



Independent Communications Authority of South Africa
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MEDIA STATEMENT

ICASA publishes a Call for Comments on the ICT COVID-19 National Disaster Regulations

22 April 2021

Pretoria – The Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA/the Authority) is seeking written submissions from interested stakeholders in respect of the review of the Information and Communications Technology ICT COVID-19 National Disaster Regulations (the “Regulations”), as amended.

The issues of consultation with regards to this process include but are not limited to: the temporary assignment of International Mobile Telecommunications (IMT) radio frequency spectrum to address challenges posed by COVID-19; current radio frequency spectrum sharing arrangements; obligations relating to temporarily assigned IMT radio frequency spectrum (in respect of school connectivity and/or virtual classrooms obligations); type-approval relaxation measures; broadcasting services and related matters (e.g. suspension of obligations for convening of annual general meetings for community broadcasters and the requirements for local content programming).

ICASA Chairperson Dr Keabetswe Modimoeng previously indicated that mobile network operators must continue to provide services to the public during the National State of Disaster, and may derive commercial value from this high value spectrum resource assigned to them on a temporary basis. Therefore, the Authority needs to apply itself with care and circumspection on the provisions of these Regulations (in particular, the temporary spectrum extensions), and in a manner that is justifiable and primarily beneficial to the consumers of electronic communications, broadcasting and postal services.

“The approach we have undertaken is quite comprehensive because we have learnt a lot since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic about regulating in a time of crisis. This is an opportunity for all of us to sift through and identify what is really pressing and compelling for the benefit of the South African public. We also need to measure the impact of our regulatory interventions in the broader industry and the regulated sector as a whole, including consumer protection and benefits,” says Dr Modimoeng.

The temporary release of high demand spectrum to licensees was aimed at mitigating the impact of the National State of Disaster, following the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020, mainly by easing network congestion, maintaining good quality of broadband services, and enabling licensees to lower the cost of access to consumers.

Written representations on the review of the Regulations must be submitted to the Authority by no later than **16h00 on 7 May 2021**. No late representations will be considered, nor any extension granted.

The Authority encourages civil society organisations, consumer groups, independent production companies and all interested stakeholders to participate in this process so that ICASA can have a holistic overview of issues that must be addressed by these Regulations.

A copy of the notice inviting written presentations on the review of the Regulations will be published in the Government Gazette and also made available on the Authority's website at www.icasa.org.za.

Ends...

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