operation of the departmental director general be sought. However, his/her formal approval will be required only with respect to his/her role as accounting officer for budgetary approvals.

Where legislation provides for a secretariat in the ministry, the ministerial head of communications may operate from that secretariat.

## INTERNAL RESTRUCTURING

We recommend that the President's Office, Deputy President's Office, ministerial/departmental and Provincial communications structures conduct an audit of personnel and services according to criteria provided by Communications 2000.

Internal restructuring should broadly reflect the three key identified areas for government communications: media liaison, the co-ordination of services in consultation with the CSA, and provincial and local liaison. The head of communications in each structure will be responsible for oversight of these functions.

We therefore propose that:

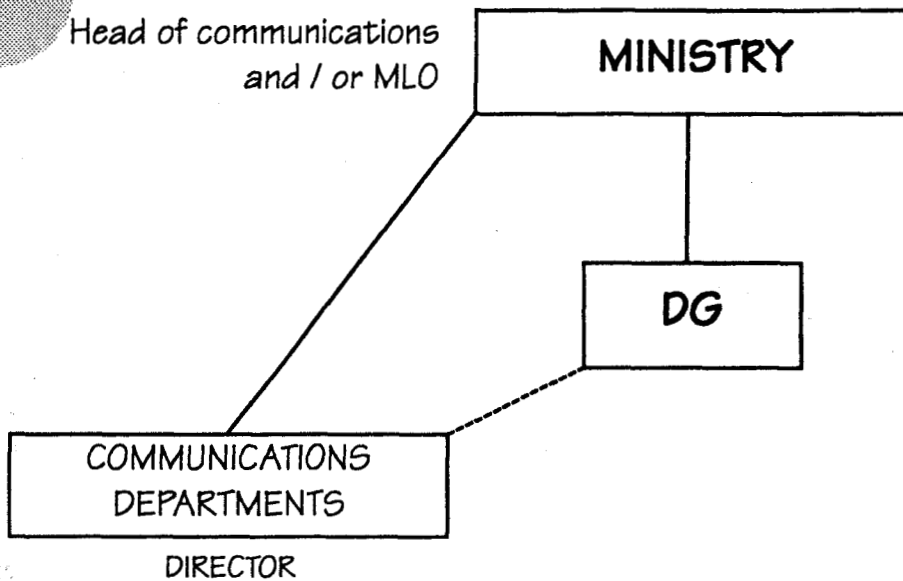
**Recommendation 23**

The communications capacity in each government body be restructured so as to be able to carry out the three key GCIS functions:

- Media Relations
- Communication Services
- Provincial and Local Liaison

The importance of building and maintaining relationships between the different tiers of government is again stressed.

## MINISTRY DEPARTMENT



Head of communications (HOC) appointed by minister and operates from ministry. If HOC is a public servant, he/she will be the head of communications in the departments. If hired externally, director reports to him/her.

----- Financial Accountability      \_\_\_\_\_ Line

### THE FUTURE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNICATION SERVICE

As noted in Chapter 6, The Task Group found that there is a strong international trend away from a civil service 'department of information'. This is an anachronistic concept which is unsuited to the streamlined and open style of communications required by South Africa. What is required rather is focus on economies of scale and the empowerment of departments and other sections of government. This is reflected in the proposal for a small central agency which delivers, accesses and outsources essential services.

SACS lacks a clear mandate, and its senior echelons are severely depleted by the decision to take packages. Given its current lack of capacity, the external perceptions of SACS within other parts of government and beyond, as well as its considerably reduced functional role, it has become clear that it is not capable of effective regeneration. However, some of its services, resources and skills are relevant to the proposed CSA.

We therefore propose that SACS be dissolved, and that a part of the transformation process be to oversee the subsumption of relevant functions into the work of the new agency.

We therefore recommend that:

#### **Recommendation 24**

SACS be formally dissolved and that, where appropriate, its resources and equipment be subsumed under the new CSA structure as directed by the Presidency with advice from Communication 2000.

Personnel still employed by SACS will be given the preferential option to apply for posts within the new system.

## **COMMUNICATIONS 2000:**

### **An Advisory Committee to the GCIS Making the Transition**

We estimate that the transformation process will take a minimum period of two years. We recommend that this process, which we have called Communications 2000, be driven from within and led by government, supported and assisted by the professional and community media and information sectors.

Thus Communications 2000 will take the form of a policy development and advisory Committee led by the Presidency.

At the same time, it would greatly benefit this process if Communications 2000 involved representatives of the communication and information sectors with a variety of experience and expertise in media and communications. We were impressed with the evident willingness of the many professional bodies to contribute skills and resources to this process. Such an arrangement would have the benefits of

- drawing on the considerable and varied expertise of civil society;
- constituting a visible manifestation of transparent/open government, and its ability to form partnerships with civil society.

We propose, therefore, that:

#### ***Recommendation 25***

The process of transformation be led by the Presidency with support and assistance of a committee drawn from the professional communications sector.

Professional sector representatives to Communications 2000 would:

- work on a pro bono part-time basis;
- be made up of individuals from the following sectors: marketing, advertising and public relations, community media, research, the information sciences and international communications. We recommend that the selection of representatives be made after consultation with the relevant professional bodies;
- the Head of the GCIS and the Head of the CSA will sit on Communications 2000 ex officio;

The total, in consultation with the Presidency, should have the power to co-opt additional members where necessary.

Thus we propose that:

#### ***Recommendation 26***

Communications 2000 consist of no more than 10 people, including representatives of government (serving ex officio) and of representatives of the professional private sector (working pro bono). It should however have the power to co-opt additional members if and when necessary.

The prime responsibility of Communications 2000 should be to advise and facilitate the implementation of decisions by government.