

Minister, SOS Coalition meeting over broadcasting policy



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The SOS Support Public Broadcasting - a lobby group comprising of various organisations - will meet with communications minister Roy Padayachie in Pretoria this Friday afternoon, 2 September 2011, to discuss burning issues pertaining to the controversial Draft Public Broadcasting Bill, a proposed legislation set to replace the 'out of touch' Broadcasting Act of 1999.



"First, as a country we need to comprehensively review the White Paper policy of 1998, which is very important in the sense that it will enable us draft a new legislation that will replace the existing one," SOS spokesperson Kate Skinner told Bizcommunity.com today.

Points that may be raised

It is understood that the SOS working group will raise the following points with the minister - concerns the group believes are genuine to address the deep-seated problems affecting both the levels of public broadcasting (mostly the SABC) and community broadcasting.

The five points are:

1. South Africa's lack of a coherent vision for public broadcasting: the strong commercial and government pressures facing the SABC .
2. The SABC's legal structure is problematic: that the minister is the SABC's sole shareholder gives him almost God-like powers to intervene whenever he or she feels like.
3. Lack of clarity regarding the roles of the SABC's oversight structures (including the ministry and department of communications, ICASA and Parliament) and the SABC's governance structures (including its board and management).
4. A need to craft a new funding model for the SABC and for the community broadcasting sector.
5. The SABC's culture of secrecy and lack of accountability to its audiences and citizens more broadly.

The group said it has a contingent of solutions it will suggest to the minister for each point raised here.

"We need a public broadcaster that is more accountable to South Africans," Skinner reiterated, as the SABC's endless problems continue to hamper its integrity, moral standing and financial stability, and the growth of local content.

Bush Radio's financial meltdown

The SOS working group is also set to raise the financial meltdown currently being experiencing by [Bush Radio](#).

Skinner said she is worried that the ministry may want to rush this process as it has stated that it wants to wrap up the review by March 2012. "This will clearly not be sufficient time, as the time period needs to be sufficient to allow for a proper consultation process," she said.

It is believed that the new broadcasting legislation will also include matters related to the digital terrestrial television (DTT) project - a process all countries must finalise by 2015, as per the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) deadline.

DTT capital spend

The Department of Communications (DoC) said the DTT capital spend is earmarked at over R4 billion for both the infrastructure upgrade and broadcast spending, such as studio technology, improvements and technology subsidies like dual illumination spending and the set-top-box scheme.

"This figure increases when considering spending requirements by the SABC, M-Net and e.tv," the DoC said, adding that the department has given itself until 2013 to migrate from analogue TV to digital TV.

The minister said earlier this year that the uptake of digital broadcasting will technology will expand the public bouquet in content viewing. It is believed that the SABC's channels might increase from three to over 10, providing a critical platform for local content's growth and transformation.

For more, go to www.supportpublicbroadcasting.co.za and follow [@sos_za](#) on Twitter.

Update 5 September 2011 at 4pm: [Press statement - Comms Minister agrees to comprehensive broadcasting policy review - 3 Sept 2011](#)

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