

# Departments in turf war over digital TV process

By [Bekezela Phakathi](#)

13 Nov 2014

Tensions are simmering between the Department of Communications and the Department of Telecommunications and Postal Services over the ownership of key state technology-related projects such as the roll-out of digital terrestrial television (DTT).

Both departments have claimed ownership of the digital-migration process - a situation that has led to growing speculation of a power struggle between Communications Minister Faith Muthambi and Siyabonga Cwele, the telecoms and postal services minister.



Faith Muthambi

SA is migrating to digital TV broadcasting from analogue - a process that began more than five years ago.

Last week Muthambi said she was taking control of the digital migration process, saying she had "initiated the process of reviving it".

Cwele had been entrusted with leading the digital-migration process. Earlier this year he said the final digital-migration policy would be gazetted by the end of July, but missed the deadline amid talk of a tug of war between the two ministries. There had also been confusion over which of the two departments would be in charge of the Independent Communications Authority of SA (Icasa).

But appearing in Parliament yesterday to explain her department's role and mandate, Muthambi said the communications regulator now reports to her.

She said the two departments had twice had a ministerial-level meeting, co-ordinated by the presidency, to address the transfer of legislative functions. However, the meetings had not yet produced the required results and the presidency would be making the required intervention to resolve the matter, she said.

"A new proclamation is being considered by the presidency in this regard... We have requested engagement with the Department of Telecommunications and Postal Services on what could be considered for transfer, while awaiting for the proclamation," Muthambi said.

When President Jacob Zuma reconfigured his Cabinet and established the Department of Telecommunications and Postal Services soon after the May general elections, he said the aim of the new department was to get more value out of the telecoms sector.

The Department of Communications' functions were broadened to include communication policy and strategy, information dissemination and publicity as well as the branding of the country abroad.

But a grey area remains around the two departments' legislative functions - especially on the crucial roll-out of DTT.

Another gripe from the new communications department was a funding gap. "We are also reprioritising funds to cater for the ministry's programmes, as they are not funded for this current financial year ... the minister has been assigned more responsibilities by the president, which go beyond the current budget allocated," the department said.



Siyabonga Cwele

Democratic Alliance MP and communications spokesman Gavin Davis said there was clearly a turf war between the two departments, which had created more uncertainty on meeting the 2015 deadline to migrate from analogue to digital broadcasting.

Meanwhile, the Department of Communications said the success of DTT will, for the most part, hinge on SA's ability to develop its own "quality content".

The department briefed MPs on the establishment of the South African Broadcast Production Advisory Body, which will give advice on how government can develop the production and display of local television and radio content.

The department's Norman Munzhelele said the advisory body, whose appointment Muthambi was finalising, must make recommendations on policy and strategies to give effect to the production and display of local content.

This would be done after consultation with the National Film and Video Foundation and the broadcasting industry.

Source: *Business Day* via I-NET Bridge

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>