

**Submission**  
**To**  
**House Committee on Communications,**  
**Transport and the Arts**  
**RADIO INDUSTRY INQUIRY**  
**By**  
**National Indigenous Radio Service**

The National Indigenous Radio Service (NIRS) is owned and operated by Indigenous broadcasters from around Australia. It operates a National Satellite delivery service on the Optus Aurora Satellite system and is available across Australia. Its purpose is to provide a National program feed that is made up of a mix of the best Indigenous programming from a broad range of Indigenous broadcasters around the country. Many smaller Indigenous communities lack the resources to operate their own local radio services but can rebroadcast programs delivered by satellite. The NIRS allows these communities access to a range of Indigenous programming that is put together by Indigenous communities around the country. It also provides an opportunity for local communities to feed programming into a National network for distribution across the country.

NIRS is located at Fortitude Valley in Brisbane where it's office and studios are situated. Programs are fed directly to Optus for unlinking to their B3 satellite at their Rochedale installation in Brisbane's south. There is a comprehensive network of digital program lines and satellite feeds that deliver programming from different parts of the country to the NIRS studios in Brisbane. Most of the programs on NIRS are broadcast live as they go to air.

Programming includes music, spoken word, current affairs, cultural, news, documentaries, sport etc. NIRS originates a National Indigenous News Service from it's Brisbane studios. This service goes out on the hour between 6.00am and 8.00pm weekdays and there are plans to increase this to weekends as well. NIRS also produces its own coverage of AFL football during the football season. This is done with the full cooperation of the AFL and in many cases the NIRS football program is the only one that is available to remote communities.

NIRS is interested in playing its role in attempting to ensure that communities in remote Australia have access to a similar range of programming as their city based counterparts. Many of our communities operate Broadcasting for Remote Aboriginal Communities Scheme (BRACS) services. These allow for the re-transmission of radio and television signals in remote locations. These also have facilities to insert appropriate local content as determined by the local community. In many cases, these BRACS operate typically 1 or 2 radio frequencies and these are switched from one service to another at different times of the day. In the majority of cases however, there are too few resources to ensure that these switchovers are done with any sort of regularity according to the needs of the local community. NIRS would like to see extra frequencies made available at these BRACS communities so that people living there can have a broader range of choices in radio services.

This could be done with minimal impact on the greater planning criteria of the ABA as these services are typically located hundreds of kilometers from built up and highly populated areas. They run very low power FM services and would have little or no impact on neighboring services. They are also cheap to establish and maintain. Increasing the range of services at the remote community level would increase the communities overall awareness of the media and create more local interest in generating local programming at the community level. This would have a small impact where funds were available for employment in the media at this level. It would also generate a greater sense of community for people living in remote Australia and would provide mainstream Australia with a rich source of new and interesting programming from parts of the country that most of us know little about.

Technology is already playing a major role in widening that range of programs in all areas across the country and that is set to increase. An increase in the number of frequencies at these BRACS would allow local communities to take full advantage of this new technology and the wider range of services that this makes available.

The National Indigenous Radio Service has plans to increase its service from the one National satellite channel to a system of 5 channels so that it can deliver programs at the correct time displacement for each of the countries time zones. This will overcome one of the major difficulties that we encounter in delivering a live program feed to all areas of the country. Today's digital technology is making this objective achievable as the prices become more competitive.

I would like to thank the Committee for this opportunity to comment on this important issue and would be pleased to offer any additional comments and/or information as appropriate.

Gerry Pyne  
NIRS Manager

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