

MEDIA STATEMENT

For immediate release

COMMERCIAL RADIO SPREADS THE VACCINATION MESSAGE

Johannesburg, South Africa, 30 September 2021: While the country ‘breathes easier’ with the announcement that South Africa has officially exited its third Covid-19 wave, warnings of a potential fourth wave over the December holiday period reinforce the need for all South Africans to remain vigilant against spread of the coronavirus. This is the message from South Africa’s commercial broadcasting sector, who continue to strongly support Government’s initiatives to contain the virus by keeping the public informed, with currently a major focus on the vaccine roll-out.

Across the country, broadcasters are leading the message to get vaccinated with presenters being vaccinated ‘on air’ and/or publicly posting that they have “been jabbed’. As summer fast approaches, campaigns such as Smile FM’s ‘*Save our Summer*’ are being launched to promote the message of “getting vaxxed”.

In addition to flighting public service announcements, the extensive radio coverage ranges from daily vaccine related news and interviews with experts, policy makers and representatives from the private and public sector to explainer videos and presenter endorsements. Having covered the vaccine roll-out since it was announced, a highlight, says 947, was interviewing the first person to be vaccinated in South Africa.

In addition to radio coverage, broadcasters, as reported by OFM and Algoa FM, are utilising a variety of formats to make vaccination information more readily available, converting interviews into podcasts and posting extensively on their digital platforms, amongst other initiatives. CapeTalk reports that it has curated its coverage into an online collection of all interviews and digital content related to the vaccine roll-out into one digital stream. Kfm 94.5 notes that it is cross-publishing Covid-19 vaccine related content from its sister stations and news brand to continually create public awareness.

Broadcasters are also looking to partner with relevant stakeholders in order to amplify the vaccination message. For example, both 702 and Jacaranda FM have partnered with leading medical aids on their vaccination campaigns and broadcasters such as the SABC, Jacaranda FM and Power 98.7 have hosted mobile vaccination sites at their premises.

As reported in ‘*Rising to the contagion*’, published by the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB), the commercial radio sector responded immediately to the outbreak of the pandemic in March 2020, quickly adapting to meet the changing information, entertainment and lifestyle needs of listeners. A survey of 20 commercial radio stations, covering the first six weeks of the national lockdown, indicated the extent to which broadcasters have used their platforms to provide listeners with

accurate news and information on the pandemic. In the first six weeks, over 32 279 minutes of Covid-19 related content was broadcast across the 20 commercial stations (an average of 1 614 minutes per radio station).

Even before the lockdown, radio stations had taken a proactive approach to broadcast messaging in line with the recommendations from the World Health Organisation (WHO). However, as South Africa entered the nationwide lockdown, commercial radio stations launched an immediate and extensive Public Service Announcements (PSA) campaign across all provinces in seven of South Africa's official languages. Within the first six weeks, over 72 790 PSAs were broadcast by the 20 stations surveyed.

“Commercial radio’s swift response in support of government communications and programmes to contain the virus is indicative of its unwavering commitment to addressing public interest concerns,” notes Nadia Bulbulia, NAB’s Executive Director. “In this regard, an invaluable programme launched in 2019 by our Commercial Radio Committee (CRC) is the Free Radio Initiative (FRI), which provides free air-time to address societal issues. The inaugural FRI campaign, ‘*Turn Down Your Radio*’, focused on the disturbing prevalence of Gender Based Violence (GBV) - which regrettably has seen a significant spike during lockdown– calling on all South Africans to act collectively in ending GBV.”

More information on the ‘*Turn Down Your Radio*’ campaign and the ‘*Rising to the Contagion*’ report can be accessed on www.nab.org.za.

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About NAB

The National Association of Broadcasters (“NAB”) is a voluntary association that was formed in 1993 to foster and promote the development of a sustainable and robust broadcasting system in South Africa.

It supports the principles of democracy, freedom of expression and the diversity of voices.

As the leading representative of South Africa’s regulated broadcasting industry, the NAB members comprise all three tiers of broadcasters (public, private and community) as well as signal providers and industry associates. It has since the dawn of SA’s democracy, engaged in policy and regulatory processes that affect the broadcasting sector.

The NAB is funded entirely by its members and responds to a broad range of needs and developments to strengthen and create a favourable climate for a vibrant industry. It established the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of SA (BCCSA) that is recognized by the sector regulator, ICASA.

Further information: www.nabsa.org.za