

CC: tyhileka@madubela.org, ja...@..., g...@...
Dear Ms Tyhileka Madubela,

This email is in response to the South African Weather Service Amendment Bill 2011, specifically Section 30 A (Offences and penalties) and Section 27 A (Liability).

I would like to state that the African Space Institute (registered name: African Space Development Institute), a leading nonprofit in the space development sector in South Africa, is firmly against such additions mentioned in Section 30 A and Section 27 A.

In Section 30 A:

Our institute is against how this section would make the Weather Agency have a monopoly over the weather prediction and reporting sector, it would be highly counter-productive, slow the research process, inefficient, stifle innovation and response times to emergency situations. It also effects international ties with other organisations and companies over weather and satellite information sharing.

As we are a player and an important stakeholder in the South African space sector, we find this amendment as an obstacle to progress, research and innovation. We have extremely innovative projects coming online in the near future that make use of Citizen Science technology and concepts and Section 30 A would impact on this and hinder advancement of scientific understanding and research into weather patterns, intense storms and earthquake research that could put South Africa higher on the map in science and technology.

The South Atlantic Anomaly above the Cape that extends across to South America is a high radiation zone that is still being investigated and researched. It is thought to affect weather patterns below and is linked with space weather research. With future research that will go into this area, a unique location in the world, this section would stand in the way of freedom of communication between the international and local scientific community. This also effects Earth Observation via our satellites that we use as well as important Space Relations (outreach) work that we do where we educate the public and our youth of earth from space and how the weather affects our planet.

This is only just the tip of what Section 30 A would cause headaches over and the space industry isn't the only sector that will be impacted. The carbon credit industry would be effected. Air quality covers CO2 and giving control over release and research of this information is not advisable. South Africa being a commodities player in the world and where weather is analysed for agriculture monitoring, financial analysts would have to line up on the phone to ask for permission regarding their

analysis to go into reports. Traders would have to also call the Weather Agency. Farmers would also not be allowed to warn fellow farmers of sudden storms, especially the increase in violent and deadly storms that have been forming over our home province, the Kwazulu-Natal region.

It also effects aviation, pilots will not be able to transmit warnings to fellow pilots flying on IFR or VFR routes without having to call the Weather Agency first from 30,000ft.

Regarding Section 27 A is also an issue, how can no one be held responsible for any proven negligence or failure to pass on possible life threatening warnings? Isn't this one of reasons the Weather Agency is around for? We understand a certain cover of liability but if it can be proven that negligence was committed, those responsible should be chargeable.

To put a law down that punishes those interested in saving lives (who can ignore a dangerous storm in front of their eyes and have to phone the Weather Agency before they believe what is in front of them) this is just unbelievable in a time when we are trying to advance space science and technology with our youth and our public.

I ask parliament, how can we create awareness and build knowledge freely with having our hands tied?

Access to information and a competitive economy is the only way South Africa can move forward into a fully advanced country. With these amendments it would cause unethical competition and advantage of the Weather Agency.

We seriously ask you to please rethink these sections (30 A and 27 A) for the future of our loved country and for the future of our knowledge based society.

This is for the love of science and technology. We thank you for your time.

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Kind regards
Brad Inggs
Founder / Managing Director
African Space Institute (ASI)

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Mobile: +27
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