

## Traditional leaders opposed to Initiation Bill

Traditional leaders are opposed to the Customary Initiation Bill, through which initiation schools will have to keep up-to-date financial statements, be registered with the government or face closure and possible prison terms. It also introduces a minimum age for initiates, and requires traditional surgeons be registered to participate in initiation practices, including being in possession of the registration letter at all times during participation in initiation practices. The Bill was tabled by Minister of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs Zweli Mkhize in Parliament last week, notes a [City Press](#) report. The Bill is also meant to eliminate deaths and injuries at initiation schools. However, Nkosi Mwelo Nonkonyana, the Eastern Cape House of Traditional Leaders chairperson, said they were vehemently opposed to the Bill. 'We are fundamentally opposed to this Bill. We see the trend with some of the people in government, which seeks to regulate custom. **Custom belongs to us as traditional communities and we would have hoped that Dr Zweli Mkhize would have consulted us,**' said Nonkonyana, who is also the head of the Congress of Traditional Leaders of SA in the province. He said that as traditional leaders, they see a trend where government is hellbent on promoting medical male circumcision at the expense of their custom. 'Our custom will now be the subject of public debate by women, even by people who are uncircumcised, in Parliament. I think it is really insensitive because the issue of traditional circumcision can only be discussed by people who themselves are circumcised,' he is quoted as saying.