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COMMUNITY TV STATIONS WITHDRAW FROM ACT-SA

Two community television stations have withdrawn from the nascent body formed to represent the sector, the Association of Community Television – South Africa (Act-SA).

Cape Town TV and 1KZN TV withdrew from Act-SA, citing irreconcilable differences with the initiative. This leaves Tshwane TV, Soweto TV and Bay TV as the only licensed community broadcasters participating in the initiative, along with a few other unlicensed community TV groups.

Act-SA was initiated in May 2013 when a grouping of community television organizations agreed to the formation of the body. The intention was to form Act-SA as a distinct legal entity which operates on behalf of its members, namely community television stations licensed by ICASA as well as those seeking such licenses.

To this end, the participating organizations signed a memorandum of understanding, which outlined their intention to form a legal entity governed by a constitution. The MoU was signed on 29 May 2013, following the election of a steering committee. The mandate of the elected office bearers was to organize the AGM, at which the constitution would be ratified and a leadership elected to take the organization forward.

One of the main problems that has led to the demise of the the initiative is that the steering committee failed to organise an Annual General Meeting, leading to a situation where the initiative lacked legitimacy. This was compounded by a breakdown of trust between members brought about by poor communication, lack of transparency, and concerns about the absence of a democratic decision-making processes.

While Act-SA members were able to to agree on a ‘Charter for Community Television in South Africa’ which set out parameters for the ethical operation of community TV stations, the provisions of this document could not be enforced due to the absence of the legitimate oversight body which Act-SA was supposed to become.

Meanwhile government spend on the community TV sector, propelled by policy guidelines from the ruling ANC and parliamentary directives, has been wholly inadequate. Government adspend channeled via the GCIS has been wildly disproportionate in favour of certain channels while others have been almost entirely neglected.

Act-SA has not met since March 2014 and the body is to all intents and purposes defunct.

1KZN TV and Cape Town TV resigned from Act-SA on 24 and 25 June 2015 respectively. Cape Town TV and 1KZN TV declare that no decisions or actions by individuals purporting to act on behalf of Act-SA will be in any way representative of or binding on our stations, nor do they represent the community TV sector as a whole.

Executive Committee: Anton Harber (Chairperson), Raymond Louw, Nobuntu Mbelle, Indra de Lanerolle, William Gumede, Oupa Lebogo, Sam Radebe, Franz Kruger. **Executive Director:** Tusi Fokane

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