

# NAB celebrates 30 years of industry self-regulation

Earlier this month the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) celebrated 30 years of self-regulation through the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa (BCCSA).



Source: © Andrea De Santis [Unsplash](#) The National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) is celebrating 30 years of self-regulation

The celebration took the form of an event in Johannesburg with its members and various stakeholders, where a range of local and international speakers on three panels shared their thoughts on the last three decades of broadcasting in South Africa as well as globally, and the future.

## Importance of the industry to democracy

One of the speakers included Justice Albie Sachs, who reflected on the role of broadcasting from the apartheid era to its importance in our democracy today, with broadcasting giving South Africans a platform to express themselves.

“Radio is everywhere. It’s in the car and when you’re shopping you hear it. It is the sound of South Africa. It reaches millions of people; there’s storytelling on the radio,” says Sachs. “Community radio in South Africa is so well-developed. It [radio] was so important when three-quarters of the nation were silenced,” he adds.

Sachs also says that while South Africa is not exactly a fair or safe society, it is an open one and that the media play an enormous role in terms of this openness.

## Industry self-regulation progress

BCCSA chairperson, Dr Sunette Lötter, shared with the audience just how far industry self-regulation has come since 1993 and commended the BCCSA for its contribution to broadcasting.

“The fact that the BCCSA has stood the test of time proves that it has not only gained people's trust, but it also meets the real needs of society,” she says.

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## Radio's unique power

Guest speaker, James Cridland, a radio futurologist based in Australia, says he believes the medium has the power to bring people together, even amidst the emergence of new digital platforms.

“Radio has a unique power. When I listen to the radio, I listen to people with common interests to me and because radio isn’t ultra-personalised, like Google or Facebook can be, it can help people see both sides of the argument. It can help people discover stories they otherwise were unaware of. It helps connect people,” says Cridland.

The NAB’s executive director, Nadia Bulbulia, notes that the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) Act was passed 30 years ago in October 1993.

“The Independent Broadcasting Authority (the predecessor to Icas), was established to “free the airwaves” and foster the development of a three-tiered broadcasting system - with community radio being the first tier of licences to be issued even before South Africa’s first democratic elections in 1994,” she says.

Bulbulia adds that the broadcasting sector should dedicate efforts to mentoring the next generation of policy specialists, regulators and content creators who will take the industry forward into the next 30 years.



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The international speakers that participated virtually in the celebrations included:

- African Telecommunications Union secretary-general John Omo, Christian Schalt - chief digital officer, RTL Radio Germany
- Larry Rosin - president, Edison Research)
- Tammy Greenberg - senior vice-president, RAB-USA
- Emily Davidson, head of policy & public affairs, Channel 4 UK.

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