

THE FOCUS

03 ICASA regional
footprint

06 Embracing a paperless
environment

07 Best of five
with Councillor
Thembeke Semane

CONTENTS

- 02 Code for Persons with Disabilities
- 03 Regions and Consumer Affairs Division
- 05 Levelling the Playing Field with PEB Slots Allocation
- 06 ALFRESCO EDRMS
- 07 Chat with ICASA Councillor Thembeke Semane
- 09 Postal Services 'Innovate to Recover'
- 10 Africa ICT Day
- 11 FCC MoU Signing

EDITOR'S NOTE

ICASA's mandate is to regulate the communications sector in the public interest.

One of the ways to live out the mandate is through the regional footprint across all nine provinces. In this issue, we zoom into the Regional and Consumer Affairs Division and the various activities such as the Code of Persons with Disabilities, the Consumer Advisory Panel's role and the Authority's contribution to levelling the playing field amongst the political party's in South Africa.

Happy reading.

EDITOR & EDITORIAL TEAM

Do you have an article for **The Focus**? Please submit it to thefocus@icasa.org.za for consideration.

Code for Persons with Disabilities

Persons with disabilities have the right to access broadcasting, postal and telecommunications services like every other individual.

The International Day of Disabilities (3 December) is an important day for ICASA, particularly due to the Authority's mandate of protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. In this regard, ICASA has published the Code for Persons with Disabilities.

These regulations look to the future to ensure that persons with disabilities such as the visually or hearing impaired, have fair access to ICT services.

The final Code was gazetted on 9 April 2021, after the Authority published the draft regulations with the intention of soliciting inputs on the draft Regulations by 12 June 2020.

This was after the Authority had conducted an extensive process of consultations on the proposed amendments which included a two-day workshop held on 6 and 7 June 2019, international study visits, public hearings across all provinces, and engagements with licensees and stakeholders.

The purpose of the Regulations is to ensure that persons with disabilities, specifically those that are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, or visually impaired, have equal access to broadcasting and telecommunications services.

WHAT DO THE NEW REGULATIONS COVER?

Broadcasting Service Licensees

The Regulations requires Broadcasting service Licensees to implement the following:

- Audio Description
- Sign Language
- Subtitles
- Closed Captioning

Electronic Communications Service (ECS) Licensees

The Regulations require ECS Licensees to ensure that all electronic communications devices ready for purchase adhere to the principles of Universal Design to cater for the needs of persons with Disabilities.

The Regulations require an ECS Licensee to provide a National Relay System which translates voice to text and vice versa, on calls made by persons who are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment.

>> **The Code for Persons with Disabilities, 2021** is available on www.icasa.org.za

ICASA regional footprint

Zooming into the Regions and Consumer Affairs Division, which takes the responsibility of protecting business and consumers.

The Regions and Consumer Affairs Division is or assumes the face of ICASA through its important consumer protection role and that of licensees. It's all thanks to the leadership of the Executive: Regions and Consumer Affairs, Ms Anele Nomtshongwana.

The Division's mandate is to enable unimpeded provision of electronic communications, broadcasting and postal services.

It achieves this by handling and resolving complaints, eliminating radio frequency spectrum interference experienced by authorised users, inspecting radio apparatus, resolving or mitigating instances of harmful radio frequency interferences, and issuing pre-assigned spectrum licences. The Division further conducts inspections and investigations into both reserved and unreserved postal services.

Complaints handling

Consumers can lodge complaints against any service provider licensed by ICASA (to provide communications services such as broadcasting, telecommunications, or postal services).

The types of complaints usually received by the Division include (but are not limited to) quality of service, network coverage, dropped calls, line installations,

service activations, billing, and services misconduct.

The Division works proactively to ensure good governance and to mitigate potential future challenges before they become serious risks. This work is carried out by a governance committee called the Consumer Advisory Panel, as prescribed by the Electronic Communications Act.

Consumer Advisory Panel

This governance committee is made up of a panel of experts in various fields and operates according to the Consumer Advisory Panel Regulations of 2017. It consists of eleven (11) members who are nominated through a public process to serve for a period of three (3) years.

The panel focuses on education and empowerment of consumers (with particular emphasis on persons with disabilities, senior citizens and people living in underserved areas), and conducts research on consumer issues and related challenges.

It reports to the Council of the Authority quarterly and annually on its activities and findings for the year, and identifies areas where consumers experience poor service within the sectors regulated by ICASA.



Executive: Regions and Consumer Affairs, Ms Anele Nomtshongwana

> The Division has processes and procedures in place for dealing with consumer complaints, which require a complaint to be lodged with the service provider with whom they have transacted with, before forwarding the matter to ICASA.

ICASA REGIONS AND REGIONAL MANAGERS



Aganang community radio station in Potchefstroom (left) and Mmabatho FM in Mahikeng (right). The visit aimed to address the challenges faced by the radio stations, including the lack of funding and programs for persons living with disabilities.

Levelling the playing field with PEB slots allocation

As the number of political parties and independent candidates increase with each election, ICASA remains steadfast in ensuring that no voice gets drowned out amid the campaign frenzy.

The Authority has never missed a beat in its commitment to ensuring equitable access and use of broadcasting services by political parties and candidates during elections.

Elections are an important pillar in the entrenchment of democratic values and our democracy thrives when all participating stakeholders are afforded equitable access to communications platforms.

In a true reflection of ICASA's commitment to moving in step with South Africa's growing democracy, the allocation of PEB slots on October 8 saw 320 political parties and 1 580 independent candidates receive slots in line with Section 57 of the Electronic Communications Act.

The fact that independent candidates were not left out in the allocation of PEBs demonstrated ICASA's commitment to free and fair elections – and dispelled any possible perceptions of a "big boys club".

There was palpable tension in the country as the countdown to South Africa's sixth municipal

election drew to a close. The all important day was 1 November, which President Cyril Ramaphosa declared a special public holiday in recognition of the central role that elections play in upholding the ideals of our rainbow nation.

In preparation for the elections, politicians criss-crossed the country to drum up support from eligible voters, whipping up motivations as to why they deserved the votes.

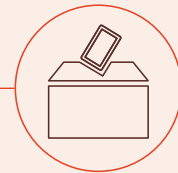
South Africa's democratic journey started in 1994 when the country turned its back on its divisive past to forge a cohesive dispensation anchored by democratic and constitutional principles.



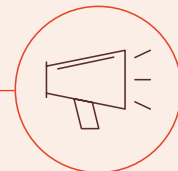
? ABOUT PEBs



Party Election Broadcasts (PEBs) are direct-message clips aired free of charge on broadcast service platforms with the intention of advancing the interests of political parties and independent candidates.



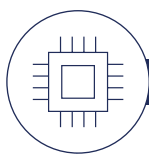
PEBs play a crucial role in empowering prospective voters with information that helps them in deciding how to cast their votes.



PEB slots were allocated to 320 political parties and 1 580 independent candidates for the 2021 Municipal Elections.

Embracing a paperless environment: EDRMS

Electronic Document & Records Management System



WHY GO PAPERLESS?

- Saves time, money, effort and natural resources
- Easier & faster to share with colleagues and other parties
- Easier & faster to store, sign and distribute
- More efficient & reliable record-keeping
- Better security
- Automatic back-ups
- Easy-to-use system
- Documents cannot be misplaced or lost



HOW DOES IT WORK?

Log in to the EDRMS system using your work computer (ensure you have internet connection)



HELP?

Use the do-it-yourself video tutorials available on the internet. For enquiries contact the IKM team, TMakabe@icasa.org.za or BNTaka@icasa.org.za

! COLLEAGUES, REMEMBER TO MIGRATE ALL YOUR DOCUMENTS TO EDRMS!

Best of five

with Councillor Thembeke Semane

1

Your term as an ICASA Councillor is almost coming to an end. Please take us through your journey as a Councillor?



Yes. I do feel privileged to have been given an opportunity to serve my nation in this sense. From the start, I knew that four years was not a long time. I embraced the Pareto principle and decided to focus on the 20% that will yield 80%. Because of my economics background, I focused my energies on projects that would have a developmental impact while nudging the Authority to adopt best corporate governance practices.

The importance of strong institutions is crucial for a country that seeks to inspire investor confidence and strengthen our democracy. The Authority is on its way to achieving a clean audit this current financial year. It is my hope and prayer that this is achieved and that ICASA maintains a clean audit.

2

What do you consider to be milestones during your term as a Councillor?



First on that list is the transformation of the industry. I chaired the HDI/B-BBEE Committee, which produced the first ICASA regulations aligned to the B-BBEE Act. Another pro-transformation committee that I chaired was the TV White Spaces Committee. The lowering of barriers to enter this market by not charging spectrum fees to black firms has been a commendable milestone. I chaired the Universal Services and Access Committee where the deliverables were originally not in the annual performance plan, but are now included and also aligned to the NDP 2030. Through this committee, we pushed rural and underserved area connectivity and 1 000 schools were connected in the past three years.

I also chaired the Strategy Planning Committee, which developed the current ICASA Five Year Strategic Plan. The most important achievement was changing the ICASA vision: to build an inclusive digital economy. This is very important because technological advancements have the potential to deepen the already bad economic divide. Unfortunately, it is black people who remain the face of poverty in almost 30 years into our democracy. Setting a compelling vision that seeks to change the status quo and deliver accordingly was very important to me.

Other committees I chaired included the Reserved Postal Services, Wireless Open Access Network and Mobile Broadband Services Inquiry committees.



Councillor Thembeke Semane

PARETO PRINCIPLE

The Pareto principle (also known as the 80/20 rule) states that for many outcomes, roughly 80% of consequences come from 20% of causes.

In business management 20% of customers usually account for about 80% of an organisation's profits.

In computer science, it was found that by fixing the top 20% of the most-reported bugs, 80% of related errors and crashes in a given system can be eliminated.

Source: Wikipedia

HDI

Historically Disadvantaged Individuals

B-BBEE

Broadbased Black Economic Empowerment is a government policy to advance economic transformation and prioritise the economic participation of Black people (African, Coloured and Indian people who are South African citizens) in the South African economy.



3

If you were forced to choose one stand-out workstream as the most important, which would it be – and why?



The HDI/B-BBEE Regulation was my number one project. For our democracy to be approaching three decades of age, and yet the majority of black people still face poverty, is not just morally inconceivable, but also a threat to the stability of our democracy.

The current South African scenarios, called Indlulamthi, are the best reference guide on these dynamics. To have charted a way forward that seeks to address this economic injustice has been a highlight for me during my term of office.

4

On a more personal note, what is your "Why"? In short, what fulfills you as a person?



I am a born-again Christian, and I consider myself to be very simple and down to earth. What fulfills me is being in constant conversation with God through prayer. This affords me an opportunity to seek for divine intervention and wisdom for the complex decisions we take.

Most importantly, through the Holy Spirit, I also get guidance to self-correct. Prayer, the love for my family (in particular my son) and friends fill my cup.

5

What exciting plans do you have for the coming year? And what is your key message to the ICASA family?



I'm very entrepreneurial at heart and my plan is to build a Fortune 500 type business that will make a meaningful developmental impact.

My key message to the ICASA family is to thank them for allowing me to be part of their well-knit family. Coming to lead in an institution of intellectuals as an outsider was never going to be easy.

Special thanks to our Chairperson, Dr Keabetswe Modimoeng, for allowing me to lead the B-BBEE Committee, to Councillor Zimri for helping me to understand the environment we were working in when I arrived (including helping me to get things like diplomatic passports), and of course, to Councillor Kadi for always reminding me to wear a blazer when travelling overseas.

To the entire Council and Executive team, and CEO, thank you for putting up with my stubbornness.

I may have wronged some people along the way, and I sincerely apologise. It was never personal – sometimes the passion for what I do, got the better of me.

Postal services 'innovate to recover'

Celebrating World post day

World Post Day is celebrated annually on 9 October, the anniversary of the establishment of the Universal Postal Union (UPU) in 1874 in Switzerland.

Today, the UPU is a specialised agency of the United Nations.

The purpose of World Post Day is to create awareness of the role of the postal sector in our everyday lives and its contribution to the social and economic development of countries.

The theme of this year's World Post Day was "Innovate to recover". In his special address on World Post Day 2021, UPU Director-General, Bishar Hussein said:

"Together, let us learn the lessons arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. Innovation is not an accessory; it is the driving force behind recovery, and what makes this sector crucial to billions of people."

Globally, post offices have evolved to offer a range of services that include special deliveries, e-commerce, and in some countries, even complex cold storage for COVID-19 vaccines is offered.



AFRICA TELECOMMUNICATIONS/ ICT DAY 2021

The African Telecommunications Union (ATU) led the continent in celebrating the 44th African Telecommunications/ICT Day on 7 December 2021.



Minister Khumbudzo Ntshavheni

The theme for the day was “Digital Skills Development for Africa’s Digital Transformation”. The topic was at the top of the agenda when representatives of ATU member countries met virtually to commemorate the day.

The African Telecommunications Union urged members to reflect on e-skills development in the context of the e-skills framework developed by the union. There’s an urgent need for Africa to equip her citizens with the right digital skills for the uptake of emerging technologies for the socioeconomic benefit of the continent.

Emerging technologies include the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Big Data, Internet of Things (IoT), Augmented Reality and Robotics that are revolutionising all economic sectors and increasing efficiency, productivity and value across the globe.

As an ATU member state, South Africa celebrated the day and the Minister of Communications and Digital Technologies, Hon. Khumbudzo Ntshavheni by showcasing the value addition of digital skills development on efficiency of emerging social and commercial enterprises in Africa.



Signed, sealed and delivered

ICASA signs MoU with the FCC to improve engagement and deepen collaboration

The United States Federal Communications Commission (FCC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with ICASA in April 2021. The MoU has seen both regulators collaborating and sharing ideas on matters of mutual interest.

The MoU entails a non-binding framework to facilitate an exchange of ideas in the field of telecommunications regulation and policy for the mutual benefit of the two regulators.

"This is a momentous collaboration that affirms the confidence that our global

counterparts have in ICASA," ICASA Chairperson, Dr Keabetswe Modimoeng, said at the virtual signing ceremony held on 8 April 2021.

"This collaboration places the Authority on solid ground to achieve international best practices, cutting-edge regulatory approaches and further validates South Africa's standing in the global ICT arena."

"So much can be accomplished through cooperation and the mutually respectful sharing of knowledge and experience,"

FCC Acting Chairperson, Ms Jessica Rosenworcel, added in agreement.

"Today, I'm proud to have formalised our partnership with our friends in South Africa on issues of telecommunications policy, competitive markets, technological innovation, and closing the digital divide in both countries."

"I thank Dr. Modimoeng for his leadership and partnership and look forward to further exchanges with ICASA," Rosenworcel concluded.



While ICASA CEO Willington Ngwepe looks on from a safe social distance, Dr Keabetswe Modimoeng, Chairperson of ICASA, signs the MoU between ICASA and the US Federal Communications Commission during the virtual signing ceremony.

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