



Independent Communications Authority of South Africa

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MEDIA STATEMENT OF THE INDEPENDENT COMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY OF SOUTH AFRICA (ICASA) ON THE LICENSING OF COMMUNITY TELEVISION SERVICES IN SOUTH AFRICA

08 September 2010

Johannesburg – The Independent Communications Authority of South Africa has taken note of media reports suggesting that it was in the process of closing the existing community television services once their current annual licences elapse. Contrary to the media reports, the Authority wishes to reiterate its commitment to the development of community television broadcasting, drawing on lessons learnt in community radio broadcasting.

Over the years, the Authority has played a lead role in the development of community broadcasting, and the introduction of community TV constitutes one of its primary concerns as the country enters the digital broadcasting environment.

In order to enhance regulatory certainty, the Authority wishes to state the following facts regarding its approach to community TV:

1. At present, the Authority has licensed community TV services in Soweto, Tshwane, Cape Town, Bojanala District, Nelson Mandela Metro and Richards Bay. These stations will be allowed to either reapply or renew their licences when they expire, as a way of protecting community investments in these services.

2. One new initiative in Rustenburg is under consideration, pending the submission of additional information.
3. However, given the scarcity of frequency spectrum due to the migration of existing broadcasting from analogue to digital, the Authority will not receive and consider any new registrations or applications from any community or entity.
4. The Authority will undertake a review of the community TV licensing framework to address the following issues:
 - a. The identification of temporary frequencies to accommodate community TV during the digital migration process. There are currently limited frequencies to accommodate existing demand.
 - b. The inclusion of community TV in the digital broadcasting environment, which will include setting aside dedicated multiplexes for community broadcasting;
 - c. A possible review of the current definition of class licences, which confines community TV to local and district municipalities. The Authority will investigate the feasibility of extending the geographic scope of community TV to provide wide coverage to ensure that community TV services, across the country, are sustainable. To address the policy issues that may arise from this engagement, the Authority will accordingly advise the Minister of Communications to amend the relevant sections in the Electronic Communications Act;
5. While the Authority is aware of the difficulties posed by issuing one-year instead of seven-year Community TV licences, this situation arises due to limited frequencies available to accommodate demand. However, as stated, the advent of digital broadcasting will free more frequencies to

accommodate all components of the three-tier broadcasting system, that is, community, public and commercial services.

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