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# TECHNOLOGY

## MEDIA AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

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# ALERT

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## 'THE DRAFT IMT ROADMAP MAY BE BENEFICIAL TO SOME BUT COSTLY TO CURRENT LICENSEES'

At a media release held on 1 September 2014, the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa ('ICASA') called for comments just days after it had published the Draft International Mobile Telephony Roadmap ('Draft IMT Roadmap') on 27 August 2014.

Stakeholders have until 7 October 2014 to submit their input, comments and representations to ICASA on the Draft IMT Roadmap. The Draft IMT Roadmap builds on the Frequency Migration Plan published in April 2013 which identified the frequency bands employed in South Africa.

The Draft IMT Roadmap seeks to ensure universal availability of broadband services as well as a vibrant and competitive telecommunications industry to promote investments.

In its media release, ICASA stated that "It is generally known that many rural areas do not have access to mobile bandwidth indicating a need for a more universal mobile broadband coverage, a need best served by deploying lower frequencies that propagate a wider market."

The demand for mobile broadband is growing substantially and as a result thereof there is tremendous pressure to increase broadband bandwidth capacity.

The executive summary to the Draft IMT Roadmap

identifies that the 'key driver' for the deployment of IMT Bands is to ensure that it meets the objectives of 'broadband for all' encapsulated in the National Broadband Policy and Strategy, SA Connect ('SA Connect').

The Draft IMT Roadmap therefore seeks to deploy 700 MHz and 800 MHz digital dividend bands and, potentially, the 450-470MHz band while strongly focusing on Long Term Evolution (LTE) and identifying the various options and recommendations for the deployment of the identified bands.

It furthermore lists the potential migration scenarios and timelines for the deployment of the identified bands.

The Draft IMT Roadmap should not be read in isolation as it is designed to support the targets set by SA Connect.

One of the targets set by the SA Connect broadband initiative is the conversion to Digital Terrestrial Television ('DTT') and the switch-off of analogue broadcasts which is anticipated to be completed by mid-2015.

Although the Draft IMT Roadmap will have a beneficial impact on rural communities, current licensees may have to migrate to the identified and listed IMT bands available.

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