

Icasa releases regulations on sports broadcasting rights

Sports minister Ngonde Balfour has hailed the Position Paper and Regulations on sports broadcasting rights as a move that will give all South Africans an opportunity to participate in all sporting codes.

The minister said this on Friday after the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (Icasa) released the position paper that will see the majority of South Africans watching rugby, cricket, soccer, and Olympic games on free-to-air channels.

'If we want to succeed in getting the majority of South Africans to actively participate in sport, we must ensure that there is affordable and easy access to the broadcasting of sports events.

He said these regulations should never be seen as an end in itself, saying the move however, provided a solid foundation.

'And already we are seeing the impact of cooperation between broadcasting licensees with the return of sports such as rugby and tennis to the screens of the public broadcaster,' said Mr Balfour.

The release of the Position Paper and Regulations on sports broadcasting rights by Icasa is the culmination of a lengthy and intensive process of negotiations and discussions between stakeholders in sport, members of the public and the authority.

Icasa defines the broadcasting of 'national sporting events' as sporting events deemed to be of national interest, and should be broadcast live or delayed by free-to-air television licensees if rights are held by subscription broadcasters.

Icasa has listed the Summer Olympic Games, All Africa Games, FIFA Soccer World Cup, Rugby World Cup, Cricket World Cup, the Rugby Super 12 only if a South African team is playing and the CAF Champions League, as events of national interest.

However, the Authority has left negotiations for commercial rights on the broadcasters themselves, choosing not to prescribe a regulatory intervention.

'We believe that the manner in which the policy and regulations are structured, makes it clear that the onus is on subscription broadcasters to sub-licence rights to listed national sporting events to free-to-air broadcasters since subscription broadcasters will be prohibited from broadcasting these sporting events, if such sub-licensing does not occur,' said Lumko Mtimde, Icasa's acting chairperson.

Mr Mtimde said the authority would monitor the effectiveness of the system and investigate the need for guidelines on

deadlock breaking mechanism with regard to sub-licensing.

Article by Richard Mantu, courtesy of BuaNews, www.gcis.gov.za/buanews.

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