

# **REGIONAL RADIO – AN INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVE**

## **ATSIC SUBMISSION**

### **TO THE INQUIRY INTO REGIONAL RADIO**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
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# **Executive Summary**

## General Issues

### **Economic and Cultural Values**

1. The future of regional radio is being pioneered by Indigenous media.
2. There is a need to move away from a welfare mentality and programs that encourage dependence. 'Investment' and 'market intervention' may still be necessary. An investment approach encourages and affirms self-responsibility, growth and ingenuity.
3. Radio is seen as a significant cultural and economic resource for Indigenous communities in regional and rural Australia and as part of the platform for self-sufficient economic activity.
4. Indigenous media promote and develop Australian content in both music and speech radio forms.
5. In order to move more successfully towards self-sufficiency, Indigenous regional radio stations need investment support to gather information about their audiences.

### **Regulatory Framework**

6. Indigenous radio services provide a first level of service to Indigenous people, broadcasting information and entertainment, facilitating networks and skills development and providing access to local languages. Indigenous radio is the 'mainstream' medium for many communities.
7. For Indigenous broadcasting to prosper in the digital environment, it is essential that existing legislative obstacles be resolved.
8. Indigenous media would be better regarded as an emergent industry with commercial potential. The regulatory framework needs to be modernised to allow the full potential of Indigenous media to develop. This must involve the formation of a separate license category for Indigenous broadcasters and reservation of spectrum.
9. Indigenous radio forms a distinct third national public network for Australia and should be a national responsibility recognised in legislation and public investment as a National Indigenous Broadcasting Service as a third national broadcaster.
10. The National Indigenous Broadcasting Service should be charged with expanding national coverage so that Indigenous broadcasting reaches all Indigenous Australians.

11. For Indigenous communities, radio will be the building block to the new digital era. Through the development of existing radio services, Indigenous broadcasters will be able to strengthen their television presence and become important participants in a convergent media environment.
12. Skills and resources are needed in order to bring geographically dispersed communities into the information economy as equal participants.

### Responses to the Terms of Reference

#### **Social Benefits**

13. There is strong support for a separate Indigenous media sector, to offer choice to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous listeners.
14. The social benefits of regional radio for Indigenous listeners include:
  - community building,
  - preservation of language,
  - sharing of information,
  - communication between different regions via networking,
  - access to broadcasting,
  - provision of alternative perspectives on news and current affairs,
  - participation in the development of Indigenous communities,
  - contribution to the well-being of Indigenous communities.

#### **Future Employment Trends**

16. Indigenous radio stations have significant potential to realise the cultural capital that Indigenous culture enjoys in contemporary Australia. This includes commercialisation of media production, training, multimedia enterprises, and servicing tourism.
17. Indigenous media are at the forefront of best practice in flexible employment. Working conditions have been developed that are culturally suitable for Indigenous people, but they can also provide a model for the workforce more generally as working practices are adapted for the emerging 'network society'.
18. Employment in the radio industry should not be seen in isolation for Indigenous people who typically work across several

sectors including broadcasting, training, film production, ceremony and community leadership. However, radio is seen as playing a leading role in establishing a properly resourced employment infrastructure, for example by means of the Indigenous Media Industrial Award.

19. Employment extends beyond on-air presenters to include: the technical maintenance of infrastructure, training of producers and presenters, development and curation of cultural archives in sound and other media, enterprise management and entrepreneurial activity, content production, R&D. News-gathering provides further opportunities for employment, for instance the development of a network of reporters and 'stringers'.
20. Employment opportunities extend beyond the *workforce* to the development and support of Indigenous *wealth-creators* in the creative media sector. Indigenous entrepreneurship is fostered and expanded in regional radio.
21. Government advertising should be placed in regional Indigenous media proportionally to the local Indigenous population.
22. Regional depopulation is not a significant an issue for Indigenous workers.
23. Indigenous regional radio stations support local Australian music production, helping to build a commercially viable music industry.

## Networking

24. Mainstream media are already so networked that they have almost completely abandoned Indigenous content. Commercial regional broadcasters do not target Indigenous listeners. The response from Indigenous communities throughout Australia has been to develop their own separate broadcasting system, with its own networking.
25. In terms of Indigenous media, networking is understood as a positive benefit. Not all Indigenous broadcasters are able to provide a comprehensive service and therefore require appropriate feeds from sibling stations. Culturally, networking ensures a wider perspective on Indigenous issues for local listeners.
26. Although networking is essential at a regional and national level, local stations and communities must retain direction and control.

27. Networking is seen to extend to an international context with the prospect of program sharing between first peoples' radio stations around the world and commercial sales to international media networks.

### **New Technologies**

28. There is a strong interest in new technologies, especially the Internet and computer-based interactivity, but less in digital radio as such. But it is essential that Indigenous broadcasters are not left 'out of the loop' in the development of policy, infrastructure, connectivity, and functionality of the new communications technologies.
29. Especially in the regional context, convergence means that developments in post-broadcast television should be kept within the same policy framework as radio.
30. All regional Australians, including Indigenous Australians living in regional areas, must be provided with telecommunications infrastructure which makes it possible to take advantage of new technologies, including but not limited to the possibilities offered by the Internet.
31. The physical housing of new technology infrastructure and equipment must be taken into account.
32. Effective business plans and governance strategies must also be developed.

# **INQUIRY INTO REGIONAL RADIO:**

## **AN INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVE**

Prepared for ATSIC by John Hartley  
Assisted by Alan McKee, Elinor Rennie and Michael Keane

### **Preamble**

This submission is generated out of discussion and consultation with representatives of Indigenous broadcasters, practitioners and entrepreneurs, and with other interested parties and stakeholders. The submission also draws upon key policy documents, reports and academic studies.

All interviews were conducted in October 2000.

Indigenous regional radio is emerging as a commercially viable industry sector. It provides a first level of service to Indigenous people living in regional and remote locations – this comprises the majority of the Indigenous population of Australia.

There is a will to exploit commercial opportunities. However, legislative impediments need to be removed in order to allow entrepreneurial individuals and organisations to take advantage of technological changes and market opportunities.

Networking of Indigenous media is seen as a positive benefit. Rather than threatening local cultures, inter-Indigenous networking adds value to the media sector and generates employment opportunities and career paths.

New technology, such as digital radio and the Internet, offers great potential to the development of the Indigenous broadcasting sector.

Technology hasn't been daunting, it's been great, it's been really embracing, because we're finding it's something our young ones are really clicking with (Sandy Dann, Puranyangu Rangka-Kerrem Media).

## General Issues

### **1. Economic and Cultural Values**

- 1.1 The future of regional radio is being pioneered by Indigenous media. Indigenous radio projects are often ahead of government initiatives and regulation.**

Given the right resources (many) Indigenous broadcasters could have a positive influence in the future ... as far as the BRACS goes. The commercial networks have no real interest in spreading their wings out there. It's only really CAAMA and the ABC. There is also the potential that those programs could go national and even international (Maureen O'Keefe, CAAMA)

- 1.2 Our analysis is informed by the need to move away from a welfare mentality and programs that encourage dependence. 'Investment' and 'market intervention' may still be necessary. The difference is that an investment approach encourages and affirms self-responsibility, growth and ingenuity. This approach was strongly endorsed by all of the media organisations, enterprises and entrepreneurs consulted during the research:**

One of our major aims [is to] get our own sustainability ... We had a very good year last year [for sponsorship] ... we did extremely well ... in the 99/2000 year, it was \$72970, as compared with \$35557 in the previous financial year ... we more than doubled ... it's our aim to substantially increase that in the current year (Terry Lees, Mt Isa Aboriginal Media Association).

- 1.3 Yamatji Media asserted that they were confident that, 'there's no question - in about two to three years we'll be totally self-sufficient' (Patricia Vandenberg, Yamatji Media). Others are already achieving results. The Tanami network, which consists of four desert communities (Yuendumu, Kintore, Lajamanu and Willowra) is funded by selling airtime to government and other users and is now making a small profit (ATSIC, 1999: 13). 4KIG in Townsville has earned substantial sponsorship income by adopting mainstream programming such as Country and Western music and relaying commercial shows aimed at a non-Indigenous audience (ATSIC, 1999c: 112). Tiga Bayles of the Brisbane Indigenous Media Association commented that:**

Radio stations are one of the few Aboriginal organisations that have the potential for being somewhat independent of welfare ... In Charterville ... we've got an Indigenous [community] station out there [4RR], and they've taken some of the big accounts from the commercial station ... the manager out there [Karen Russell] will quite openly tell you, she's pulled over a couple of accounts that the commercial station had for

years and years, because they were the only station there.  
Now the blackfella station's in there, it's some competition ...  
(Tiga Bayles, Brisbane Indigenous Media Association).

- 1.4 Radio is seen as a significant cultural and economic resource for Indigenous communities in regional and rural Australia and as part of the platform for self-sufficient economic activity. The cultural value of radio content is substantial and can be economically significant. Indigenous media promote and develop Australian content in both music and speech radio forms.
- 1.5 However, it must also be acknowledged that some regional radio stations, although serving vital community functions, and striving to be as entrepreneurial as possible, will never be able to survive without market intervention. Although a community station serving a regional city can make up to \$160,000pa in sponsorship, many remote Indigenous communities manage less than \$500pa (ATSIC, 1999: 14).

We're just working on [sponsorship] at the moment, we do that in kind ... the bakery might donate a pizza, so we'll make mention that we've got a pizza to give away from the local bakery, and we like to put that into local youth programs, for the young ones ... so that at least we know that a group of kids out there has had something to eat ... Halls Creek is a lovely, vibrant community, but it's also very oppressed in certain respects (Sandy Dann, Puranyangu Rangka-Kerrem Media).

## 2. Indigenous radio audiences

- 2.1 Demographic patterns mean that 'regional' and 'remote' are not entirely accurate terms for Indigenous Australians – for them 'regional' and 'remote' areas are *hubs* of population, not peripheries. Remote Australia comprises 70 per cent of the Australian continent. It has a population of less than one person per ten square kilometres outside of the urban centres.

The total population of remote Australia is 520,000, of whom 72,000 or 14 per cent are Aboriginals. However, if urban centres with total populations greater than 5,000 are excluded, the percentage of Aboriginals in remote Australia increases to around 20 per cent (DAA, 1984: 5, 7).

Indigenous people are a 'significant group of the customers and clients of broadcasting and communications' (DAA, 1984: 5) in these areas. Indigenous media in regional and remote areas need to be recognised for their importance in serving these communities – communities that should be considered the 'hubs' of the Indigenous populations and culture.

- 2.2 The table below gives the percentage of Indigenous populations in the smallest geographical area in which each radio station



sits, as identified by the Census. This does not provide exact information about the percentage of possible Indigenous audience for each Indigenous station. No figures are available on the comparison between the range of the radio station, and the census areas.

However, despite such caveats, this table does give some sense of the demographic make-up of the population that is served by each of these radio stations.

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Indigenous population percentage</b>
<i>Mabunji Aboriginal Resource Association Incorporation</i>	<i>Borroloola NT</i>	<i>(Gulf) 1995/2880 = 69.3%</i>
<i>Puranyangu Rangka Kerrem</i>	<i>Halls Creek WA</i>	<i>1842/3302 = 55.8%</i>
<i>Wangki Yupurnanupurru Aboriginal Corporation</i>	<i>Fitzroy Crossing, WA</i>	<i>(Derby/West Kimberley) 3938/7249 = 54.3%</i>
<i>Warringari Media</i>	<i>Kununurra WA</i>	<i>(Wyndam-East Kimberley) 3006/8760 = 34.3%</i>
<i>Broome Aboriginal Media Association</i>	<i>Broome, WA</i>	<i>3354/13717 = 24.5%</i>
<i>Muda Aboriginal Corporation</i>	<i>Bourke NSW</i>	<i>990/4049 = 24.5%</i>
<i>Umeewarra Aboriginal Media Association Inc</i>	<i>Port Augusta SA</i>	<i>1900/14244 = 13.3%</i>
<i>Mount Isa Aboriginal Media Association</i>	<i>Mount Isa, Qld</i>	<i>3006/22866 = 13.1%</i>
<i>Bunma Bippera Media ATSI Corporation</i>	<i>Cairns QLD</i>	<i>6413/121036 = 5.3%</i>
<i>Central Queensland Aboriginal Corporation for Media</i>	<i>Rockhampton, Qld</i>	<i>2721/59732 = 4.6%</i>
<i>Mid North Coast Indigenous Association Aboriginal Corporation</i>	<i>Taree NSW</i>	<i>1170/42410 = 2.8%</i>

Table 1: Density of Indigenous population around footprint of selected Indigenous regional/remote radio stations

- 2.3 **Self-sufficiency is hindered by lack of audience research. Indigenous regional radio stations need investment support to gather information about their audiences.**

It's a matter of getting the funds to do a [professional survey] because you'd want it done independently ... when you're chasing that sponsorship dollar, you can say, here's how we're doing and if you're not spending this percentage of your advertising dollar with us, you're missing out (Terry Lees, Mt Isa Aboriginal Media Association).

- 2.4 **These stations are showing great ingenuity in attempting to gain audience information without the funds for independent surveys. For example, Mt Isa Aboriginal Media Association is asking local car hire staff, mechanics and workers at the McDonald's drive-through to check which station has been selected on the car radio. Such ingenuity demonstrates the seriousness of the commitment by Indigenous regional radio stations to audience research, but cannot replace independent, professional audience research.**

### **3. Regulatory Framework**

- 3.1 **Indigenous media serve distinct social and cultural needs that are not reflected in the regulatory framework as set out in the Broadcasting Services Act. Indigenous radio services, in particular, provide a first level of service to Indigenous people, broadcasting information and entertainment, facilitating networks and skills development, and providing access to local languages. Indigenous radio is the 'mainstream' medium for many communities. However, Indigenous media have been subject to ad hoc policymaking that has restricted the sector from operating to its full potential.**

- 3.2 **In June 2000, a new Object was added to the Broadcasting Services Act. 3 (1) (n) resolves:**

... to ensure the maintenance and, where possible, the development of diversity, including public, community and Indigenous broadcasting, in the Australian broadcasting system in the transition to digital broadcasting.

**For Indigenous broadcasting to survive in the digital environment, it is essential that the existing legislative obstacles be resolved.**

## A separate license category

- 3.3 The priced-based auction process for commercial broadcasting licenses has meant that some Indigenous groups have been denied the ability to participate commercially in radio broadcasting. Not all such groups have the up-front capital to enable them to compete for commercial licenses. Planning that limits the number of commercial licenses in a given area has also worked to impede the emergence of commercially-run Indigenous stations.

As a result, many have had to apply for community licenses – licenses that have heavy regulatory restrictions imposed upon them. Community broadcasting licenses are defined by their not-for-profit status and are funded by subscription, sponsorship, donations and government support. Although such limitations may be suitable for non-Indigenous community media, there is no adequate reason to restrict the ability of Indigenous media to raise funds through commercial advertising.

- 3.4 As a result, Indigenous radio has grown up in a subsidised, dependent environment as a community service. This is despite the fact that Indigenous media provide a first level of service for Indigenous communities, unlike community broadcasting for metropolitan non-Indigenous audiences, for whom it is an *alternative*, or an *addition*, to other media. Indigenous radio services have been forced to compete with other community broadcasting organisations for licenses, with no guarantee of spectrum. The Productivity Commission has acknowledged that the category of community broadcasting is inadequate for Indigenous broadcasters as ‘it affects Indigenous media services’ access to spectrum, their participation in the co-regulatory processes of the broadcasting industry, and their financing and staffing’ (Productivity Commission, 2000, p. 285).
- 3.5 Indigenous media would be better regarded as an emergent industry with commercial potential. The regulatory framework needs to be modernised to allow the full potential of Indigenous media to develop. This must involve the formation of a separate license category for Indigenous broadcasters.

Community broadcasting ... relies on volunteer labour ... [whereas] Indigenous broadcasting plays an extremely important role in the preservation and maintenance of Indigenous culture and languages. It also plays an essential role in promoting self-determination for Indigenous people. In order to ensure these objectives, Indigenous people must be engaged at all levels of the production processes as well as highly trained and well informed about cultural, linguistic and other issues ... The [community broadcasting sector’s] Codes

of Practice ... were designed with a strong emphasis on volunteers, sponsorship and matters that ... have very little relevance to Indigenous media (NIMAA, 1999: 11, 13)

- 3.6 Furthermore, the reservation of spectrum for Indigenous broadcasters would ensure that services are able to develop where needed without having to compete for licenses with other (community or commercial) broadcasters. This recommendation was put by the Productivity Commission in its Inquiry into Broadcasting:**

Recommendation 8.5: A new license category for Indigenous broadcasters should be created, with appropriate conditions relating to advertising

Recommendation 8.6: Spectrum should be reserved for Indigenous broadcasters to provide a primary service for Indigenous communities, where appropriate (Productivity Commission, 2000)

**The ABA has also proposed a move towards class licenses for Indigenous radio operators in regional areas:**

In 1996, the ABA proposed 'deregulation of remote community broadcasting services by providing special class licenses to all BRACS units and new aspirants. Services would not need to be individually 'planned' or 'allocated' but would receive 'permanent permission' to operate provide that they met standard guidelines' (Turner, 1998: 14)

**These recommendations should be taken into account in the current Inquiry.**

### **A National Indigenous Broadcasting Service**

- 3.7 Indigenous radio has developed as a de facto national service without direct governmental policy support or funding. Indigenous radio forms a distinct third national public network for Australia and should be a national responsibility recognised in legislation and public investment. ATSIC is currently conducting a feasibility study into a National Indigenous Broadcasting Service as a third national broadcaster. The need for such a study was reflected in the Productivity Commission's Report on *Broadcasting*:**

Recommendation 8.7: The Government should examine the need for, and feasibility of, establishing an Indigenous Broadcasting Service, including: who should provide the service; how the service should be provided; the additional government resources required; and a timetable for implementation (Productivity Commission, 2000: 37)

**Despite this national presence, many Indigenous Australians still have no access to an Indigenous broadcaster. The National**

**Indigenous Broadcasting Service should be charged with expanding national coverage.**

A large percentage of this country ... still doesn't have access to Indigenous broadcasting (Tiga Bayles, Brisbane Indigenous Media Association).

- 3.8 Some stakeholders argue that the National Indigenous Broadcasting Service should be overseen by an Indigenous controlled public body. A possible title for this body has been suggested – Indigenous Communications Australia (NIMAA, 1999: 4).**

The development of an Indigenous license category would facilitate commercial activity by allowing advertising revenue without the deterrent of having to compete with other aspirant commercial broadcasters. However, it must also be recognised that some Indigenous broadcasters may never be able to survive entirely on advertising revenue. An adequately funded national Indigenous broadcasting service would work to ensure that support be provided where necessary.

### **Into the Digital Era**

- 3.9 The current Inquiry seeks comment on the ability of new technologies to provide enhanced services in metropolitan, regional and rural areas. It must be recognised that for Indigenous communities, radio will be the building block to the new digital era. Through the development of existing radio services, Indigenous broadcasters will be able to strengthen their television presence and become important participants in a convergent media environment.**
- 3.10 As digital media can be reconfigured at any time, services will become increasingly customised. The flexibility of digital media will allow Indigenous broadcasters to play on their local strengths and provide innovative services to local, national and international audiences. Reduced equipment costs will allow broadcasters to develop content that may be broadcast across a number of platforms. Such expansion must start from local radio. The existing local radio services possess the people, community networks, organisation and skills to begin a viable transition.**
- 3.11 Any discussion on the potential for new digital services must take into account a new set of policy issues that have emerged as a result of convergence. Although convergence is driven by technological and market developments, unless regulatory intervention occurs there is a real danger that services will become centralised. In order to avoid media activity being**

exported to overseas – or even urban – hubs, policy must be developed that builds skills, infrastructure and capital in regional and local areas. It is essential that Indigenous communities are not deprived of their media as a result of convergence.

- 3.12 The *Convergence Review*, conducted by the National Office for the Information Economy, states that: 'Industry and regional outcomes are becoming more dependent on successful formation of human, intellectual and social capital, as well as digital infrastructures designed to support electronic services' (NOIE, p. 8). Skills and resources are needed in order to bring geographically dispersed communities into the information economy as equal participants.
- 3.13 Flexibility, service innovation, customisation and internationalisation – the anticipated features of convergence – are not inconsistent with local cultures. On the contrary, Australian Indigenous culture is capable of attracting immense national international interest and capital in a convergent media environment.

#### **4. Social Benefits**

**‘The social benefits and influence on the general public of radio broadcasting in non-metropolitan Australia in comparison to other media sectors.’**

- 4.1 There is strong support for a separate Indigenous media sector, to offer choice to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous listeners. This is seen as more important than to specify the adequacy or inadequacies of the existing mainstream services. The social benefits of regional radio for Indigenous listeners include:

##### **Providing an alternative perspective on news and current affairs**

- 4.2 Regional broadcasting is seen by Indigenous people as a means to facilitate the free flow of information and to provide an alternative perspective on news and current affairs. According to Michael Meadows, audience surveys internationally have revealed ‘that local media are the primary sources of information about Indigenous affairs for most native people’ (Meadows, 2000: C2).

##### **Preserving language**

- 4.3 Indigenous media are vital in the promotion and protection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity, including language. It is estimated that in 1788 there were around two hundred Aboriginal languages in Australia, with numerous dialects. Of these two hundred, at least fifty are now extinct. Of the remaining, fewer than one hundred have more than one hundred speakers (DAA, 1984: 13). Barbara Jackson of the Mid-North Coast Indigenous Broadcasters Association commented on the importance of radio’s ability to allow ‘Aboriginal people to speak Aboriginal languages to Aboriginal people’. Indigenous listeners ring ‘*all* the time’ with music requests and comments. According to Jackson, such phone calls demonstrate that the Indigenous community get ‘a sense of pride’ from having ‘their own Indigenous radio station (Barbara Jackson, Mid-North Coast Indigenous Broadcasters Association); including pride in the revival and promotion of language.

## Sharing information

- 4.4 Indigenous media provide important information on law, health and other public information (Productivity Commission, 2000: 283). Kevin Fong has pointed out also that ‘common messages of national importance can be sent out on our network, and it becomes the unofficial or official media outlet for government or private enterprise to use’ (Kevin Fong: Managing Director, Goolarri Radio, Broome).

The ABC did a report (in 1999) which showed that 70-80% of people relied on CAAMA for their main source of information (Maureen O’Keefe, CAAMA)

Our network is in fact the only feasible way for government or non government organisations to get information out to business in remote communities. We know the service is being listened to in those communities. There are often radios on in the stores and office and clinics all day every day, and we have a very dedicated listenership, as the feedback of calls around the country during the *Mary Geddardyu Show* especially indicates. So it’s a very powerful medium for getting information into remote communities who don’t receive many other mainstream services (possibly they get commercial WAFN) (Neil Turner Pakam Media).

- 4.5 Print-literacy in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is lower than the Australian average. Although little may be printed in Indigenous languages, speakers of these languages are prepared to go on radio – this is consistent with their oral and visual communication traditions (ATSIC, 1991: 11-12).

[The WA Health Department] said to me, we’ve done our figures ... and we’ve found that press is inadequate because Indigenous people don’t always read the press, leaflets are a waste of time because you end up with a pile left in your office, and television isn’t getting them either ... because not all Indigenous people have televisions – but they love the radio. And [they] said, we’ve realised that radio is the way to go. And because of this, another advertising agency was talking to me about a health related thing, and they’re using community radio; now an advertising agency has *never* done that ... [but] it works (Patricia Vandenbergh, Yamatji Media).

## Serving non-Indigenous Australians

- 4.6 There are social benefits of Indigenous regional media for non-Indigenous listeners, including information about different cultures and viewpoints. For instance, 4MobFM in Mt Isa ‘attracts both Indigenous and non-Indigenous audiences’; the Torres Strait Islander Media Association’s ‘audience of ten to twelve thousand is multicultural’; Warringarri Media in the



Kimberleys, '80 percent of its audience is Aboriginal' (ATSIC, 1999c: 114, 116).

Getting a lot of feedback from non-Aboriginal people saying things like 'We didn't know that this was going on' (Josey Farrar, BAMA, in Hartley and McKee, 1996: 113).

**Mt Isa Aboriginal Media Association now has up to a 30 percent audience share in the town.**

I'm in a Rotary club in the town and I find a lot of my Rotary mates, non-Indigenous people primarily, talk about how much they enjoy listening to Mob FM, particularly in the aspects we run on *Your Aboriginal Radio News (YARN)* and interviews, community service announcements. It happens so often now that a Rotary mate will come up to me and say, 'Love the music ... I was listening to that interview with so and so; I didn't know that, it was interesting to find that out, it's changed my perception of things.' That sort of comment has become very common ... We didn't just want to reach the Indigenous audience, we wanted to educate the non-Indigenous audience (Terry Lees, Mt Isa Aboriginal Media Association).

**Tiga Bayles describes the situation in Brisbane, which he says illustrates the potential for regional Indigenous radio:**

We've got 120-130,000 non-Indigenous people tune into this station in Brisbane for that country music, and our audience is growing every survey period ... Non-Indigenous people who tune in for the music, they get some Indigenous information, an Indigenous presenter, Indigenous news, Indigenous music ... they're hearing Indigenous experiences via music, which would not happen if Triple A wasn't here (Tiga Bayles, Brisbane Indigenous Media Association).

Indeed, he says that the feedback suggests that non-Indigenous listeners: 'like to hear Indigenous news because they do not hear a lot of these issues in mainstream media. And some of the oral history programs that we run, they're impressed with the information. They like the way that our radio programming is inclusive, we're non-offensive, we don't put people down. We're casual but professional, and that's a comment we get a lot' (Tiga Bayles, Brisbane Indigenous Media Association).

## **Community building**

**4.7 Regional radio stations play an important part in the formation and maintenance of community for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.**

On special occasions, we run open days, have a sausage sizzle ... always get a lot of people coming through throughout the day. It's terrific to get the comments that come back, saying, Oh, this is a really great operation ... we've

never had any negative vibes out of doing that, it's always positive ... it's always been a very, very good mix [of Indigenous and non-Indigenous listeners ... We had the Mayor of Mt Isa here to launch our video production and sound recording studio complex ... and he made the comment that 'it's absolutely marvellous to see how successful MIAMA has been ... your broadcasters have become broadcasters within this community ... commercial radio can take a leaf out of your book for what you've done,' and that's the Mayor of the city (Terry Lees, Mt Isa Aboriginal Media Association).

According to Sandy Dann, Pupanyangu Rangka-Kerrem Media are often approached with community announcements. She says, 'I can never walk down the streets here without a pen and paper in my hand' (Sandy Dann, Puranyangu Rangka-Kerrem Media). Similar sentiments were expressed by Patricia Vandenberg.

It's well received by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people ... people ring up and tell you, say, we like that ... if you're a local station, people tell you – you had an interview, I found that interesting. They ring up or they call into the station (Patricia Vandenberg, Yamatji Media)

Non-Indigenous listeners regularly ring Indigenous stations, leaving messages and requests, demonstrating an active non-Indigenous audience for the station. In Taree, the Indigenous radio station has received significant community support from non-Indigenous as well as Indigenous locals. Country and Western music is hugely popular with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, and that the station by playing this, services both constituencies (Barbara Jackson, Mid-North Coast Indigenous Broadcasters Association)

I can't stress highly enough how positive our reception is in our community (Greg McKellar, Muda Aboriginal Corporation).

### **Regional networking via music**

- 4.8 Special mention was made of the benefits to the community following from the use of music on regional radio. Broadcast music was seen to build a profile of individual artists, assist communication across different regional groups and develop distinct regional sounds (Clayton Lewis and Russell Bomford, NIMAA).

### **Participation in the development of Indigenous communities**

- 4.9 Participation in radio production is said to benefit young people by providing them with skills and entertainment.

We've got about a dozen Aboriginal kids, aged from 10 to 14, and they come in from Monday to Thursday, 4-6pm each afternoon to present their program ... We've got a social problem in town, our kids tend to be bored ... the program takes them away from any temptation while they're here. We teach them all the principles of radio broadcasting, they do interviews for us, they interview the police, they talk about youth issues ... it's working out excellent (Greg McKellar, Muda Aboriginal Corporation).

In Halls Creek, a daily music program run by a group of young Indigenous people called 'Young, Black and Deadly' has proven to be one of the most popular youth programs on the network (Sandy Dann, Puranyangu Rangka-Kerrem Media). 'Mary Geddardyu,' a character on Radio Goolarri who broadcasts three hours live on regional radio, has proven so popular that 'she' is now featuring in a six part series for SBS Television. The program, which discusses social economic and cultural issues, has developed a cult following.

In Falls Creek after it's broadcast on Wednesday night the arrest rates and appearances in court the following day are well down. This fact was quoted by the judge and the Aboriginal Liaison Officer said that it was because everyone stays home and listens to Mary Geddardyu ... And the judge asked why the show was not on every night. This show obviously saves a lot of lives (Kevin Fong, Goolarri Radio).

## **Access to broadcasting**

**4.10 Radio serves regional communities, and particularly Indigenous citizens in regional areas, better than other media for a variety of reasons including cheapness, portability, and the fact that people with low levels of print-literacy can benefit from it. It is also consistent with the oral traditions of Indigenous communities.**

Print media requires a high level of literacy and numeracy, television's a bit expensive and it's hard to get it out on remote communities, especially where people now are setting up outcamps and so on. Radio's easier to maintain and cart around (Sandy Dann, Puranyangu Rangka-Kerrem Media)

**Indigenous television broadcasting 'would be wonderful', but in meantime, 'radio is more accessible, it's here now', and this makes it very important. Newspapers are 'no go, unless you're an employed person. They're not interested' (Barbara Jackson, Mid-North Coast Indigenous Broadcasters Association).**

Radio is instant, it happens now. It's cheaper, it's readily available, it's easier to train people up in radio ... in a far shorter time than you can TV (Tiga Bayles, Brisbane Indigenous Media Association).

## 5. Future Employment Trends

**'Future trends in radio broadcasting, including employment and career opportunities, in non-metropolitan Australia.'**

### Tourism

5.1 Indigenous radio stations have significant potential to realise the cultural capital that Indigenous culture enjoys in contemporary Australia. This includes the possibilities of media production and servicing tourism. Indigenous radio stations are already working to realise this potential. Given the rise in overseas tourists occasioned by the Olympics, this is an ideal time to support an infrastructure which appeals to, and may draw, tourists to Australia

The Olympics website, set up by the National Indigenous Media Association in July 2000, recorded over two and a half million hits to October, many from overseas. In 1997, ATSIIC estimated that the market for Indigenous arts and crafts was worth around \$200 million per year (ATSIIC 1999b: 10).

We find at CAAMA that there's a lot of international media that come looking for stories ... obviously this can have an ongoing effect on tourism (Maureen O'Keefe, CAAMA).

We have the stories, the trust and the support of the community to publish them, the energy and the vision. All we need to develop saleable product is appropriate training, equipment, a minimal production budget and some coordinated marketing (Turner, 1998: 37)

5.2 Indigenous radio stations are a tourist attraction. Travellers and tourists stop in small towns to visit the stations and meet the locals. Sandy Dann explained that many of the visitors had been listening to Indigenous radio. Once they spot the radio sign, 'they all want to have a look around' (Sandy Dann, Puranyangu Rangka-Kerrem Media).

We ... have tourists coming through town that have picked us up on the radio, seen where we are in passing, and stopped on the off-chance that we can say G'day, give them a sticker, and of course we always make them a cup of tea and give them a look at the place. We see it as very much part of our PR and marketing exercise ... (Terry Lees, Mt Isa Aboriginal Media Association)

Denis Conlon commented that many visitors come in to look at the local art housed in the station: 'the paintings we did, the studio, we gave it the earth look, and built a lot of Aboriginality into the studio' (Dennis Conlon, Central Queensland Aboriginal

Corporation for Media). Regional and remote Indigenous radio stations are seen to be important expressions of Australian culture in the making:

We had the Queen come to visit us ... the only person who hasn't come to see us now is Bill Clinton, every other dignitary has come (Greg McKellar, Muda Aboriginal Corporation)

### **Careers in broadcasting**

**5.3 Broadcasting is a particularly attractive career for Indigenous Australians, and should be encouraged given the higher than average rates of unemployment in Indigenous communities. It suits Indigenous people because it is 'a talent based industry' (Gerry Pyne, NIRS) – one where cultural capital and oral traditions become immediately valuable.**

It's an oral tradition that is so much a part of our culture. We fit like hand in glove in this radio industry (Tiga Bayles, Brisbane Indigenous Media Association).

I have to push them away ... I've got a couple of people here voluntary, and they're in here every day, do a couple of hours of programs ... I think when they get on the air, they feel that sense of freedom, to air their opinions about a lot of things, and they have control, more or less (Dennis Conlon, Central Queensland Aboriginal Corporation for the Media).

**5.4 Employment extends beyond on-air presenters to include:**

- the technical maintenance of infrastructure,
- training of producers and presenters,
- development and curation of cultural archives in sound and other media,
- enterprise management and entrepreneurial activity,
- content production,
- R&D,
- News-gathering provides further opportunities for employment, for instance the development of a network of reporters and 'stringers'.

**5.5 Indigenous people trained in broadcasting skills in Indigenous regional radio stations demonstrably move on to develop career paths within the broadcasting industry.**

Two of our people have received offers elsewhere ... We encourage that – it gives them a chance to move into a bigger market, to make more of an impact. That's for their benefit, and this radio station benefits greatly from having trained these people ... they're going away and being ambassadors for us, always remembering where they've got their training ...

One is in Brisbane, the other in Townsville [one in Indigenous radio; one in non-Indigenous television] (Terry Lees, Mt Isa Aboriginal Media Association).

We can train people up to improve their lifestyle, which in turn will open many doors and opportunities – employment opportunities (Greg McKellar, Muda Aboriginal Corporation).

Tiga Bayles thinks that his experience is generalisable when he notes that, ‘we encourage people to move on. If they see an opening in the ABC, one of our staff started with us, went to the ABC, and came back, then left us later on, did about 4-5 years service all up with us. Movement and opportunity are encouraged’. (Tiga Bayles, Brisbane Indigenous Media Association).

Working in the media provides ‘vital transferable skills’ for Indigenous workers – particularly communications skills – which will enable them to ‘get any job [they] want’ (Barbara Jackson, Mid North Coast Indigenous Broadcasters Association).

- 5.6 Despite such movement, regional depopulation is not considered as significant an issue for Indigenous workers as for non-Indigenous. Indigenous media personnel are more likely to stay in their home region, or return to their home region, rather than moving permanently to metropolitan areas for work.

## **Training**

- 5.7 Careers in broadcasting are seen as attractive to many young Indigenous people, given the limitations of employment in many regional areas. Radio broadcasting brings people into contact with information technology. However, the attraction will not be sustainable without a career path supported by award rates and suitable training. Training in news production would enhance the design/format of Indigenous broadcasting, and lead to more employment. Likewise, there is need for writers and producers to develop good Indigenous intellectual property.

Training is in big demand ... at this point in time, I’m three or four staff short. We’re starting off with a bare table here. 1991, the first license was given out ... we had very few people with any real training, especially formal training, and those that were trained up ... were already employed ... Ten years later ... we’ve got 25 or 26 licensed stations, the training hasn’t been there to keep up with it. Give us another five years, there’ll be another 25. And there’s 110 BRACS out there, all suffering from lack of training. Our biggest problem now is keeping up with the growth, keeping up with the demand ... from a general manager to a program manager to a journalist to a technician, to a producer to a researcher, right across the board, there are so many skills required, and so many

communities demanding them. We'd like to see Indigenous people, but they aren't there. So we take non-Indigenous people and work on skills exchange, where those non-Indigenous people very consciously work on seeing that Indigenous people acquire some of the skills and knowledge (Tiga Bayles, National Indigenous Radio Service).

Neil Turner also expressed the need for training in order to turn the broadcasting industry into a major employment initiative in remote communities. 'Training [needs to] be established and funded and some attempt to create an award wage for BRACS operators so that there is an incentive and a career path for aspiring broadcasters in those communities' (Neil Turner: Pakam Media).

- 5.8 In order to encourage Indigenous regional radio stations to move towards greater self-sufficiency it will be necessary to put in place sales and marketing training. Several of the workers at Indigenous radio stations interviewed for this Submission mentioned that sales of sponsorship are a big issue, and they are either employing sales representatives, training up other staff in sales techniques, or attempting to learn such skills themselves.

Local business hasn't been as good as it should be, but we haven't had good sales people (Patricia Vandenberg, Yamatji Media).

Many of the 150 or more Indigenous radio stations across the country are involved in training, leading to increased community self esteem as well as the transfer to important industry skills ... there are few other training opportunities for those wishing to work in Indigenous media (Meadows, 2000: C6).

### **Flexible employment and creative initiative**

- 5.9 Employment in the radio industry should not be seen in isolation for Indigenous people who typically work across several sectors including broadcasting, training, film production, ceremony and community leadership. However, radio is seen as playing a leading role in establishing a properly resourced employment infrastructure, for example by means of the Indigenous Media Industrial Award (1995) (Brett Leavy, Clayton Lewis, Russell Bomford).
- 5.10 Indigenous media are at the forefront of best practice in flexible employment, including freelancing, multi-skilling, job share and flexible hours. Working conditions have been developed that are culturally suitable for Indigenous people, but they can also provide a model for the workforce more generally as working practices are adapted for the emerging 'network society'.

Job share – it's a common experience for a lot of our people, they don't like this white-man's perception of work where you work 40 hours a week, week in week out and earn your 4 weeks' holiday ... A lot of our people prefer to work two or three days a week, so we can be flexible, and have a job-share situation where two people can work for the one wage. Flexibility is another key with media for Indigenous people (Tiga Bayles, Brisbane Indigenous Media Association).

- 5.11 Employment opportunities are not simply for training a workforce. They extend to the development and support of Indigenous wealth-creators in the creative media sector. Intellectual property in music and other aural performance could be a significant source of income for Indigenous creative enterprises.**

In terms of how our radio network or other indigenous networks might impact on the wider Australian broadcasting scene, we're able to provide a channel for broadcast of a lot of Indigenous music that doesn't get broadcast on other stations. Both CAAMA and Goolarri have recording companies in their own right and promote local artists. The *Mary G Show* showcases emerging artists and that's a way of providing content, but doesn't get out through any other broadcast channels (Neil Turner, Pakam Media).

You have ventures into international groups and international market packaging such as cultural festivals for on-sell and broadcast on the Internet to satellite carriers. There is the potential for e-commerce and online CD-Roms, music samples, multimedia for events or collections of events (Stompen' Ground). However there is a need for format compatibility for marketing, e.g. Super VHS or VHS formats. Pilbara-Kimberley is digitally advanced whereas Central Desert is struggling on reel (Russell Bomford, NIMAA).

- 5.12 Indigenous media associations in regional areas have proven capable of sourcing contract work, and thus developing the sector and creating employment in these areas. CAAMA has demonstrated that it has the expertise to take advantage of commercial video and record production opportunities (ATSIC, 1991: 37).**

Just recently we had the contract for Seven Central ... who gave us the opportunity to become their production facility. We've also been doing production work and news stories for Imparja (Terry Lees, Mt Isa Aboriginal Media Association).

EVTV has received income from contracts totalling \$12,000 to produce Bush Medicine and Well Baby Clinic videos for the South Australian Health Commission. It has continued to generate similar amounts annually with the Pitjantjatjara



language productions for the Australian Electoral Commission, Environmental Health, ATSIC, and the Museum of Victoria. PY Media has a \$13,000 contract for the South Australian Consumer Affairs Department. The Warlpiri Media Association has two \$5000 contracts for HIV awareness, a \$10,000 financial management video funded by Asian Relations in Trade and Industry and a \$38,000 information video on a pilot old people's respite care program for the Department of Health and Family Services. TSIMA BRACS are shooting a boating safety video for the Department of Primary Industry (source: Turner, 1998: 40, 41)

Indigenous regional radio stations are expanding, owing to demonstrated demand in surrounding areas.

We're working towards getting our signal into Cloncurry and a few of the mine sites around the region have made approaches to us, if we get the approval of the ABA, to take our signal into the mine sites (Terry Lees, Mt Isa Aboriginal Media Association).

Yamatji Media in Carnarvon is distributing its programming to other stations on CD, including at Fitzroy Crossing. Muda Aboriginal Corporation are expanding due to demand from adjoining communities for their programming: 'we are really expanding our services. When we're picked up by all these communities, we'll cover an area of 250,000 square kilometres' (Greg McKellar, Muda Aboriginal Corporation).

5.13 Indigenous regional radio stations have more Australian content than any other single media area in Australia (up to 75 percent Australian music in some cases). This support for local production helps to build a commercially-viable music industry in Australia.

#### **Further measures**

5.14 In order to grow towards independence, a number of things need to be done which will provide income as part of the normal workings of the market without promoting dependency. These include, but should not be limited to:

- the provision of training in marketing and sales to Indigenous media associations;
- a commitment by the OGIA to set monitored targets of proportionally appropriate spending to reach regional Indigenous communities by means of Indigenous regional radio stations;
- training for Indigenous media associations in preparing submissions to apply for tenders for audio-visual production, both Governmental and non-Governmental;

- the preparation of a directory of Indigenous media workers and media associations (such as the *Black Book* already produced by Blackfella Films), to be made available to Governmental departments and more widely in the community;
  - a commitment by Governmental agencies contracting audio-visual production to ensure that Indigenous media associations are invited to apply;
  - a commitment by Governmental agencies that, all other factors being equal, Indigenous media associations should be favoured for audio-visual production.
- 5.15 Indigenous media workers should be employed as part of the National Indigenous Broadcasting Service to visit regional Indigenous radio stations and provide training in production, marketing and sales.
- 5.16 Government training allowances currently do not recognise CDEP [Community Development Employment Program] positions as jobs for the purpose of funding. Given that in some regional communities it is unrealistic to expect other forms of employment, this position should be revised (ATSIC, 1991: 29).
- 5.17 Government advertising should be placed in regional Indigenous media proportionally to the local Indigenous population.

The Office of Government Information and Advertising is consistently one of the top five advertisers in Australia ... [and] as a matter of policy directs a minimum of 7 percent of its press and radio budgets towards media that target people of non-English speaking background, yet it has no such policy on the targeting of Indigenous peoples (ATSIC, 1999c: 39, 40)

## 6. Networking

***‘The effect on individuals, families and small business in non-metropolitan Australia of networking of radio programming, particularly in relation to local news services, sport, community service announcements and other forms of local content.’***

### Benefits of Networking

6.1 Mainstream media are already so networked that they have almost completely abandoned Indigenous content. Commercial regional broadcasters do not target Indigenous listeners. The response from Indigenous communities throughout Australia has been to develop their own separate broadcasting system, with its own networking.

6.2 Given the existence of the National Indigenous Radio Service and NIMAA, there was relatively little concern among Indigenous stakeholders in regional radio about mainstream radio networks. The commercial media in particular were seen as an alternative to Indigenous networks, not as a competitor.

6.3 In terms of Indigenous media, networking was understood as a positive benefit. Not all broadcasters are able to provide a comprehensive service and therefore require appropriate feeds from sibling stations. Culturally, networking ensures a wider perspective on Indigenous issues for local listeners.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander viewpoint is being presented at a national level all the time, rather than just doing it at a local level (Terry Lees, Mt Isa Aboriginal Media Association).

6.4 Centres that are culturally and linguistically rich from a geographical perspective can take feeds from a variety of services and provide a buffet of Indigenous culture: e.g. BAMA and Pakam Media in the Kimberleys (Neil Turner). Here the broadcaster functions as a first service. The potential for the development of Indigenous intellectual property is enormous, given the capacity to rebroadcast through Optus Satellite footprint through CAAMA to BRACS broadcasters and subsequently to diverse communities.

6.5 Where media organisations exist in less culturally rich areas e.g. Djadjawrung media in the Bendigo area, the role of Indigenous radio programming is different, providing a necessary cultural and informational buffer to offset the negative effect of mainstream media (Jim Remedio).

Networking offers the potential for greater revenue raising by Indigenous radio stations in regional areas.

Radio networking is expanding the audience reach of BRACS broadcasters, creating greater opportunities for sponsorship which regional coordinators might be able to pursue. TEABBA offers sponsorship packages ... Some of their clients have been ATSIC (election information), a sports store, the quarantine service, Departments of Health and Family Law, and an Aboriginal-owned used car dealership (Turner, 1998: 43)

## **Networking the Local**

- 6.6. Although networking is essential at a regional and national level, local stations and communities must retain direction and control. There is wide support for the patchwork or mosaic effect achieved by a mix of local, regional and national content on any one station. Networking must be conceived as not just ‘from Sydney to outback’, but ‘from outback to Sydney’.**

You’re talking about networking here, you think of Sydney broadcasting to the rest of Australia. Well networking in our sense is completely different to that, it’s basically the rest of Australia broadcasting to itself. We provide a hub here, and we distribute programs from anywhere in the country, so it’s a different type of networking. During the Olympics, we had live broadcasts going out everywhere – including Sydney – so that’s a reversal. We had tiny little BRACS units out in the Kimberley, in the desert, probably with 20 people around them, broadcasting right across the country, in Sydney as well (Gerry Pyne, National Indigenous Radio Service).

The feedback we got ... people saying ‘That’s just fantastic, we never thought that this would happen during the Olympics ... this blackfella broadcasting from the Torres Strait, or Uluru, into Sydney ... it’s exciting, magic stuff (Tiga Bayles, Brisbane Aboriginal Media Association).

- 6.7 A number of smaller networks are emerging organically within regional Indigenous broadcasting, demonstrating that the form of networking envisaged, and developed by, Indigenous broadcasters does not rely on a simple centre/regions model.**

Remote communities were getting time call, road reports, weather conditions and so on from Brisbane and heavy domination of the NIRS service from the 4AAA in Brisbane or the 4K1G. Very little input from other broadcasters and next to nothing from Western Australia. So all our communities were very happy when we established the Pakam network to now take that as the bed program. When communities want to re-establish their ABC feeds were they are able to do that by converting the satellite receivers over to ABC which were previously TWN – or they can purchase another receiver and get the ABC another way. But given that most BRACS

communities only had two FM transmitters, if they're all happy to have Pakam on one of those and it's the community choosing whether the other is ABC or WAFM. So for them it has been a big boon to have a network program coming from all parts of the Pilbara and Kimberley region (Neil Turner, Pakam media).

Music is good example of networking. It's local content (Australian) but not recognised. Music is part of a network. Scrap Metal can be heard in Torres Straits. Kimberley-Pilbara can share some of their content with Darwin etc. due to satellite uplinks (previously only CAAMA). Generalist community based networks can take NIRS feeds (Russell Bomford NIMAA).

**6.8 Regional Indigenous radio stations are happy to use networked NIRS material because they retain final control over what is broadcast.**

You can have Indigenous broadcasting 24 hours a day. You have to be careful, to ensure that only suitable material is broadcast, but this is not a major problem (Barbara Jackson, Mid North Coast Indigenous Broadcasters Association)

It's good to hear from our people from the other side of the country too; lets us know what's going on over there, as they do when they pick us up (Dennis Conlon, Central Queensland Aboriginal Corporation for Media).

**6.9 Regional and national organisation is required. Regional organisation will improve the efficiency and output of individual stations, providing management guidance, skill-sharing and content development (including regional news).**

**6.10 Furthermore, networking extends to an international context with the prospect of program sharing between first peoples' radio stations around the world, and commercial sales to international media networks.**

Stations such as 4MW broadcast their programs into BRACS communities as well as Papua New Guinea where they have 240,000 listeners. They also broadcast into the Pacific Islands (Aven Noah, General manager 4MW Torres Straits). TSIMA feels it has a priority to network its programs to the Cape York/Torres Straits communities rather than to Indigenous people Australia-wide. The reasons relate to their cultural origins. TSIMA can run Radio Australia 'Pacific Voices' programs as it also relates to Torres Strait identity.

The biggest problem currently for Indigenous broadcasting is the ABA's geographical breakdown of broadcast areas for community stations, which are too small. For the Mid North Coast Indigenous Broadcasters Association, only being able

to broadcast to Taree is a problem; there should be a larger catchment area, including Taree, Port Macquarie, Nambucca, etc. This is why the Mid North Coast Indigenous Broadcasting Association was formed. The model proposed would be like a mini version of NIRS – a hub, with smaller studios in other towns. This would save a lot of money, and service a lot of people (Barbara Jackson, Mid North Coast Indigenous Broadcasters Association)

## **7. New Technologies**

**‘The potential for new technologies such as digital radio to provide enhanced and more localised radio services in metropolitan, regional and rural areas.’**

### **Digital Radio**

**7.1** There is strong Indigenous interest in new technologies, especially the Internet and computer-based interactivity, but not in digital radio as such. Digital technologies are already used for satellite transmission, but rebroadcasting to the community is by analog means. Until digital receivers are more affordable, digital broadcasting is not a high priority for Indigenous broadcasters.

We use digital to get our signal from here to out there ... but how do you get it from the middle of town to your community? And that’s where I don’t think digital is going to be of any assistance at this point in time, because you’ve got to buy the digital receivers, understand the technology, and it’s going to take a while to filter through (Gerry Pyne, National Indigenous Radio Service).

**7.2** Indigenous broadcasters have consistently been at the front of technological implementation in regional and remote areas. This commitment to technology has been driven by necessity (Tiga Bayles, Brisbane Aboriginal Media Association).

ATSIC notes ‘the growing interest that Aboriginal and TSI media organisations and communities are showing in such advances as satellite program delivery, development of radio networks and related communications fields such as satellite-linked, compressed video networks ...’ (quoted in (ATSIC, 1993: 39)

**7.3** However, Indigenous media groups insist that advances in digital radio implementation must involve consultation with Indigenous bodies. It is essential that Indigenous broadcasters are not left ‘out of the loop’.

### **Convergence and New Technologies**

**7.4** The possibilities are seen to be much wider than digital radio. Indigenous communities could potentially benefit from a convergent media environment. Opportunities include:

- Internet open source networking,
- net radio,

- digital television,
- video streaming.

**7.5** Especially in the regional context, developments in post-broadcast television should be kept within the same policy framework as radio. Television is set to become more like radio as production costs fall and services can be reconfigured for the end-user – increasing opportunities for variety in local content.

At the moment we're as digital as we can be ... You'd love to do it, it's on your wish list, but where would the funds come from? As a non-profit organisation, our hope is to make as much money as we can ... and churn it back into upgrading our services as we go along. The aim would be to be in the digital frame as soon as is practical ... the concept of having your radio service on the net is pretty good ... more and more commercial stations are doing it, and that's something we'd love to do (Terry Lees, Mt Isa Aboriginal Media Association).

Two organisations that successfully use the Internet to sell Aboriginal art, music and musical instruments are Aboriginal Art and Culture Centre (Alice Springs) [www.aboriginalart.com](http://www.aboriginalart.com) and Manigrada Arts and Culture (Central Arnhem Land) [www.peg.apc.org/~bawinanga/mac.html](http://www.peg.apc.org/~bawinanga/mac.html). See also [www.aboriginalaustralia.com](http://www.aboriginalaustralia.com).

**Ernebella Television is an example of a successful realisation of Indigenous cultural capital in audio-visual products.**

[Ernebella] has produced more than 130 edited video productions ... Sales generated up to \$12,000 per annum ... A sizeable mail order clientele was built up nationally, including prisons, educational institutions and nursing homes. Some international sales were also made to universities and art galleries overseas and through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to Australian embassies around the world. Irrunytju Media [has for sale] 27 edited productions ... income of \$12,000 over five years (Turner, 1998: 38, 43)

**7.6** Regulation must take convergence into account. Initiatives for the development of regional radio should be part of a larger regime. Indigenous broadcasters are already taking advantage of possibilities offered by technological convergence.

We do run television production work, and corporate videos and stuff, and ... promoting our music side, which is recording, to get particularly Indigenous artists to come in and record their stuff, so that we're a full on media service, not just a radio service (Terry Lees, Mt Isa Aboriginal Media Association).

With the availability of cheap digital cameras (from \$3,500), and the dramatic reduction in prices of non-linear editing systems in the last couple of years, and with the ready adoption of this



format by the broadcasting industry (e.g. the ABC's *Race Around the World*; Channel 7's Olympic coverage), 'broadcast quality' production equipment is now within the reach of BRACS communities (Turner, 1998: 39).

## **Infrastructure**

- 7.7 All regional Australians, including Indigenous Australians living in regional areas, must be provided with telecommunications infrastructure which makes it possible to take advantage of new technologies, including but not limited to the possibilities offered by the Internet. An estimated four percent of the Australian population still remain unserved by data channels suitable for Internet use. A significant number of these people are Indigenous (ATSIC, 1999c: 86). Timed long distance calls also disadvantage many Indigenous communities. Modern telecommunications networks incur no extra cost when calls travel over a long distance, making zone charges inequitable and unjustified.

Digitalisation of communications technology will have significant effects for Indigenous communities. The critical question is how to provide links capable of carrying sufficient data ... There are a series of projects involving Indigenous people in, eg, running an Internet Service Provider, selling through websites, video-conferencing and accessing the Internet. Tele-medicine and tele-education in particular are involved (ATSIC, 1999c: 83)

- 7.8 Access to infrastructure is not enough. Policy must focus also on regional development including investment and employment. Without investment, content is likely to be outsourced, causing production to become centralised and damaging local industry.
- 7.9 The physical housing of new technology infrastructure and equipment must be taken into account. Effective business plans and governance strategies must also be developed. BRACS equipment is often housed in the local school or health centre where media workers cannot get after hours access to it. Media centres must be accessible and well maintained in order to get maximum value out of the technology.

## **Interviewees**

Tiga Bayles, Brisbane Indigenous Media Association, Qld.

Russell Bomford, National Indigenous Media Association of Australia

Dennis Conlon, Central Queensland Aboriginal Corporation for Media, Rockhampton Qld.

Sandy Dann, Puranyangu Rangka-Kerrem Media, Halls Creek WA

Kevin Fong, Goolarri Radio, Broome WA

Greg Harris, ATSIC

Barbara Jackson, Mid-North Coast Indigenous Broadcasters Association, Taree NSW

Toni Janke, National Indigenous Media Association of Australia

Adjunct Professor Brian Johns, Queensland University of Technology

Brett Leavy, CyberDreaming Inc.

Terry Lees, Mt Isa Aboriginal Media Association, Qld.

Clayton Lewis, National Indigenous Media Association of Australia

Greg McKellar, Muda Aboriginal Corporation, Bourke NSW

Christine Morris, Australian Key Centre for Cultural and Media Policy

Roxy Musk, Radio Larrakia Inc., Darwin

Aven Noah, Torres Strait Islander Media Association

Maureen O'Keefe, Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association, NT

Gerry Pynes, National Indigenous Radio Service

Jim Remedio, Dja-DjaWrung Media Association, Vic.

Neil Turner, Pakam Media, WA

Patricia Vandenberg, Yamatji Media Aboriginal Corporation, Carnarvon WA

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