

MEDIA STATEMENT

REGULATOR CELEBRATES 25 YEARS OF PAIA DURING INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO INFORMATION DIALOGUE IN KZN

1 OCTOBER 2025

As Access to Information month draws to a close, on Monday, 29 September 2025, the Information Regulator (Regulator) hosted a successful **Reform to Information Law Dialogue** in Durban KwaZulu-Natal as part of the **International Day for Universal Access to Information** (IDUAI) commemorative events.

Part-time Member, Mr Mfana Gwala, told a room full of various public and private bodies that the principle of access to information is premised on the idea that everyone has the right to seek and receive information, access to information is recognised as a prerequisite for sustainable development and for claiming human rights.

This year's programme aimed to advance the efforts in amending the Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA) and ensuring that it is fit for purpose in the digital environment. Whilst also reflecting on 25 years since it was brought into effect and assess what has worked as well as tap into areas for improvement so to strengthen the constitutional right of access to information.

During his keynote address the Deputy Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development, Mr Andries Nel, said across continents, access to information laws have become the cornerstone of open and democratic societies. "Today we gather to celebrate a principle that lies at the heart of every thriving democracy, every empowered community and every accountable institution: the universal right to access information. In today's digital age the right to access information is no longer confined to dusty archives or government gazettes. It lives and breathes online - on websites, social media platforms, and open data portals. With innovation comes complexity – and it is against this reality that the review of PAIA must take place. Algorithmic transparency and accountability are vital, especially when these technologies are used by public institutions.

People need to know why certain content is promoted or suppressed, and how platform policies affect public discourse,” he explained.

The IDUAL, is observed annually on 28 September, and the theme adopted in South Africa for this year was “**Reflecting on 25 years of the Access to Information Law and making it fit for purpose in the Digital age**”, which coincides with the global theme and the current events in the country.

Chairperson of the South African Human Rights Commission Reverend Chris Nissen told the audience that the right to access information is a fundamental human right which empowers individuals, communities and society at large to participate in this constitutional democracy. “Lack of access to information results in disempowerment citizens, poor and unfirmed decision making, missed economic and social opportunities, creates ignorance and most concerning, it weakens democratic processes. As the Human Rights Commission, we commend the Information Regulator under the leadership of Adv. Pansy Tlakula, for its leadership in championing for transparency through its mandate,” he added.

Participants appreciated the carefully curated panel discussions and rich deliberations on topics, “*Access to online information in the digital age- How digital transformation can enhance access to information*”, and “*Denied and delayed access to information and how it jeopardises the realisation of rights*”. The dialogue was a success as it met its objectives and recommendations were recorded, and will provide the Regulator with a catapult to embark on reforming PAIA and improving its efficiency.

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