

## **Broadcasters concerned about cost of digital migration – council chair**

By: Leandi Cameron

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Digital Dzonga Council chairperson Lara Kantor said on Tuesday that broadcasters were concerned about the costs of providing content for the new television channels that would be established as South Africa migrates to digital television.

“It is generally expected that broadcasters will make investments in new content for all the new channels. It is an investment that is costly, and it is something broadcasters are concerned about,” she said at the launch of the council in Johannesburg.

*Engineering News* questioned Kantor whether these concerns have been addressed, in the light of the financial woes of the national broadcaster, and the fact that the issue had been raised by broadcasters last year.

Kantor replied that, “Undoubtedly, the [digital broadcasting] migration process is a big project that will yield large prices, but the important thing to know is that the funding is being shared by multiple roleplayers. As we have heard, government will make a contribution [to the digital migration] and broadcasters, through their investment in content.”

M-net and e.tv said late last year that they were looking for an incentive to migrate to digital terrestrial television.

M-Net CEO **Patricia Scholtemeyer** said in November that DTT migration was “very expensive” and that an adequate plan between broadcasters and the Independent Communication Authority of South Africa (Icasa) had to be worked out. e.tv channel director **Bronwyn Keene-Young** agreed, saying that the migration would have “a huge financial impact”. “The costs will result in a difficult financial period for the broadcasters,” she said at the time.

South Africa switched on the digital signal on October 30, last year, starting a dual-illumination period during which both the analogue and digital signals are broadcast simultaneously.

Icasa recently announced that it was considering asking Communications Minister Sphiwe Nyanda to review the current dual-illumination period set out in the Broadcasting Digital Migration Policy.

Icasa chairperson Paris Mashile said that the dual illumination of digital and analogue television signals would most likely not end by November 2011, as previously expected, but perhaps only by 2013.

The Digital Dzonga Council was launched by the Department of Communications as an advisory body, which was appointed by government in 2008 to oversee South Africa’s migration to digital terrestrial broadcasting.

Digital Dzonga Council members includes government (Department of Communications),

consumer groups, broadcasters (SABC, e.tv, M-Net), manufacturers, the national signal distributor (Sentech) and the regulator (Icasa).