

House of Representatives Standing
Committee on Communications,
Transport and the Arts

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Secretary:

March 29 2001

Mr P. Neville, MP
Chair, House of Representatives Standing Committee
on Communications, Transport and the Arts
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Neville

**RE: Public hearing on regional radio, conducted by the House of
Representatives Standing Committee on Communications, Transport and
the Arts (19 February 2001), at Logan, Qld.**

A submission was presented to the hearing on behalf of ATSIC by Professor John Hartley of QUT and Mr Roderick Fraser of ATSIC. During the session members explored several questions on which we would like to present further information.

(a) Have any Indigenous stations with community licenses sold the full five minutes of sponsorship that is allowed, for any segments? (Hansard CTA 394).

The community license is seen by many Indigenous broadcasters as an inappropriate category, given their stations' national status as a primary broadcasting service for Indigenous people. The criticism of the community license is not simply about its limited sponsorship capacity.

However, a good example of Indigenous radio stations selling their sponsorship time is Teabba. Currently Teabba has around 23 BRACS stations, which are all coordinated via their community radio broadcast. Teabba offers *sponsorship packages* to assist prospective clients, and as an easy way of coordinating funds to BRACS units.

Their clients have included ATSIC (election information), sports stores, the Quarantine Service, the Department of Health and Family Law and a car dealership.

The sponsorship packages they offer are: \$110-\$330 per week (10-30 spots); casual spots at \$22; community announcements at \$10. They also offer some of their services to clients. Charges are: production at \$50; translations at \$100; and studio time at \$50 per hour.

(b) Information was sought about ATSIC's support, funding and policy in the area of practical initiatives (as opposed to Canberra based ones). (Hansard CTA 396).

ATSIC supports broadcasting initiatives outside Canberra through regional councils and offices. They are also locating the Output Group Responsibility Centre in Alice

Springs. Practical support for individual stations comes in the form of paid advertising.

(c) *How much networking of NIRS material is taken by individual BRACS, NIRS, and NIMAA stations, and how many hours per day do they broadcast of their own material (Hansard CTA 398-9).*

The Committee was pressing here for details about a network on a presumption that it is already geared up for comprehensive self-monitoring. Such activity requires levels of research, secretariat support, governance protocols and financing that one would expect from a national broadcaster. It does need to be stressed that the case being argued by ATSIC is in fact that such a service – the National Indigenous Broadcasting Service or NIBS – needs to be established.

In the meantime, ATSIC regularly sponsors or commissions research reports into BRACS and other Indigenous broadcasting matters. Some of these reports are referenced in our original written submission to you (submission #190, “Regional Radio: An Indigenous Perspective”).

In practice, the amount of programming that stations take from the existing NIRS network varies greatly. NIRS now has a very comprehensive program line-up. Many stations take programs such as *Talk Black* and *Murri Voices* during the day.

The recent launch of the *National Indigenous News Service* has been a huge success. Nearly all of the NIRS network takes this service on a regular basis.

Outside of normal business hours a lot of stations take NIRS. Times that this occurs start from about 5:00pm and go through until the 6:00am program starts.

Special event broadcasts such as the coverage of AFL football on weekends, Tamworth Country Music Festival, Laura Festival etc. are also taken by the majority of the network. NIRS itself has tried to get a more comprehensive account of who takes their service and when, but their efforts to date have not been successful (this information was supplied by Gerry Pyne, of NIRS).

(d) *There was a question about the transmission footprint of BRACS stations (Hansard CTA 401).*

The power of a typical BRACS unit is 10 watts ERP for the FM services. This results in a coverage of about 15-20kms. On average the demographic of listeners is about 85 to 95 percent Indigenous people.

I hope this additional information is helpful to the Committee.

With best wishes,

Professor John Hartley, *Dean of Creative Industries, QUT*
(Consultant to ATSIC)