

South Africa withdraws its draft AI policy over fake AI-generated citations

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Minister announces withdrawal of draft AI Policy

Sunday, April 26, 2026

Communications and Digital Technologies Minister Solly Malatsi has announced the withdrawal of the Draft National Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy following an internal process.

"Following revelations that the Draft National Artificial Intelligence Policy published for public comment contains various fictitious sources in its reference list, we initiated internal questions, which have now confirmed that this was the case.

"This failure is not a mere technical issue but has compromised the integrity and credibility of the draft policy. As such, I am withdrawing the Draft National Artificial Intelligence Policy," the Minister said.

The draft AI policy was approved by Cabinet on 25 March 2026 (combined with the Special Sitting of Cabinet on 01 April 2026), for public comment. In the Government Gazette dated 10 April, the public had until 10 June 2026 to comment on the bill.

The document extends the initial AI policy framework by embedding principles of intergenerational equity, ensuring that AI-driven innovation prioritises the well-being of current and future generations.

Speaking at the launch of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) lab and a Centre of Specialisation in Mpumalanga for artisan training earlier this month, Deputy President Paul Mashatile said the government is developing a comprehensive response through the policy. He added at the time that the policy will establish national priorities, norms, and sector-specific strategies across manufacturing, energy, infrastructure, transport, and trade.

On Sunday, Minister Malatsi said the withdrawal comes as South Africans deserve better.

"The Department of Communications and Digital Technologies did not deliver on the standard that is acceptable for an institution entrusted with the role to lead South Africa's digital policy environment. The most plausible explanation is that AI-generated citations were included without proper verification.

"This should not have happened. In fact, this unacceptable lapse proves why vigilant human oversight over the use of artificial intelligence is critical. It's a lesson we take with humility. I want to reassure the country that we are treating this matter with the gravity it deserves. There will be consequence management for those responsible for drafting and quality assurance," said the Minister. - SAnews.gov.za

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