

# TV is dead but the SABC refuses to die

By [Nicholas Woode-Smith](#)

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I think we can all agree that TV licenses are dumb. Why should we pay for a license to own a TV? Especially if we're not ever planning to watch any of the SABC channels. Many household televisions these days aren't even hooked up to a TV antenna. Why would they be? This is the age of the internet.



Source: © Jeshootscom [pexels](#) Is TV dead and if so should consumers still be paying the SABC tv licences?

The SABC is a bloated zombie that died long ago but refuses to acknowledge that fact. Instead, it would rather parasitically feed off the populace for some petty cash.

## Charging for a service you don't want

Whenever I've had to tune in to SABC, the broadcast quality has been trash, the content has been boring, and the outdated mode of having to wait for an analogue schedule rather than choosing my own entertainment is just painful. My subjective preferences aside, no taxpayer should be on the hook to fund my entertainment needs – be those in the form of the SABC, or something else.

Television is dead. Yet SABC itself refuses to die. Further, it not only refuses to die, it is still trying to find new ways to extract money from people who don't care about it.

Last year, the SABC put forward its desire to require a TV license for PC monitors. Their reasoning is that a PC monitor is theoretically capable of being used to watch SABC. So therefore, they are entitled to their pound of flesh.

By the same logic, McDonalds should always charge us for fries, no matter if we want them or not. Because theoretically, we might. Right?

Charging someone for a service they have not used nor want to use is fundamentally wrong.

Arguments that PC users are probably not watching SABC's terrible content are not actually necessary. What should be necessary is the basic logic that SABC shouldn't presume behaviour by consumers.

## Experimenting with streaming services

The SABC needs to get with the times. If it wants to remain relevant, it needs to earn money like every other enterprise. It needs to deliver a quality product to consumers who want to pay money for it. This is not even a new principle!

People no longer want to watch the content SABC produces and broadcasts. And they especially don't want to be presumed to be watching it – requiring them to pay a TV license when their TV is going to be used to monitor CCTV footage of the crime that the government keeps failing to address.



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If the SABC wants to remain relevant, it has to stop trying to use the heavy-hand of the state to force people to pay for it. Rather, it should become a proper private enterprise incentivised by profit and driven by competition and innovation.

The SABC is already experimenting with streaming services. It should continue investigating that business model, while also working on its content and producing shows and films that people will actually want to watch.

## Go after TV antennae

For consumers without internet (a dwindling number), continue to broadcast but instead of licensing televisions and devices, instead go after TV antennae. Only people with antennae are actually capable of watching the SABC's broadcasts.

Someone with no ability to actually watch broadcast television shouldn't be expected to pay for a product they cannot receive.

## Sink or swim

The SABC must be allowed to sink or swim with its own ability to innovate and actually do a good job, not just leach off a population required by law to feed it cash.

In addition to the SABC modernising with streaming services and a content-for-cash approach rather than a cash-for-existence mindset, the SABC should be privatised. It is its status as a state-owned broadcasting company that keeps it dulled, entitled, greedy and lazy.

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If the SABC was freed from the teat of the state, it would be truly incentivised to finally start changing and performing better in order to survive. Right now, it knows it can just be bailed out and subsidised. If freed from this safety net, it would finally have to learn to sink or swim.

Additionally, the lessening of political interference may end up resulting in increasingly better content. The SABC could criticise and comment the government without fear of losing funding or jobs. Content could be purely profit-driven rather than politically motivated.

And if it continues to fail after privatisation, then it was doomed to fail in the first place. Then South Africans will at least finally be free from its entitlement and repeated attempts at downright theft.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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