



Umeewarra Aboriginal Media Association

Submission 98

Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications, Information Technology and the Arts

Umeewarra Media's submission will cover the following areas:-

1. Background Information on Umeewarra Media
Mission Statement
2. The importance of an Aboriginal voice in media in South Australia
3. The current situation
4. Our funding dilemma
5. Funding resources the need for extra funding to allow us to offer programming in language and culture
6. Future of Umeewarra Media – we have an exciting future but we desperately need more funds to reach anything like our full potential as a very real voice for Aboriginal people in media.

Background information on Umeewarra Media

Umeewarra Aboriginal Media Association was founded in 1987 when Michael Turner, the CDO of the Aboriginal Community Affairs Panel (ACAP), asked John Macumba, (John was one of the co-founders of CAAMA in Alice Springs) to research the feasibility of setting up an Aboriginal Media Association in Port Augusta.

In August 1988 a broadcasting workshop was co-ordinated. Harry Dare, Raymond Weetra and George Reid were the first to go to air. In 1989 Umeewarra Media began by producing a 15-minute program for the ABC.

In 1991 the ABC gave Umeewarra Media some surplus equipment which was installed at the Marryatt St premises and this enabled the setting up of two studios.

On the 23rd of February 1993, Umeewarra Media was granted a temporary license to broadcast and this covers the eastern side of the Flinders Ranges as well as the Aboriginal communities in Whyalla and Port Pirie. Umeewarra Media can be found on 89.1 FM. Umeewarra Media now produces a wide range of programs for the community, broadcasting 12 hours a day of local content and then switching over to CAAMA. We also produce a two-hour national cultural program for the National Indigenous Radio Service.

Whilst radio is the main feature of Umeewarra Media's business we also have other areas such as CD production, video production, multi media facilities, conference room for hire, sound equipment and an outside broadcast van for outdoor community events.

We have been instrumental in the producing of several CDs and have encouraged local Aboriginal people to record both their music and their stories.

The Association is managed and controlled by a Committee elected by members at an Annual General Meeting and operates according to the Constitution.

The aims of the Association are contained in the Mission statement but can be summarised as:

Providing radio broadcast services to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people with an emphasis on meeting the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal people. Through programs with a high content of languages that promote Aboriginal culture, history lifestyle and values; and to elevate the status of Aboriginal people by promoting knowledge and understanding among the wider Australian community of Aboriginal culture and the specific difficulties experienced by an Aboriginal minority within that community.

Umeewarra Aboriginal Media Association carries out its charter by promoting and encouraging the involvement of Aboriginal men, women, youth and the disabled in researching, producing and broadcasting programs with Aboriginal content which focuses on areas of Aboriginal interest.

Mission Statement

Our Mission is to:-

- Provide full radio broadcast services to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people of the region, with emphasis upon the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal people;
- Provide Aboriginal produced programs with a high content of languages and emphasis on promoting Aboriginal culture, lifestyles and values;
- Provide employment, education and training programs for Aboriginal people, covering every aspect of radio, video and print media;
- Promote knowledge and understanding among the wider Australian community of Aboriginal culture and of the specific difficulties experienced by Aboriginal people as the indigenous minority within that community;
- Conduct research into any and all areas of concern or interest to Aboriginal people and to prepare and broadcast programs based on such research;
- Record and preserve Aboriginal culture, history, languages, music, dance, art and craft;
- Promote and assist in the establishment of Aboriginal enterprises that arrest social disintegration and alleviate the social and economic problems that exist within Aboriginal communities;

broadcaster who is very popular with our listening audiences. He uses some of his own language the language of the Narrunga people throughout his program. This program also includes an hour of National Talk back with Tiga Bayles. This keeps our listeners up to date with what is happening and what people are thinking about Aboriginal issues across the country.

Country Request Program 10.30am - 2.00pm Mon - Fri

This program is very important to our community as it allows them to celebrate, grieve and share information together through the requests and messages they put over the air. It also features Aboriginal country music much of which is local bands and in the languages of the region.

The broadcaster is our station manager and she is well known in the community and is considered as part of the family for much of our listening audience. This means they feel very comfortable sharing with her what they want to express in their requests.

National Culture Show 2pm - 4pm Tues

This program is broadcast on the National Indigenous Radio Service as well as to our local listeners. This program features an Aboriginal broadcaster and all Indigenous music, issues news and views. The broadcaster is Yankantjatjara and does a lot of the program in language.

Easy Listening Show 2pm - 4pm Mon, Wed, Thurs & Fri

This is a music program that also features Indigenous music. It is also interspersed with local messages and information both in English and Aboriginal languages.

Afternoon Request program 4pm - 6pm Mon - Fri

This is for our younger listeners and mainly plays up to date music, again with a major focus on Indigenous music. This is an important show as it still features the community messages and the announcements in language but it has a younger listening audience.

DJs Choice 7pm – 10pm

This program relies on volunteers to work from 7 – 10pm and they play the music of their choice. This has given a boost to our local content and has been well received by our listeners.

Community announcements are offered in all of our programs

News Service We currently broadcast the NIRS news on the hour between 7am to 6pm

CAAMA relay 10 pm - 7am daily Mon - Fri plus Saturday and Sunday

We also broadcast Indigenous programs such as:-

- Aboriginal Message

- Deadly Sounds
- Awaye Program
- Radio Out There
- Our Place

These programs all have Aboriginal broadcasters. These programs ensure we keep our listeners up to date with both state and national issues and then we offer the local content that is also important.

We believe we have been able to offer our audience a good mix of Aboriginal music, news and views from a local, state and national level.

We have built partnerships with many community organisations that make use of our facilities on a regular basis. For example we provide Pika Wiya Health Service with broadcast time whenever they have a new health initiative they want to inform the community about or if there is a particular health issue i.e. immunisation programs, diabetes program information etc we always give them priority air time. We also work with the Aboriginal Advisory Council for Port Augusta City Council, Country Arts SA, the Northern Regional Development Board, Family Legal Service and others to ensure our listeners are up to date with happenings and issues that affect their everyday lives.

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Sponsorship

We run a sponsorship programs that feature media organisations such as NIRS, Active Radio, and Independent and General and that gives us a small income through advertising campaigns. We also offer sponsorship arrangements with local businesses. We also facilitate a translating service for important messages to be translated from English into Aboriginal languages. However, we are located in a very racist region of South Australia and therefore sponsorship for an Aboriginal radio station is very difficult.

Trainees, CDEP, Work for the Dole and Work Experience

In 2005 three of our radio trainees completed their training, however, we are not in a position to offer any further employment due to funding restraints. This is a very difficult situation because we believe we are setting up our people to fail because they put in three years of their life and there is no career outcomes.

We are about to start another group of trainees who will study media through Bachelor College in Darwin. This is a vital part of our service, these trainees are mentored and supervised by our paid staff and they play an important role in our organisation.

We currently have 6 CDEP participants' placed at Umeewarra Media and they are supervised by our staff. They work in the areas of admin and radio and also play an important role in this organisation.

Umeewarra Media believes very strongly in Equal Employment Opportunity and to the end we have two volunteers who have physical disabilities. We also facilitate placements from CRS from time to time.

We are often asked to facilitate work for the dole participants and we do this as a service to our community. These positions can be very time consuming in terms of staff resources, however, we feel it is important to assist our community in this way.

We are also approached on a regular basis to facilitate work experience people. This can be through the Secondary School or through some other organisation that is trying to build the experience and self-esteem, usually of Aboriginal people. Again we feel this is an important service we can provide for our community.

Outside Broadcast Van

We offer a service to community organisations and events by taking the outside broadcast van to offer sound for events such as:-

- Alcohol Free Days
- Reconciliation Week
- CrocFest
- Harmony Day
- NAIDOC events throughout NAIDOC Week
- Pika Wiya Health Expos
- Aboriginal Sports Carnival
- Open days at the Youth Centre and other Aboriginal organisations
- Secondary School Sports Day

We also take the outside broadcast van to other towns throughout the region for events happening in those places.

In 2005 we also had our first live broadcast and this looks like it may be a regular thing with the local Football Association and this could mean an increase in sponsorship, however, we have ongoing problems with getting sponsorship because we are situated in a very racist area.

We are very much a part of our community, we have an all Aboriginal Board of Management who oversee all of the policy decisions for the station. We have CDEP participants and volunteers who work at the station and we attend nearly all community events.

Funding

Two years ago we received a cut to our federal funding of nearly \$100,000 and this has made it extremely difficult to even keep the doors open.

We have had to cut our staff numbers in half and we only have 4 paid staff in the organisation, two in radio and two in admin.

We are not like other community radio stations, this station was set up to offer employment for Aboriginal people. It was never designed to be run by volunteers. The Aboriginal cultural and language content needs to be paid for in order for it to receive the respect it requires to be taken seriously in today's society. We also are not in a position to self fund these necessary positions as we are situated in a very racist area and sponsorship is extremely hard to acquire.

In order to offer Aboriginal people a real voice in the media we need an urgent increase in funds. We are continually pushed to do more programs in Aboriginal language and we continually apply for funds to run an appropriately run language program with a community committee to oversee the program. However, we always get a negative response to these applications.

We must have appropriate funding for a language program. We must be able to pay our people for their cultural knowledge and experience. We also under our insurance policy must have two people who can speak the language in order to ensure liability laws are followed.

This is an expensive exercise, however, if DCITA is serious about this issue they will find the funds to fund this program appropriately.

We are in an amazing position in this area as there are over 20 different language groups represented in our Aboriginal community and we could be doing some really exciting programs in language and leading the way in programs in Aboriginal language that could be sold to other media associations across the country and become a very real resource for educational institutions.

Another issue with regard to the funding is that we are continually urged to get more young Aboriginal people involved in media and we do facilitate training in partnership with Batchelor Institute in Darwin. Last year we had three trainees complete their diploma in Media Studies. However, there is no career path for these young people because our positions are so limited.

This means these young people are yet again set up to fail. They have been very successful but there are no job prospects.

Future

The future could be very exciting for Umeewarra Media, we have funds set aside from the sale of an old building to upgrade our transmitter and studio, however, without extra staff this is going to be very difficult. We have a very dedicated team who work extremely hard to get the best possible outcomes for our listening audience. They all work well above their paid hours and we have a strong group of CDEP Participants and volunteers who keep the radio going. But with a bit more funding we could really be offering a very exciting service to our listeners, with far more language and culture represented in our programming.

We would like the ability to take Umeewarra Media to the heights in Aboriginal media we know it is capable of but we urgently need more funding to allow this to happen. We need extra staffing in the radio area and the admin area to allow us to function successfully. It is ok to suggest we use volunteers

and CDEP participants but they require training and supervision and at the moment we do not have sufficient staff to allow this to occur.

Minister Vanstone in her speech that was delivered at our opening of our new building said, “ *new buildings and new equipment are only half of the story. Resources are fine but, **without dedicated and talented people to provide a service, those resources are useless.** The success of Umeewarra rests in the hands of the Board, the staff and the community.*

All of the people who have put in so much hard work over the years deserve congratulations for the commitment, creativity and enthusiasm they have shown.

*You are part of a national network of Indigenous broadcasters that provides an impartial and professional service to Indigenous communities and to other Australians. **What you do is valuable to the life of this nation.**”*

If we are in fact valuable to the life of the nation, we need extra funding to allow us to continue this important work in an appropriate manner.

Yours sincerely

Vince Coulthard
Director
17th March 2006