

Minister explains ad spending

Communications Minister Faith Muthambi has addressed a Democratic Alliance (DA) parliamentary question relating to government *The New Age* advertising spending, which is managed by the Department of Communications...

In the question by DA MP Gavin Davis, the DA alleges that government [rewards "state-friendly media"](#).



Faith Muthambi - defending the adspend on *The New Age*.
(Image: GCIS)

Muthambi today moved to address the claims.

"On Thursday, 29 January, after I released a breakdown of government advertising spending through the Department of Communications, this myth is back, copied and pasted under the byline of Gavin Davis.

"It's clear that Hon. Davis, MP, has a shallow understanding of advertising communication at best and is being disingenuous in his attempt to shoe-horn his obvious prejudice against the black-owned media into a false argument to further his own agenda.

"A passing knowledge of newspaper distribution footprints, reader demographics and editorial content would have prevented the obvious flaws in the honourable member's allegations," said

Muthambi.

The Minister said *The New Age* - a national daily newspaper owned and operated by TNA Media Ltd - was much closer to the *Business Day* - a national daily that covers economics, business and politics - in its editorial balance based on tonality of coverage.

"Research conducted by an internationally renowned company, Media Tenor, has produced a report analysing positive reporting on President Zuma for the period July 2014 - January 2015.

"[It] shows that 10% of *The New Age* articles report positively on President Zuma, with 9% of *Business Day* reportage carrying equally positive content on the President. Are we to deduce that *Business Day* is a propaganda platform or pro President Zuma?" said Muthambi.

She said to make decisions in a dynamic media environment, the Department of Communications' in-house media buying team directs strategic government media buying using Telmar Media's suite of worldwide leading media advertising software and services used for reach, frequency and optimisation.

Telmar's 10,000 users across 85 countries include many of the world's leading advertising agencies, digital and print publishers, broadcasters and advertisers.

The minister said the in-house media buying personnel attend regular South African Audience Research Foundation (SAARF) and Telmar accredited training and are Advertising Media Association of South Africa members.

"*The New Age* - a newspaper with a national distribution footprint - is being incorrectly compared to metropolitan newspapers (*The Herald* - Nelson Mandela Bay, *The Mercury* - Durban, *Pretoria News* - Pretoria) competing in defined regional markets.

"If we followed Hon. Davis MP's argument, government would need to advertise in a greater number of metropolitan newspapers in all provinces to match the footprint of *The New Age*, at a greater cost than that of advertising in *The New Age*.

"For the record, *The New Age* is distributed in all nine provinces, with six regional editions. Each daily edition of *The New Age* has a dedicated provincial focus page highlighting local news in addition to its coverage of national and global news," Muthambi said.

She said government uses mass communication to fulfil its mandate to communicate to the largest possible spread of South Africans.

"By his own admission, Davis concedes that government uses 248 newspapers to inform the public of its programme but omits the fact that government is the largest supporter of print media diversity through its advertising.

"It is incomprehensible that Davis continues to peddle half truths about the audience size of *The New Age*.

"It's readership of 153,000 excludes the additional 621,000 viewers measured by AMPS for its TNA Briefings - a live broadcast event that combines stakeholder interaction, its print readership and social media following with national television coverage.

"I invite Honourable Davis MP to visit Tshedimotso House - a Setswana word meaning insight, learning, information or erudition ... to be tutored by the home grown talent employed in the Department of Communications media buying operation," she said.

Source: SAnews.gov.za

The DA response

Muthambi's defence of government's R10m expenditure on advertising in *The New Age* is laughable.

According to Muthambi, her Department used sophisticated software to guide it in its decision to allocate 11,2% of government print ad spend on *The New Age*.

The Minister cited *The New Age*'s "footprint" as the reason that disproportionately more was spent on it than other newspapers.

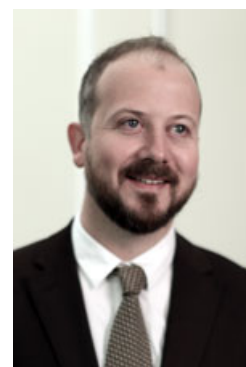
She must be joking.

The New Age has a mere 153,000 readers. The reason that so few commercial advertisers choose *The New Age* for their campaigns is because it reaches so few people compared to other publications.

Is Muthambi really suggesting that *The New Age*'s "footprint" is as big as the *Sowetan*'s with its 1,6 million readers across the country? Or that *The New Age* has a larger "footprint" than the *Daily Sun* with its 5,3 million readers in all provinces?

Does the Minister really expect us to believe that the decision to channel millions into *The New Age* had nothing to do with the fact that the President's close friends, the Guptas, own it?

The people of South Africa know a scam when they see one. We demand real answers and real accountability for this sickening abuse of public money on a Zuma-aligned newspaper.



Gavin Davis - calling the adspend on *The New Age* into question.