

## TV licences to go?

NEWSWATCH: Law-abiding South Africans, hotels and companies with television sets have funded the national broadcaster for years. However, in terms of the draft Public Service Broadcasting Bill, licence fees could be scrapped, reports *IOL*, though the SABC has been quick to remind everyone that until there are any changes to the law, TV licences are still required, reports *Mail & Guardian Online*. What's more, the draft bill proposes an extra tax to fund the broadcaster, reports *Business Day*. However, you can still comment on the proposed bill - but you must do so by 7 December 2009.



### Public comment

The Department of Communications late last week released the draft Public Service Broadcasting Bill for further public comments, following a thorough consultative process after the release of the Discussion Document in July 2009. The bill seeks to repeal the Broadcasting Act no.4 of 1999, so as to align the broadcasting system to the developmental goals of the Republic.

The bill is in response to the Minister of Communications, General (Ret) Siphwe Nyanda assertion that "A new vision and mandate for public broadcasting services in line with South Africa's developmental agenda required..." The department will therefore amend the Broadcasting Act, in consultation with all relevant stakeholders and rename it the public service broadcasting Act.

The amendment is intended to bring the charter in line with international best practice and ensure that the public broadcaster is best suited to our young democracy. The department will introduce an "appropriate funding model" to ensure that the public broadcaster is not left to the vagaries of the markets.

To this end, the bill seeks to:

- Establish a Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) Fund for public service broadcasting in the Republic;
- Abolish television licence fees;
- Establish International Broadcasting Services (IBS) within the corporation and clarify its role;
- Transfer Channel Africa to IBS;
- Revise the composition of the board of the corporation;
- Introduce a performance management system for the board;
- Outline the mandate of Sentech as a common carrier;
- Clarify the powers of the minister in respect of public service broadcasting;
- Provide charters for the corporation and Community Broadcasting Services;
- In line with the draft local content strategy recently released by the department, the bill further provide for the licensing of specialist channels prioritising: children programming, wild-life and documentaries

The closing date for the written submission is 7 December 2009. Interested parties or individuals are invited to post their comments to Dr Mashilo Boloka, Director Broadcasting Policy, Private Bag X860, Pretoria 0001, or hand deliver to the doc at Block A3 first floor, iParioli Office Park, 399 Duncan Street, Hatfield or email Miyelani @doc.gov.za or fax at +27 (0)12 427 8059. Enquiries relating to the bill can be addressed to Miyelani Khosa or Humbulani Rambau on +27 (0)12 427 8174 and +27 (0)12 421 7046 respectively.

The Draft Public Service Broadcasting Bill is supposedly available on [www.doc.gov.za](http://www.doc.gov.za) but is definitely to be found on the [Parliamentary Monitoring Group](#) site.

**For more:**

- *IOL*: [TV licence fees could be scrapped...](#) Moves are afoot that could possibly see TV licences being a thing of the past.
- *Mail & Guardian Online*: [SABC: Paying your TV licence is still the right thing to do...](#) Broadcaster moves quickly to ensure no one gets the wrong idea about paying their TV licence.
- *Business Day* [Extra 1% tax looms to help fund cash-strapped SABC...](#) There's sting in the tail of the draft Public Service Broadcasting Bill - it proposes a separate tax on taxpayers to fund the SABC.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>