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## Mzwandile Masina: a Mayor under pressure

Ekurhuleni's Mayor, Mzwandile Masina, is currently trending for his critical position on recent opposition marches ([www.news24.com](http://www.news24.com)), but aside from this controversy, he faces the singularly unenviable task of accelerating performance in the only ANC-held Gauteng metro, with a demanding coalition partner in tow. As Personality of the Month, we consider the potential tensions between attending to local government responsibilities whilst on the national stage.

### In the national spotlight

Masina faces controversy for remarks made at the Chris Hani memorial service regarding Save SA's mobilisation:

"So please, we just want to request [Save SA] nicely: don't divide our nation because if you continue to do so those that sided with you in 1994, they won't be here in five years... It might be very rough and we are many, this is not a threat, we are many [and] it might be very very rough... It is very important that we send a very very strong warning that... we will crush any individual who stands [in the way of] the project of nation building and social cohesion in South Africa..."

"I want to say to our white counterparts in South Africa, they must be very very careful...[They need to] understand that the issue of nation building and social cohesion requires all of us, not these insults that you get from social media and you get called everything else...that time has come to an end."

[www.news24.com](http://www.news24.com)

These statements were surprisingly divisive for the mayor of a metropolitan area with a diverse demographic and political makeup and global economic aspirations, especially given that global city regions are typified by their cosmopolitan make-up. To make sense of them, they need to be understood within the national context that Masina operates.

Masina is a higher profile ANC Mayor than has traditionally been evident in local government, standing out as a national player (having served as Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry), strongly affiliated with President Jacob Zuma. His deployment can be explained by the high stakes set in accelerating delivery in Ekurhuleni - needing to demonstrate the superior outcomes of the President's radical economic transformation model against neighbouring DA-controlled Tshwane and Johannesburg. In this sense, Ekurhuleni has become a flagship ANC metro, alongside eThekweni.

To make matters more difficult for Masina, the ANC needs the support of the tiny AIC to hold a coalition together, with delicate demarcation negotiations underway to assuage the latter's kingmaking role ([municipaliq.co.za](http://municipaliq.co.za)). He is also under fierce attack from a vocal opposition; with a proposed vote of no confidence leading to a fist fight between EFF and ANC councillors and as a result, the delivery of Masina's State of the City address taking place outside of council chambers ([ewn.co.za](http://ewn.co.za), [municipaliq.co.za](http://municipaliq.co.za)) - not the first mayor to have do so this year in the highly contested metro terrain.

All of this before the day-to-day challenges of transforming Ekurhuleni's industrial sprawl and formalising its informal settlements ([municipaliq.co.za](http://municipaliq.co.za)). In line with the ANC's election mandate, Masina has emphasised housing and land as priority areas; with processes underway to secure land for bulk services for housing settlements and deliver approximately 5,000 housing units in 2017/18 ([citizen.co.za](http://citizen.co.za)), as well as recreational facilities for the youth ([tembisan.co.za](http://tembisan.co.za)), and ushering in a single salary structure for council employees ([boksburgadvertiser.co.za](http://boksburgadvertiser.co.za)).

Considering these pressing local issues, it is questionable whether Masina should be caught up in messy national debates (Twitter feeds for instance focus on the Save SA utterances rather than important plans for informal settlements, [tembisan.co.za](http://tembisan.co.za)). Masina is certainly able to drive through important agendas for Ekurhuleni; with insight into its complex industrialisation trajectory from his time in trade and industry as well as his Masters degree from the University of Pretoria in entrepreneurship and work experience as the CEO of the Gauteng Film Commission and time spent in Gauteng's Department of Sports, Arts, Culture and Recreation not to mention Ekurhuleni itself (where he focussed on economic empowerment, [www.gov.za](http://www.gov.za)).

But Masina's background in activism, however, is probably the predominant feature of his CV; stretching to his teenage years, with leadership roles in the Gauteng ANCYL and as Chairperson of the Congress of South African Students. Masina is currently the national convener of the ANCYL and has seats on the ANC NEC and NWC ([www.gov.za](http://www.gov.za)).

As such, Masina is probably the ANC's highest powered politician deployed to local government to date. The question for residents of the Metro is whether this status is positive or negative for delivery and the interests of residents - it is an interesting case to watch.

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