

The digital disaster we know nothing about

 By [Dr Julie Reid](#)

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According to a treaty South Africa agreed to with the International Telecommunications Union, we are committed to switching off our analogue television broadcasts by 2015, and start broadcasting via digital signals instead. It sounds simple enough. It also does not sound particularly exciting, does it?

It is only when you start getting into the details, and take stock of what needs to be done to make this happen, that the magnitude of the entire project becomes apparent.

On the upside, the advantages to undertaking this digital migration could be vast. Where we currently have access to four free-to-air television stations (SABC and e.tv) the switch over to the digital multiplexing system will mean that the SABC could have access to enough spectrum to broadcast between 10-12 channels instead of its current three. So, we could be looking at a lot more free-to-air channels to choose from. That's a good thing, especially for the swathes of South Africans who cannot afford the subscription television services of DStv or TopTV. There are other advantages: because there will be more space on the "airwaves" it opens opportunities for new entrants, so if all goes well we may even see additional broadcasters starting up, and hopefully the encouragement of the community television sector.

Read the [full article](#) on www.dailymaverick.co.za.

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