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RECEIVED  
4-5-05

Submission No. 42  
Date Received 5-5-05

MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS,  
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY  
AND THE ARTS

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11 05 MAY 2005

BY: ATSLIA

Mr Barry Wakelin MP  
Chairman  
House of Representatives Standing Committee on  
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

19 APR 2005

Dear Mr Wakelin

**Inquiry into Indigenous employment**

Thank you for your letter of 16 March 2005 concerning the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs' inquiry into Indigenous employment.

The Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts administers a number of Indigenous-specific programs that provide opportunities for Indigenous people to develop skills and attributes which enhance future employment prospects.

The Department's Indigenous culture and language programs support the operational funding of a number of community centres which employ Indigenous people in a number of roles, including language experts, teachers, sound recordists, archivists, interpreters, heritage and cultural officers, administrators and office staff. Through language and cultural centres, Indigenous people are afforded recognition of their cultural knowledge and gain proficiency in the use of information and communications technology, administration, teaching, governance and management. Employment in such centres provides a strong community focus for Indigenous employees, and can be instrumental in building community cohesion and self-respect.

The Department's Indigenous broadcasting program funds a number of broadcasting services in metropolitan areas that employ a large percentage of Indigenous staff. In regional and remote areas, however, key salaried positions in Indigenous community radio are traditionally held by non-Indigenous personnel. This is due to a lack of suitably trained Indigenous broadcasters and administrators. The Australian Government recognised the need to support broadcast training through a 2004 election commitment to provide \$2.2 m over four years to the Community Broadcasting Foundation, to establish a program to meet training needs in

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community radio (including Indigenous community radio). This training will include station management and broadcast skills. The intended outcome of the program for Indigenous Australians is more formalised training that will provide the appropriate skills and knowledge to allow them to secure broadcasting positions currently held by non-Indigenous Australians.

Initiatives contained under the Department's Telecommunications Action Plan for Remote Indigenous Communities (TAPRIC) program are providing access to information and services for Indigenous people living in remote and regional Australia, leading in turn to improved employment outcomes for Indigenous people. The TAPRIC Internet Access Program has supported the establishment of public Internet access facilities in 135 remote Indigenous communities to date, with a further 40 communities to benefit over the coming months. The majority of these facilities are co-located with community councils which, in addition to municipal and local government functions, deliver programs such as CDEP and other services for the development of employment opportunities. Stakeholder consultation and government studies consistently identify access to higher-bandwidth Internet services in Indigenous communities as an important best practice in improving employment opportunities for Indigenous people and as an enabler of economic activity in these communities generally.

The National Arts and Crafts Industry Support Program has significantly increased Indigenous peoples' access to culturally appropriate and sustainable income generation activities. In some communities, particularly in regional or remote localities, art production stands as the only source of externally generated income. The income generation capacity of artists has significant flow on benefits to individuals, the artists' extended family and their community as it results in increased purchasing power, increased self esteem, the creation of positive community profiles and enhanced cultural transmission. The Program's focus upon industry development in partnership with business development and training initiatives is also contributing to the expansion of the number of formal employment roles Indigenous people are able to fulfil within the Industry beyond that of artist/producer to include roles in administration, copyright protection and technical training.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely



HELEN COONAN