Independent Communications Authority of South Africa
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MEDIA RELEASE

POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE ASTRONOMY GEOGRAPHIC ADVANTAGE ACT ON EXISITING AND FUTURE FREQUENCY SPECTRUM LICENSEES

Johannesburg – The Astronomy Geographic Advantage Act, 2007 (Act No. 21 of 2007) ("the AGA Act" was promulgated on 17 June 2008, in Government Gazette No. 31157 and became operational on the 24th of April 2009.

On the 19th of February 2010, the Minister of Science and Technology ("the Minister") declared the whole of the territory of the Northern Cape Province excluding Sol Plaatje Municipality as an astronomy advantage area for radio astronomy purposes in terms of section 5 of the AGA Act and on the 26th of March 2010 gave notice of her intention to declare the Karoo Core Astronomy Advantage Area, that included an invitation to the public to submit written comments in terms of section 42 of the AGA Act.

The Karoo Core Astronomy Advantage Area was finally declared on 20 August 2010, by the Minister for the purposes of radio astronomy in Government Gazette No. 33462. The area consists of three pieces of farming land of 13 407 hectares in the Kareeberg and Karoo Hoogland Municipalities purchased by the National Research Foundation.

The Karoo Core Astronomy Advantage Area will contain the MeerKAT radio telescope and the core planned Square Kilometre Array (SKA) radio telescope that will be used for the purposes of radio astronomy and related scientific endeavours.

The Minister obtained the concurrence of ICASA on the following matters with respect to the Karoo Core Astronomy Advantage Area:

- The complete prohibition and restriction of terrestrial broadcasting transmission and

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activities within the area capable of causing radio frequency interference in terms of section 22(2) of the AGA Act.

- That activities prescribed in section 23(1) of the AGA Act may be prohibited within the area, such as the construction, expansion or operation of any fixed radio frequency interference sources and any activities capable of causing radio frequency interference , including bringing into the area or operating any interference source mobile radio interference source or SRD's.
- The Authority also agrees that the restriction on the Karoo Core Astronomy Advantage Area may be confirmed either by a notice in the government gazette or by means of making regulations in accordance with section 50 of the AGA Act.

Section 22(6) of the AGA Act, read with section 30(1) of the Electronic Communications Act, 2005 (Act No.36 of 2005), imposes an obligation on ICASA not to issue broadcasting service licences or radio frequency spectrum licences, where the service or frequency could cause radio frequency interference in the Karoo Core Astronomy Advantage Area, unless the conditions set out in the licence make provision for the protection of such areas.

The complete prohibitions and restrictions on the use of specific frequencies within the radio frequency spectrum or radio frequency spectrum in general within Karoo Core Astronomy Advantage Area will become effective upon publication of notice by the Minister or by means of regulations to be published by the Department of Science and Technology.

ICASA will, with immediate effect, not issue spectrum licenses that would cause the radio interference within the declared Karoo Core Astronomy Advantage Area.

The Authority will conduct a study work on the frequency occupancy and usage for the purpose of determining the Electronic Communications Networks and Broadcasting Service Licensees with existing transmission sites affecting astronomy and related scientific endeavours within Karoo Core Astronomy Advantage Area.

The ECN and Broadcasting Service Licensees that transmits or broadcasts into the core astronomy advantage area to migrate onto a radio frequency or utilize alternative technology that more effectively protects radio astronomy observations.

Ends

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ISSUED BY COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT