

Chairperson, Dr Mncube's Address At The Launch Of, and Fundraising Event For The Giyani Community Radio Station, 01 June 2013.

The Programme Director

Member of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Communications, the honourable Faith Muthambi MP,

Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and members of the Board for the Giyani Community Radio Station,

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen

It is indeed a great honour to join you this evening in the launch of your beloved community mouthpiece, Giyani Community Radio.

Let me hasten to congratulate you for the class community radio licence awarded to you last November by ICASA.

I must say, this licence was long overdue, given that the first batch of community radio licences were awarded in 1993.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the community radio sector.

Not only is it time for celebrating with you and the entire community broadcasting sector, but it also a time for reflecting on all matters affecting the sector.

When South Africa got down to negotiate a new constitutional dispensation, the role of broadcasting services during the transition period was at the epicentre of the talks.

Broadcasting services were considered critical in "levelling the playing field" by providing all South Africans with the information necessary to enable them to make informed decisions regarding the future of the country.

The Independent Broadcasting Act of 1993 was thus promulgated at about the same time with the country's 1993 interim Constitution.

The 1993 Act removed the powers for licensing and regulating broadcasting services from government, and placed these in the hands of an independent regulator –the IBA.

The Act also created a three-tier broadcasting service consisting of the public, commercial and community broadcasting services.

For the purpose of this evening, lets us confine ourselves to the community broadcasting sector.

This completely new sector was meant to bring broadcasting to the community level, to the people on the ground to use it as a tool for development.

The conception of community broadcasting was informed by literature and research reports on socio-economic development.

One lesson learnt from post-colonial period is that the people themselves or a community itself must own up and lead its way towards development and up-liftment.

This community radio station must therefore lead the Giyani community, and the surrounding areas in addressing their needs for information.

Our communities in this part of the country have specific challenges.

Access to clean water and sanitation is limited in many a household and villages.

In this instance, community radio can play an important role in providing information to the community when there is an outbreak of an epidemic such as cholera.

Our street vendors selling fruits and vegetables along the main road to Polokwane can use radio to share information about latest methods in improving their harvest or accessing bigger markets for selling their crops.

Giyani Community Radio can assist local schools, from pre-school to high school, with day-to-day back-up for their lessons - from Mathematics, History to Life Orientation.

All these information would need to be packaged for the local community, in their own language or languages.

I am told this area is multi-lingual, and the people are multi-lingual as well in their command of ShiTsonga (XiTsonga), ChiVenda and KheLobedu.

Already your station can play an important role in community cohesion, integration and nation-building.

So, Giyani Community Radio should be for the community, by the community and about the community.

The radio station must draw participation from all sectors of your community – women, youth and persons with disabilities.

Apart from launching your radio station tonight, is a need to raise funds for its operations.

I assume that invitations to this event were extended to all the business entities operating in your fifty kilometre radius.

Go and knock on the doors of these business entities, show them the value you can bring to their enterprises in terms of marketing and advertising.

Before I conclude my speech, let me share with you some street-wise survival tips for this sector.

The first advice is that you cannot operate alone. Always engage and share ideas with other established radio stations as to how they have survived to this day.

There is an association of community radio stations, it is always advisable to lobby as a group rather than as individuals for your issues to carry weight.

The Authority's Licensing and Compliance division is always ready to help you to comply with your licence terms and conditions, and on any other regulatory matter.

The Department of Communications and its portfolio organisations and state-owned entities such as ICASA, SABC, Sentech, SA Post Office and USAASA conduct community road-shows across all provinces from time to time to address service delivery challenges on broadcasting, postal and telecommunications issues.

It is advisable to have your ear on the ground when these imbizos come to your areas. Alternatively, as a District Municipality you can request and arrange one through the office of the mayor or the Traditional Authority.

Finally, on behalf of ICASA I would like to wish you well, and I hope and know that Giyani Community Radio will indeed take its rightful place in this community, and in the hearts and ears of its listeners.

I thank you.