

Axe hovers over SABC bigwigs

The SABC board is too bloated, too costly and too prone to external influence, parliament was told yesterday.



The Department of Communications wants the number of SABC board members to be cut from 12 to nine. The portfolio committee on communications also heard various legal opinions on the Broadcasting Amendment Bill, which partly deals with the appointment and removal of board members.

Tshegofatso Kgarabjang, from the department's legal services division, also claimed that the sub judice rule does not prevent parliament from removing SABC board members - even though there are currently two cases before the courts that relate to three board members who were removed last year.

Kgarabjang also argued a large board can be easily influenced.

"A large board may be subjected to outside interference and lobbying of external forces and sometimes conflicts of interest."

"A large board is very expensive to maintain and money can be used elsewhere."

He added that a large board "can easily become dysfunctional due to too many competing factors".

Critics have said the bill, which was surreptitiously tabled by Communications Minister Faith Muthambi last year, would render the SABC a state-controlled broadcaster, as it was under apartheid rule.

DA MP Marian Shinn described the bill as the most "pernicious piece of legislation" the committee has seen.

She said: "It emasculates the role of public oversight through parliament."

"It enables the [communications] minister, whoever she or he may be, to appoint cronies without any indications of what the requirements must be. We've got no idea what are deemed suitable skills to be appointed," said Shinn.

ANC MP Moses Tseli said Shinn could not accuse the minister of interference when it was Muthambi's duty to ensure that SABC performs as required.

Source: The Times