



# MY DISTRICT TODAY



Issue no. 4 March 2012

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## Government in full support of the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) Project

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The SKA MeerKAT project near Carnarvon.

Government has, through the GCIS, managed to coordinate 50 live television broadcasts to venues in remote areas to bring the State of the Nation Address (SoNA) held on 9 February, to audiences who have not been exposed to this important event before. One such venue was held at Carnarvon, in the Northern Cape where more than 150 community members gathered in the Carnarvon Hall. The choice to host the broadcast in Carnarvon was strategic because it was expected that the President would mention news of the South African bid for the SKA, in which Australia is also a contender.

The President called for South Africans to support the bid for the SKA that is expected to be announced in March 2012. According to the residents the project is expected to boost the economy and skills development in the small town.



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The SKA will be a mega radio telescope, about 100 times more sensitive than any other existing radio telescope. It will consist of about 3 000 dish-shaped antennas that will be spread over a vast area of more than 3 000 km to form the core site to the furthest telescope antenna. This is the next-generation radio telescope that will be powerful enough to explore the edges of the universe.

The project with 64 dishes, each with a 13,5 m diameter, is said to be the largest and most sensitive radio telescope array in the southern hemisphere, capable of delivering frontier science. If Africa wins the SKA bid, the core of the telescope will be constructed in the Karoo region of the Northern Cape with outlying telescope stations throughout South Africa, Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Mauritius, Namibia and Zambia.

The SKA is one of the most exciting engineering and research projects that Africa and particularly South Africa is bidding to host and has, among other things, the following benefits:

- The design, construction and operation of the Karoo Array Telescope (MeerKAT).
- A Youth into Science and Engineering Programme, which supports students who wish to become the scientists or engineers, to work with the MeerKAT and SKA radio telescopes.
- Electricity and broadband infrastructure layout.



Some of the community members watching SoNA.

To date the project has already influenced the tarring of the road between Vosburg and Carnarvon, which will re-

duce the travelling distance between Kimberley and Carnarvon by 100 km.

Local people are employed on the SKA Project as security officers, drivers and other various construction works.

Further investments in skilled human resources include the training of artisans and technicians and the availing of bursaries for scientists.

Other infrastructural development expected to take place is the building of the science centre, which is expected to attract tourists to the area and positively contributing to the tourism industry, with bed and breakfast guesthouses and local businesses such as hardware stores and filling stations showing tremendous signs of growth.

As the community of Carnarvon is anxiously waiting for the announcement of this massive project, government is mobilising its resources to do everything it can to win the bid.