

# How OUR GOVERNMENT

**G**overnment is made up of national, provincial and local representatives.

The National Parliament makes the country's laws in accordance with the Constitution. Parliament is made up of two houses. They are the:

- National Assembly; and the
- National Council of Provinces.

The National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces must set up a joint committee. This committee makes rules about the combined business of the Assembly and the Council.

## ■ National Assembly

The National Assembly is elected to represent the people and to ensure that government is run by the will of the people.

It does this by:

- choosing the President;
- providing a public forum to discuss issues;
- passing laws; and
- overseeing action taken by government.

## Members of the National Assembly

The National Assembly usually has between 350 and 400 members. Members are elected every five years.

The number of members each political party has in the National Assembly is in line with the number of votes each party won in the election.

The Speaker is the head of the National Assembly.



*The Parliament Building in Cape Town where the houses of Parliament meet. Parliament is opened every year with a special ceremony.*

## Decisions and laws

When the National Assembly takes decisions it must get the votes of the majority of the members. Voting on most Bills (proposed laws that have not yet become law) may only take place if a majority of members of Parliament are present.

The National Assembly may make laws, except on some specific matters on which the provinces can make laws. It has the power to amend (make changes to) the Constitution, if two thirds of its members support the change.

## Debates and questions

Issues that are important to the country are debated in the National Assembly.

Members of the Assembly may

ask cabinet ministers questions. They have to answer in writing or in person in the House.

## Portfolio Committees

The National Assembly has 26 portfolio committees - one for each government department. Examples are portfolio committees on housing, welfare, safety and security, education, and trade and industry.

Portfolio committee's duties include making recommendations on law-making, budget and management regarding the department it oversees.

## ■ National Council of Provinces

The National Council of Provinces looks after the interests of the