

# e.tv concerned about the future of terrestrial broadcasting

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The recently published ICASA Frequency Migration Plan presents major stumbling blocks to the sustainability of free-to-air broadcasters. Broadcasters have rallied against the proposed changes and are concerned that ICASA has not adequately assessed the implications of frequency migration. Broadcasters are particularly concerned at the absence of any policy inquiry into the future needs of terrestrial broadcasting and the implications for their business.

e.tv's Chief Executive Officer Marcel Golding says, "Given the significant impact such a plan would have on the business of free-to-air broadcasters, e.tv would expect the plan to be carefully developed and its rationale thought through. A major concern is that ICASA is proposing the large-scale migration of TV broadcasters from the spectrum bands in which they have assignments without having considered the future spectrum needs of the TV industry or compensation for affected broadcasters."

The much desired 790MHz to 862MHz and 694MHz to 790MHz band (termed Digital Dividend 1 and 2 respectively) is currently occupied by terrestrial broadcasting services. ICASA states that these bands will be vacated by 2015 which e.tv does not believe is realistic.

Free-to-air broadcasters face the prospect of losing highly valuable spectrum without being compensated. Without defined entitlements after analogue switch-off, broadcasters will be thrown into an environment where they are unable to explore additional services such as HD, 3D etc and compete against TV-like services delivered over new technologies.

e.tv continues to support the migration to digital terrestrial television (DTT) as it will offer a variety of new and exciting services. It also supports the release of a digital dividend as it understands that broadband and mobile telecommunications has an important role in South Africa's development.

Golding continues, "e.tv is of the view that, following analogue switch-off, it must be guaranteed at least one full DTT multiplex to replicate its position in the analogue environment or be compensated for the loss of spectrum in the event that it is not provided with a full multiplex."

For the industry to benefit as whole, e.tv recommends that ICASA make it clear that the rights of existing analogue broadcasters, insofar as the digital dividend is concerned, will be considered at a later stage in a separate consultative process.

e.tv raised these issues at ICASA's public hearings into the draft Frequency Migration Plan on Thursday, 1 November 2012.

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