

Busy period for SANEF with POIB, AGM, awards

[www.bizcommunity.com/Search/196/11/sm-3/i-11/r-196/s-SANEF.html SANEF]] has commented on yesterday's news that the ANC will delay its decision on the Protection of Information Bill, having only on Friday, 16 September 2011, referred to this issue at its AGM. The AGM, addressed by national police commissioner general [Bheki Cele](#), was also an occasion to present two annual awards.



Having stated that the [Bill](#), despite important improvements, remains unsafe for democracy, it welcomed the decision to engage in further consultation. The Forum adds that this is an important opportunity to ensure that the proposed legislation meets the standards required in an open and democratic society.

In its current state, it fails appropriately to weigh the state's legitimate need for secrecy in narrowly defined matters of national security against the rights of all South Africans to freedom of speech and access to information.

If it is to replace the existing, unconstitutional classification regime as an instrument worthy of our democracy the Bill must undergo further important changes. A law worthy of our democracy cannot criminalise the publication of information that reveals corruption, human rights abuses, or the abuse of state resources for political ends. It must ensure that the grounds of classification are sufficiently narrow to prevent officials from using it to draw a veil of secrecy across the workings of government.

It must enable appropriate public scrutiny of our powerful intelligence and security services and it must do in a fashion which maximises transparency and accountability in the classification process. Much progress has already been made. We look forward to participating in the ongoing process of getting this important piece of legislation right.

New SANEF appointments

At the AGM, SANEF elected *Cape Argus* editor, Gasant Abarder, as deputy chairperson, *Mail & Guardian* editor, Nic Dawes, chair of the media freedom subcommittee and *City Press* editor, Ferial Haffajee, as chair of the diversity and ethics subcommittee.

In his address, Cele, who stressed the need for 'robust' policing of violent protest action and referred editors to the way in which British newspapers were "firmly and unapologetically on the side of law and order" during the recent riots in London and other cities. "I must confess that I am still envious of the outpouring of support that the British media directed at the members of the Metropolitan police," he said.

He declined to add to his previous comments on matters surrounding the report of the public protector into the leasing of new police headquarters in Pretoria and Durban. "As inexcusable as these bungles may be,

they should be viewed within the context of the regrettable reality that over the years, they had come to be erroneously accepted as correct operating procedure ... Steps have been taken to address the institutional weakness that gave rise to these administrative bumbles."

General Cele and his media team discussed with editors operational measures to improve coverage of crime and policing.

The meeting also heard proposals aimed at improving the quality of science coverage in local media.

Awards, congratulations

The meeting congratulated SANEF stalwart, Raymond Louw, on being named an International Press Institute press freedom hero.

The SANEF-Wrottesley Award, a peer recognition award, was presented to Hopewell Radebe for his commitment towards the achievement of the forum's goals. Radebe is Gauteng convenor for SANEF and land and agriculture editor at *Business Day*.

The Nat Nakasa Award, now in its 14th year, aims to acknowledge courage and integrity. It is open to all living journalists, editors, managers and media owners irrespective of the medium they represent.

At the Nat Nakasa Awards Dinner, the judges expressed their agreement that - instead of giving an award - there would be a special mention for the work of photojournalist [Anton Hammerl](#). Hammerl, a South African, enjoyed a distinguished career before he was killed while reporting on the war in Libya.

Download General Cele's full SANEF address [here](#).