

Muthambi stands by Motsoeneng

Communications Minister Faith Muthambi has defended the permanent appointment of Hlaudi Motsoeneng as chief operations officer of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) in the face of strident criticism of the move.



(Image: SABC)

Motsoeneng, who was acting operations chief for the past three years, was confirmed by the minister in the position last week. This was despite him not having the required qualifications and a finding by the public protector that he was not fit for the post.

Muthambi has been widely criticised for openly defying a Chapter 9 institution. Both the African National Congress-dominated parliamentary portfolio committee on communications and the party's national executive committee have demanded explanations for the appointment from the minister.

SABC board chairwoman, Zandile Tshabalala, who herself is under investigation for allegedly lying about her qualifications, is said to have pushed for Motsoeneng's appointment.

Muthambi said it would be inappropriate to comment in detail as legal action was being pursued over the matter. But she added she there was nothing wrong with the appointment.

"I think it is important for me emphasise that when I approved the recommendation of the board (that Motsoeneng be appointed), I saw nothing untoward,"

Seeking a court review

Muthambi said. "I am mindful we have committed to meeting the public protector's deadline."



(Image: GCIS)

Public Protector Thuli Madonsela gave the SABC until August 17 to respond to her report.

The Democratic Alliance (DA) has said it will seek a court review of Motsoeneng's appointment. The party believed there was a strong case against Motsoeneng's appointment as it was irrational given the public protector's findings against him.

Among other things, Madonsela found that Motsoeneng had lied about having a matric certificate and was guilty of irregularly increasing his own salary. Further, he had purged staff members he disagreed with.



(Image: GCIS)

In her budget vote speech yesterday, Muthambi said stabilising the SABC was at the top of the Department of Communication's agenda and the filling of key positions, including that of chief operations officer, would result in "clarity of purpose" for the public broadcaster. A lot hinged on the SABC being stable and the department was "leaving nothing to chance".

"We do not intend to be hands off and allow a deterioration of the SABC. We have instructed the board to ensure that a CEO is in place before the expiry of the three months extension on the acting CEO's position that we have granted."

A new chief financial officer would also have to be appointed soon.

Bad news

Muthambi said finalising a new funding model was one of the urgent tasks that the department would give the leadership of the SABC.

Madonsela last week said she would launch a new investigation into circumstances that surround Motsoeneng permanent appointment as chief operating officer. The investigation would focus on the process followed in his appointment, which could be at odds with the SABC's articles of association.

The post of chief of operations was not advertised and it is understood Motsoeneng's appointment has divided the SABC board.

DA MP Gavin Davis [said yesterday](#) that since Muthambi assumed office she had given the impression that the SABC had to compensate for negative stories in the press.

"She has said that she wants to give herself absolute power to hire and fire the SABC board.

"And, inexplicably, she has protected and promoted Hlaudi Motsoeneng when he should have been fired."

In his response to Muthambi's budget vote, Davis called on the minister to allow the SABC board to act against Motsoeneng. He should be removed from office.

"He (Motsoeneng) is bad news for the SABC and bad news for SA," Davis said.

Source: *Business Day*, via I-Net Bridge