

## Pule concerned by digital TV delays

Communications Minister Dina Pule has raised concerns about delays in finalising matters relating to conditional access control to digital television.

By [Thabiso Mochiko](#) 18 Apr 2013



Image: GOS

South Africa is moving from an analogue to a digital broadcasting platform, which will result in more television channels and free-up the spectrum needed for broadband services.

Conditional access control is a technology used to restrict access to digital television services to those people authorised to use them by encrypting the transmitted programmes and then decrypting them. Among other things, the encryption signal prevents the use of counterfeit boxes.

The communications ministry and e.tv were involved in a court battle last year over the management of the conditional access control system, which was given to state-owned signal distributor Sentech. The court ruled in favour of e.tv, in effect stating that broadcasters should manage the control system.

"I am concerned about the slow progress of finalising the conditional access (matter)," Pule said on Tuesday (16 April) at a workshop hosted by the National Association of Manufacturers in Electronic Components, which represents electronic manufacturers.

"The STB (set-top box) control implementation is in the hands of free-to-air broadcasters as per the court judgment," she said. "To date, we are awaiting the decision of broadcasters on the details of their approach to this."

But e.tv said on Wednesday (17 April) that together with the SABC, it was finalising the set-top box control systems.

"Unfortunately attempts to expedite this with Sentech have proved difficult and the broadcasters are currently considering alternatives," e.tv said.

There have been various views on the benefits of the encryption system.

Broadcasters see it as a service that will help them be more innovative by offering several types of new broadcasting services.

Pule said, however, that some sectors of the manufacturing industry were concerned that the system would drive up the cost of manufacturing the set-top boxes, affecting their business potential.

She said the benefits of the control system for the government included limiting cross-border unauthorised use and theft. In addition, the system is designed to support communicating to the public in case of a disaster."

The migration to digital broadcasting has been delayed several times amid fears that South Africa might miss its June 2013 deadline to switch off the analogue signal.

Pule hit back at critics on Tuesday (16 April), saying that "when things don't happen and progress is not seen, the challenge is with the minister".

She was adamant the commercial launch of digital television will happen this year despite the delays.

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