highlights of the year

THE UNDER-SERVICED AREA LICENSING PROCESS

ICASA held licence application hearings into seven Under-Serviced Area Licence (USAL) areas. The hearings were followed by final evaluations, Ministerial approval and ICASA issuing the first seven USAL licences. The objective of these licences is to ensure that telecommunication services are rolled-out to areas where there was no service or limited service provision in the past. It is intended that through this licensing, access to telecommunications services at affordable costs particularly in the rural communities is attained.

FURTHER LIBERALISATION OF THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS MARKET

In September 2004, the Minister for Communications announced policy changes that seek to further liberalise the telecommunications market. These included the carrying of voice by value-added network service providers, self-provision of links by mobile operators and the resale of spare capacity by private telecommunication network service (PTNS) operators. ICASA, in response, convened a colloquium to solicit public input, and drafted and published regulations in pursuance of these determinations.

REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES FOR TELKOM

ICASA reviewed the Price Control Regulations, which require Telkom to levy fees and charges according to the prescribed determination. This was a consultative public participatory process and it included the publication of a discussion document, draft regulations and hearings into the proposed regulations. The proposed regulations, once implemented, would result in lower overall tariff increases by Telkom.

SABC LICENCE AMENDMENT

The SABC submitted its amendment applications in terms of the Broadcasting Amendment Act in March 2004. ICASA received eleven (11) representations as well as the SABC's response to the submissions, and conducted hearings in September and October 2004. In February 2005 ICASA published proposed licence conditions for the SABC and invited public comment by March 2005.

COMMUNITY TELEVISION BROADCASTING SERVICES

ICASA launched a Position Paper on Local Television in November 2004, following a public process that invited the industry and the public to comment on an economic study about the viability of commercial regional and local television and the development of a regulatory framework for community television in South Africa.

Closely related to the Local Television Policy, is the Special Event Licence for Community Broadcasting Services. ICASA published amendments to existing regulations that would allow scope for a temporary/limited period community television broadcasting licence in addition to a community television licence as contemplated in the Position Paper.

SUBSCRIPTION BROADCASTING

ICASA published a Discussion Paper in April 2004 for public comment and conducted public hearings in August 2004. The subscription broadcasting policy was launched with the publication of a Position Paper and regulations. The aim of the policy exercise is to develop a policy framework for subscription broadcasting and to introduce new entrants in the subscription broadcasting market.

SKA SURVEYS IN NORTHERN CAPE

ICASA is involved with planning and conducting terrestrial interference surveys for the South African national bid for the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) radio telescope project. A series of RF SKA surveys were completed and contributed significantly to the South African bid for the project. This project is aimed at the development of the largest-to-date radio-astronomy telescope, currently estimated at US$1,5 billion. South Africa is a strong contender with several sites identified in the Northern Cape and, as the southern hemisphere sites are preferred, competes with Australian sites in the western desert.

PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL FORA

ICASA was elected to chair the African Communications Regulatory Authorities Network (ACRAN/RIARC) from 2002 to 2005. ICASA played a key role in African and Southern African regulatory activities in its participation and chairpersonship of TRASA subcommittees dealing with policy. ICASA is also serving on the TRASA Executive Committee, as the second Vice President, 2004 – 2006.

Summary of Licences Issued

Category of licence	Type of licence	Number of licences issued
Telecommunications	Private Telecommunications Network	23
	Under Serviced Area Licences	7
	Licence Amendments	4
	Total 34	
Broadcasting	4 year Community Radio Licences	55
	Short-term (30 days) Community Radio Licences	32
	4 year Community Television Licence	1
	Short-term (30 days) Community Television Licence	1
	Commercial Radio Licences	10
	Commercial Television Licence	1
	Total 100	
Engineering	Aeronautical	5 268
	Amateur	6 341
	Exams & Certificates	19 175
	Fixed	60
	Land Mobile	46 119
	Maritime	4 049
	Radio Dealer	5 378
	Satellite	223
	Total 86 613	