



Pre-Budget Submission 2020-2021

Submission by First Nations Media Australia to the Australian Treasury

31 January 2020

"For every dollar invested in First Nations broadcasting and media, \$2.87 of cultural, social and economic value is returned."

– Social Ventures Australia, *More Than Radio – A Community Asset*, 2017

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Introduction

About First Nations Media Australia

First Nations Media Australia is the peak body for Indigenous media and First Nations Media Australia is the peak body for Indigenous media and communications. It was founded in 2001 as the peak body for remote Indigenous media and communications. In late 2016 it transitioned to the national peak body for First Nations broadcasting, media and communications.

Up to 105 Remote Indigenous Broadcasting Services (RIBS), 33 additional licensed retransmission sites across Australia, 8 Remote Indigenous Media Organisations (RIMOs) and 28 urban and regional First Nations radio services are eligible for representation by First Nations Media Australia.

About the First Nations broadcasting and media sector

The scope of the First Nations media sector includes:

- **Radio:** Over 230 radio broadcast sites coordinated by 35 licensed, community-owned, not-for-profit organisations. These radio services able to reach around 320,000 First Nations people, including around 100,000 very hard to reach people in remote Indigenous communities, or approximately 48% of the First Nations population. They broadcast live shows, plus interviews, radio documentaries, news, emergency information, community events, government and other messaging within community broadcasting guidelines.
- **Video & film production:** Production of culture and language-based content for broadcast & online distribution.
- **TV:** National (NITV) and regional (ICTV) TV services; local TV services (Goolarri TV at Broome, Larrakia TV at Darwin). ICTV satellite TV service reaches 240,000 remote households.
- **News production:** National, regional and local news and current affairs services for broadcast, as well as print and online news media, including:
 - National Indigenous Radio Service (NIRS) and its National Indigenous News and Weekly News-in-Review
 - Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association's news service, including its Strong Voices program
 - Koori Radio's news and current affairs programming
 - NITV News and Living Black
 - Print media including Koori Mail and National Indigenous Times
- **Print and Online:** A national newspaper (Koori Mail) alongside a strong web presence of journalistic sites such as IndigenousX, National Indigenous Times and indigITUBE, a dedicated online platform showcasing aggregated content complimented by an app streaming 24 radio services. First Nations media organisations have a strong social media following and publish content online daily.

First Nations broadcasters are not-for-profit community organisations providing a primary and essential service to their communities. They reach nearly 50% of the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, but are prevented from providing a primary radio service to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples due to a lack of funding. The First Nations broadcasting sector delivers programming in over 20 languages nationally, including the first language of many people in remote communities. The sector reaches significant audience share with 91% of people in remote Indigenous communities being regular listeners to radio services and watching ICTV at least once per month.¹ In the remote context, it is the most reliable and ubiquitous radio and media service available to audiences.

¹ McNair yellowSquares, *Indigenous Communications and Media Survey*, 2016,

The sector is based in local communities and employs local people as broadcasters and media producers. It is a local and trusted voice, attracting listeners who want to hear about their own communities, in their own language, sharing positive Indigenous stories.² A recent social return on investment study conducted by Social Ventures Australia found that strengthening First Nations broadcasting strengthens community through communication, culture and employment. For this reason, First Nations broadcasting returns an average \$2.87 for every \$1 invested, with many organisations returning a rate much higher than this nearly 3:1 average ratio.³ The communications sector provides enabling services to support opportunities and outcomes in service sectors, such as health and education, and promotes inclusiveness and participation.⁴

The Social Ventures Australia's report, *More Than Radio – A Community Asset* was commissioned by the Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet and produced six key findings:

1. Indigenous Broadcasting Services provide much more than radio – they are community assets that contribute to strengthening culture, community development and the local economy.
2. The outcomes achieved by Indigenous Broadcasting Services appear consistent by the activities they undertake are varied.
3. The activities Indigenous Broadcasting Services undertake are tailored to the specific needs of the community which helps build trust amongst the community.
4. Indigenous Broadcasting Services are achieving a range of social returns on investment, heavily informed by their context, and value flows to a variety of stakeholder groups.
5. Indigenous Broadcasting Services are contributing towards more of the Government's priorities than is currently realized.
- 6. Indigenous Broadcasting Services can leverage government funds to generate additional revenue – and greater impact – but only if they have sufficient resourcing available.**

This budget submission seeks funds to grow our sector's capacity to serve our audiences, grow our audiences, deliver excellent social return on investment outcomes and increase financial sustainability.

² *ibid.*

³ Social Ventures Australia, *More Than Radio – a community asset: Social Return on Investment Analyses of Indigenous Broadcasting Services*, 2017

⁴ Department of Communications and the Arts, *The Communications Sector: recent trends and developments*, Bureau of Communications Research, Commonwealth Government, Canberra, October 2016

Market Gaps

First Nations media organisations address the following market gaps:

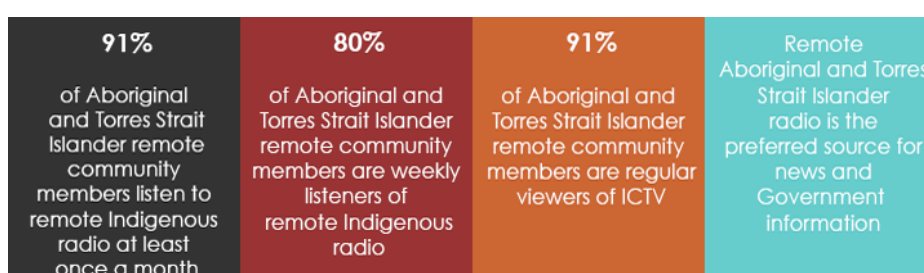
- Providing essential information to many remote communities not serviced by any other form of media. This includes the dissemination of vital emergency, health and government information.
- Reporting of issues and stories from a First Nations, community-controlled perspective. This is not adequately addressed in any other media channel.
- High levels of audience engagement. First Nations broadcasting creates a two-way dialogue described by some listeners as being “like a town meeting” where First Nations audiences feel comfortable to interact in a space curated by presenters they identify with. This role is likely to be increasingly important in consultation processes around the establishment of a Voice to Government and Closing the Gap in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Providing information in Indigenous languages not available through any other media channel.
- Connecting non-Indigenous communities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and culture, developing greater understanding and building stronger relationships.
- Providing meaningful employment opportunities in urban, regional and remote locations.

Multiple platforms, multiple languages

- The First Nations broadcasting sector delivers programming in over 20 languages nationally.
- Platforms and program activities include radio through sponsorship/advertising announcements, print materials, social media content, music production and content, video and TV, and facilitation of community events.

Local and trusted

- The sector is based in local communities and employs local people as broadcasters and media producers.
- The sector is highly trusted by local communities as evidenced in the 2017 Social Return on Investment analysis of First Nations broadcasters.
- First Nations radio services have high take-up by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander audiences with 80% of people in remote Indigenous communities being regular listeners.



(From 2016 Indigenous Media and Communications Survey)

Calls for Action Summary

On behalf of the First Nations media sector, First Nations Media Australia is calling on the Australian Government to undertake nine actions that will allow the sector to better meet our objectives to:

1. Increase jobs and skills
2. Improve the capacity and sustainability of our industry
3. Enhance social inclusion
4. Preserve culture and language.

Some of the actions require a budget allocation for implementation, others do not, as summarised below:

1	Broadcasting Act reform	Budget neutral
2	Operational and employment funding	\$9m per annum (additional to current \$21m)
3	Live and local expansion program	\$3m per annum
4	Strengthen news services	\$1m per annum
5	Expand training and career pathways programs	\$5m per annum
6	Upgrade infrastructure	\$2m per annum
7	Primary channel for government messaging to First Nations audiences	Budget neutral
8	Preserve archives	\$2m per annum for 5 years
9	Annual content production fund	\$2m per annum

Budget Item Details

1. Broadcasting Act Reform

We are seeking recognition of First Nations broadcasting as a separate licence category under the Broadcasting Services Act 1992 (BSA) to increase professionalism and income generation potential. This action requires amendments to legislation and does not have an associated budget requirement.

Budget request:	\$0
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2. Operational & Employment Funding

Operational funding is currently provided to First Nations media organisations through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS). The funding level for operations has remained virtually unchanged at \$15million per annum since 1996 to spite numerous reviews (*Digital Dreaming Report, 1999; Review of Australian Government Investment in the Indigenous Broadcasting and Media Sector, 2010; More Than Radio – A Community Asset, 2017*) encouraging the Government to increase this base level of funds. One review, conducted by the then Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, acknowledged the static funding level as problematic, but rather than increasing the level of funding instead recommended reducing services, resulting in the discontinuation of funding for television and other media forms in 2006.⁵ Responsibility for all video related costs was diverted to the Indigenous Broadcasting Program and used to support the establishment of NITV. However, audience demand for remote televisions and online services in the current convergent era has seen media organisations continue to generate content despite significantly constrained capacity.

Demand for the \$15million of funding provided annually has increased significantly with significant increases to the number of services broadcasting. There is greater reliance on First Nations media as the primary source of emergency and Government information, particularly in remote areas as commercial and ABC services withdraw operations from regional and remote locations. In 82 regions across the country, First Nations radio is the only radio service available (29 community licensees, 50 TCBLs and 3 retransmission sites). At a further 16 locations, First Nations radio is the only local service available, alongside retransmitted national services from other locations.⁶

⁵ Commonwealth of Australia, *Report on the Review of the Indigenous Broadcasting Program*, Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, May 2007

⁶ ACMA, *Radio and Television Broadcasting Stations*, April 2019 and ACMA *Temporary Community Radio Broadcasting Licenses list*, 1st May 2019

Over the past decade alone, the lack of CPI increase has meant a loss of around \$4million to the sector in real terms as the cost of power, equipment, wages, copyright licence fees and other operational expenses has increased. For example, the operating costs of transmission sites (electricity and lease expenses) increased 49.6 per cent between 2011-12 and 2015-16 across the community broadcasting sector.⁷ Stagnant funding has increased pressure on reserves, resources and personnel, limiting the capacity of First Nations media organisations to absorb income shocks, or address arising opportunities. With a lack of cash reserves, First Nations media organisations are often left with significant cash-flow issues while awaiting the provision of funds in a new financial year. With no contingency funding to address equipment failure and maintenance, these needs are also being met through redirected operational funds.

Compounding this, the Community Broadcasting Program, which provides some supplementary funding to First Nations radio stations, had indexation paused from 2014. Over the five years the indexation pause is in effect, the result is a \$4.024 million reduction in funds in real terms to community broadcasting which has ripple effects for First Nations broadcasters. In 2015-16 a sample group of 31 Indigenous licensed radio stations surveyed reported collective income of \$11,230,451, an average increase of 36 per cent over the five years since 2011-12. However collective expenditure levels for the same group of stations amounted to \$12,052,982, an increase of 69 per cent in the five years since 2011-12 and an income to expenditure percentage of 107 per cent. It is also worth noting income levels for rural and remote radio stations actually fell by 7 per cent between 2007-08 and 2015-16, while stations in metropolitan and regional areas experienced some income increase, but not enough to keep pace with rising operational expenses.⁸ These statistics demonstrate an unsustainable trend in income to expenditure levels, but stagnant funding levels restrict opportunities for First Nations broadcasters to grow their self-generated funding capacity.

In a content-driven media environment, First Nations media organisations have had to prioritise broadcast personnel while making some tough decisions in relation to support personnel. The result is a hollowing of administrative resources across the industry, which leaves gaps in career pathways into management positions and lack of human resources for business development, fundraising, promotion, financial management and programming oversight. In many cases, a Station Manager is expected to carry out all of these roles. Similarly, individual broadcasters in the First Nations media sector are delivering the same amount of content that would a team of 4 or 5 people would be working on at an equivalent mainstream service.

⁷ Survey Matters, *Financial Health of Community Radio Survey*, Community Broadcasting Association of Australia, October 2017

⁸ Survey Matters, *Financial Health of Community Radio Survey*, Community Broadcasting Association of Australia, October 2017

Indigenous broadcast services receive approximately 75 per cent of their funding through the Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet and an additional 8 per cent from other government sources.⁹ Government funding has been supplemented by sponsorship and social entrepreneurship income sources. Over the past 15 years, economic pressure has resulted in shrinking sponsorship income with Indigenous licensed radio stations reporting a reduction from an average 248 minutes of sponsorship per week in 2011-12 to 97 minutes per week in 2015-16, with an average revenue rate of \$10 per minute.¹⁰ Unlike other community broadcasters, Indigenous licensed radio stations have not been able to turn to their audiences for financial support. Membership/subscriber revenue for Indigenous stations is just \$1 per member (on average) as compared to an average \$38 per member across the wider community broadcasting sector, with audiences for some license types (fine music/educational) paying up to \$66 per member to support their preferred station.¹¹ Societal and socio-economic pressures mean that First Nations broadcasters can't supplement other revenue streams in this way. Social Ventures Australia found that First Nations media organisations have demonstrated their capacity to self-generate revenue through other social entrepreneur activities (such as revenue from video production), but are constrained by the current minimum resourcing levels allowing only for the maintenance of essential services with no provision for staffing to diversify activities.¹²

An additional \$6million per annum was allocation as operational funding in 2006, bringing the total operational funding provided to our sector to \$21million annually. However, this funding represents the evolution of Community Development and Employment Programme (CDEP) funding, which was later administered through First Nations media organisations as National Jobs Package support for both full-time and casual wages.¹³ Therefore it does not address the issue of inadequate operational funding.

We request the Government provide an additional \$9million per annum, bringing the total amount of operational funding provided to support the approximately 43 organisations delivering radio, television and online services to \$30million per annum. This includes:

- \$4million to address CPI;
- \$1.4million for job shadowing and mentor programs to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander personnel into management and leadership roles;

⁹ Social Ventures Australia, *More Than Radio – a community asset: Social Return on Investment Analyses of Indigenous Broadcasting Services*, 2017

¹⁰ Survey Matters, *Financial Health of Community Radio Survey*, Community Broadcasting Association of Australia, October 2017

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Social Ventures Australia, *More Than Radio – a community asset: Social Return on Investment Analyses of Indigenous Broadcasting Services*, 2017

¹³ Stevens, N, *Review of the Australian Government Investment in the Indigenous Broadcasting and Media Sector*, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Canberra, 2010

- \$2.6million to support activities that increase organisational sustainability and reduce reliance on Government funding with funds potentially drawn from the Department of Jobs and Small Business; and
- \$1million to expand existing operations to increase the impact and social value of our services within communities.

The requested increase for operational and employment funding would bring the total allocation for this purpose to \$30million annually. By comparison with international equivalents, this is a modest request. For example, Canada Media Fund's Aboriginal Program distributes \$85million to support Inuit media annually and the \$13.3million distributed to just 21 Maori radio stations in New Zealand through Te Mangai Paho. It's worth noting that additional funding support available for Canadian Aboriginal media organisations to apply for to support convergence, diverse languages, experimental and innovative productions.

The Canada Media Fund envelope totals \$325million per annum (Canadian dollars).¹⁴ This was an increased amount in 2017-18 from the previous \$219million level on the basis of an Evaluation of the Aboriginal People's Program conducted by the Government of Canada, which recommended funding to the Aboriginal broadcast program be increased due to the favourable social value outcomes produced since 2009-10.¹⁵ In addition to the funds distributed through the Canada Media Fund, the Department of Canadian Heritage provides funding for the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation with a budget that fluctuates between \$2.5m-\$3.5million annually.

Te Mangai Paho, distributed a total \$59.1million in funding to First Nations media organisations in New Zealand in 2017-18 with \$2.4million supporting digital and new media formats, \$1million to Maori language and culture programs and \$39.9million support Maori television programs in addition to the funding support provided to Maori radio.¹⁶ Similar to Canada, the amounts allocated to support Maori broadcasting in 2017-18 were increased from 2016-17 levels due to the favourable outcomes. A recent review released in October 2018 suggests these funding levels will be increased further by the New Zealand Government in 2019.¹⁷ On a cost-per-service basis, our funding request is exceptionally modest by comparison to our international counterparts.

Budget request:	\$9million per annum
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¹⁴ Canada Media Fund, *2018-19 Program Commitment Allocation*, <https://cmf-fmc.ca/getattachment/615afdb6-0b07-4e6f-bf5d-a25c00be6192/Breakdown-of-the-Program-Budget.aspx>

¹⁵ Government of Canada, *Evaluation of the Aboriginal Peoples Program 2009-10 to 2013-14*, Evaluation Services Directorate, March 30, 2016, <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/corporate/publications/evaluations/aboriginal-peoples-program-2016.html#a1>

¹⁶ Te Mangai Paho, *Annual Report 2017/18*, https://www.tmp.govt.nz/uploads/data_object/file/data/3569/TeMa_ngaiPa_ho_Annual_Report_2018_Lay_FA_Web_LR.pdf

¹⁷ <https://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/morningreport/audio/2018667176/maori-media-optimistic-review-will-boost-funding>

3. Live and Local Expansion Program

Although the 137 Indigenous licensed radio services operating across Australia reach approximately 43 per cent of First Nations the population, there is still approximately 53 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who do not have access to a First Nations radio service. This includes some capital cities (Adelaide, Canberra and Hobart) and many major regional centres. First Nations broadcasters provide a primary service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and people. They are the preferred channel for First Nations audiences due to their cultural appropriateness, local relevance and positive representation of First Nations issues as compared with mainstream media.

In his 1984 report to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Eric Willmot recommended Government *“accepts a special responsibility for the promotion and protection of Aboriginal cultural identity in ways considered appropriate by Aborigines and this should be reflected in the broadcasting and telecommunication policies. There must also be recognition in broadcasting policies of the contribution that Aboriginal heritage can make to the emergence of a unique Australian culture.”*¹⁸ We purport a dedicated service is required in all regions with high Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations to address the Government's social cohesion objectives, and to reduce racism. 34 per cent of Australians in the general community say their main source of information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is the media (as compared to 16 per cent who answered school or other research), yet only 10 per cent of Australians believe the media portrays Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians positively.¹⁹ First Nations radio directly addresses this issue, with 48 per cent of surveyed listeners indicating their primary reason for listening for positive stories on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.²⁰

Links between access to culturally relevant local information through media, increased cultural pride and improved social outcomes are well-established in academic literature. We seek to provide that opportunity to people living in on the Central Coast of NSW, Dubbo, Newcastle, Tamworth, Wagga Wagga, Wollongong, the Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast, Toowoomba, Canberra, Adelaide and Hobart through establishing licensed First Nations radio services in some of these regions and others. We believe the hub and spoke model currently used by Remote Indigenous Media Organisations (RIMOs) could be a cost-efficient way of establishing these services, requiring resourcing of a radio studio enabling local broadcasting and regional network contributions. This model works effectively in remote locations, allows for the possibility of co-location with other community organisations and

¹⁸ Willmot, E, *Out of the Silent Land*, Report of the Task Force on Aboriginal and Islander Broadcasting Communications, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Canberra, 1984

¹⁹ Reconciliation Australia, *Reconciliation Insights: Media*, Australian Reconciliation Barometer, 2016

²⁰ McNair yellowSquares, *Indigenous Communications and Media Survey*, 2016, <https://www.firstnationsmedia.org.au/projects/indigenous-communications-and-media-survey-2016>

provides opportunities for local employment through the First Nations radio network footprint.

The establishment of services in Canberra, Hobart and Adelaide will require an annual investment of \$1.2million. An investment of a further \$1.8million would allow for the establishment of a further 10 services in regional areas. Funding for this purpose could be drawn from the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Cities and Regional Development.

Budget request:	\$3million per annum
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4. Strengthen news services

Reporting on First Nations matters by mainstream media is often problematic, taking a deficit approach and reiterating negative stereotypes, despite journalism protocols. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are largely excluded from the news-making process and commentary. The First Nations media sector has addressed this issue in part by establishing the National Indigenous Radio Service (NIRS) and providing some locally relevant news reporting services in individual regions (eg. CAAMA's *Strong Voices* current affairs program). These radio news services are constrained in their capacity to train community journalists and provide truly national services. First Nations broadcasting and media has a vital role in providing balanced and culturally appropriate reporting in order to promote awareness and understanding among non-Indigenous Australians, participate in the truth-telling process, encourage participation in democratic processes and promote reconciliation. In this way, First Nations news reporting is public interest journalism.

To achieve these aims, our sector has developed a program to:

- Build regional journalism capacity and increase employment opportunities where other media outlets are withdrawing from regional areas;
- Address a market gap for regional and remote participation in our national news paradigm;
- Increase efficiencies in existing news services through collaboration;
- Provide opportunity for organisations to tailor news content as relevant to the region;
- Provide opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reporters to access and share professionally produced content, including sovereign messages and issues at a national level;
- Provide accessible information for all audiences to engage with news, as told from a First Nations perspective; and
- Develop partnerships for the delivery of multi-platform news content (radio, television, print and online) to provide real careers for community journalists remaining in regional areas, adding value to the Government's existing investment with NITV.

To achieve these aims, we require an allocation of funding to:

- train and mentor emerging First Nations journalists (\$200,000, potentially drawn from Department of Education funds)
- develop existing news sharing infrastructure to be responsive to emerging audience demands for multiplatform content (\$50,000)
- operational funding to support a network of regional journalists and manage content distribution (\$170,000)
- resources and reference materials (\$25,000)
- employment support for First Nations journalists to provide regular news reports (\$555,000 potentially drawn from Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business funds)

The program to strengthen news services aligns with many of the submissions made to the Senate Enquiry into Public Interest Journalism. It also aligns with similar policy considerations globally. For example, the Canadian House of Commons' Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage enquiry resulted in recommendations for the Canadian Government to establish an Indigenous journalism initiative with the purpose of training Indigenous journalists to cover Indigenous government institutions and other relevant issues across Canada as part of their Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls for action implementation. The report recommended greater support through the Canada Media Fund program to support Indigenous news reporting.²¹ In northern Europe, Pietikäinen identified a "Sámi Way" of doing journalism. This, she argued, was deeply entrenched in local cultural values and worldviews, in particular as Indigenous news media made it "possible to practise culturally typical ways of communication, to recognize experiences, perspectives and topics often disregarded by other media."²² Her research prompted significant increases in Indigenous journalism in Norway and Sweden with funding provided through the Samediggi Parliament. Universities in Norway are currently advertising courses to meet the rising demand for Indigenous journalism among the Sami community in Scandanavia, recognising it as a 'growing field'.²³ Our program proposal aligns directly with international policy to support minority journalism and a diversity of voices in news reporting.

While the program proposed by First Nations Media Australia is scalable in nature, we believe a national approach will yield the impact within the national news dialogue in a way that activities in isolated regions has not; and will allow for cost-efficiencies from building on existing activities.

Budget request:	\$1 million per annum
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²¹ Fry, H, *Disruption: Change and Churning in Canada's Media Landscape*, Report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, House of Commons, 42nd Parliament, First Session, June 2017

²² Pietikäinen, S, *Broadcasting Indigenous Voices: Sami Minorit Media Production*, European Journal of Communications, Sage Publications, 2008

<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.869.1919&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

²³ <http://sammas.no/en/studier/juo-master-sami-journalism-indigenous-perspective>

5. Expand training and career pathways programs

The First Nations media sector currently resources 43 organisations and over 120 licensed services with between 500-600 staff, including part-time and casual employees, working in organisations in urban, regional and remote locations.²⁴ Approximately 28 per cent of those positions are full time, with 72 per cent are part-time or casual.²⁵ There is industry desire to increase activities to a scale that would require twice the number of staff that are currently employed across the sector, but budget constraints currently prevent the training of new staff or the capacity to provide career opportunities to people who do undertake training. The Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research has developed an *Employment and Skills Development Strategy* in consultation with the sector which outlines a career development action plan, policy recommendations and assistance for First Nations media organisations to meet the IAS Indigenous employment target. It recommends investment in training and targeted employment programs such as traineeships and pathways roles in areas such as management, training, project management, production, technical and IT services.²⁶

In its *Australia's Tech Future* report, the Australian Government identified, "while it is hard to predict the skills in demand in the future, we know employers are looking for workers who have a combination of transferrable digital skills and collaborative, creative, communication and entrepreneurial and problem-solving skills."²⁷ The First Nations media industry is well-placed to expand on existing activities to generate new employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in these roles, as well as prepare workers with the skills to meet these emerging business demands.

The ratio of Indigenous staff employed at First Nations media organisations is currently approx. 79 per cent. There are currently about 46 FNMOs or other organisations which are funded by NIAA for delivery of broadcasting activities, of which 22 have a non-Indigenous manager. Due to the risk associated with changing the Manager role in a small organisation, this becomes an issue for small organisations where total staff are often below 9 employees.²⁸ The Jumbunna Institute reports, "A holistic approach which facilitates the development of best practice models for overcoming unemployment in Indigenous communities. Good leadership and partnerships between media organisations, stakeholders and government are factors that will

²⁴ Clague, P, *Employment and Skills Development Strategy Report*, Jumbunna Institute of Indigenous Education and Research, December 2018

²⁵ Survey Matters, *Financial Health of Community Radio Survey*, Community Broadcasting Association of Australia, October 2017

²⁶ Clague, P, *Employment and Skills Development Strategy Report*, Jumbunna Institute of Indigenous Education and Research, December 2018

²⁷ Department of Industry, Science and Technology, *Australia's Tech Future*, Australian Government, Canberra, December 2018 <https://www.industry.gov.au/data-and-publications/australias-tech-future>

²⁸ Ibid.

significantly contribute to job readiness and the skill capacity of Indigenous peoples in the media sector.”²⁹

Employment arrangements vary with some workers still supported by low-level wage rates established essentially as ‘work for the dole’ type arrangements under the CDEP and National Jobs Package schemes. The First Nations media industry produces professional media services, and yet our workers are often receiving wages that are inconsistent with modern Award rates. These low wages produce challenges for staff retention as skilled and experienced media practitioners seek higher paying jobs in other sectors and offer little incentive for career advancement within the sector.³⁰ Only 12 per cent of staff at Indigenous licensed radio stations are aged 26 years or younger.³¹ But there is opportunity to train and employ young people within the sector with additional funding support.

The award wage for a radio broadcaster is \$916.60 per week.³² The average salary for a Radio Announcers in Australia is \$52,803 annually (approx. \$1,015 weekly). However, radio announcers working in capital cities reported earnings significantly above this level; Sydney (47.9% more), Perth (42%) and Brisbane (32.6%).³³ The minimum award wage for a full-time employee working in the commercial radio industry (which includes support staff and trainees) is \$740.80 per week.³⁴ By comparison, CDP workers receive \$290 per week for working 25 hours (around \$11.60 per hour) and must work continuously in order to receive payments.³⁵ As CDP is the only available support for remote media organisations to employ broadcasters in communities, in effect this means broadcasters are working for below minimum wage rates. This creates a barrier to both the recruitment and retention of personnel.

The First Nations media sector produces an effective opportunity to:

- engage youth in meaningful careers, identified as a key economic development objective in the Governments 2018 Closing the Gap Refresh;³⁶
- address high unemployment rates in First Nations communities;
- develop job-ready skills in a range of communication industry roles;
- respond to emerging roles in a rapidly changing convergent media;

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Clague, P, *Employment and Skills Development Strategy Report*, Jumbunna Institute of Indigenous Education and Research, December 2018

³¹ Survey Matters, *Financial Health of Community Radio Survey*, Community Broadcasting Association of Australia, October 2017

³² FairWork Ombudsman, Pay Guide: Broadcasting, Recorded Entertainment and Cinemas Award 2010, Australian Government, effective 1st July 2019. <file:///Users/admin/Downloads/broadcasting-recorded-entertainment-and-cinemas-award-ma000091-pay-guide.pdf>

³³ Payscale, Average Radio Announcer Salary in Australia, 2019
https://www.payscale.com/research/AU/Job=Radio_Announcer/Salary

³⁴ Fuller, David, Commercial Radio Industrial Awards – Rates of Pay, Commercial Radio Australia, 2019
<http://www.commercialradio.com.au/hr-training/commercial-radio-awards-pay-rates>

³⁵ Burton-Bradley, Robert, Inside the CDP, NITV News, 2nd November 2017, <https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/nitv-news/article/2017/11/01/inside-cdp-allegations-fake-work-unsafe-conditions-and-payments-dead-people>

³⁶ <http://closingthegaprefresh.pmc.gov.au/targets>

- build on the culture and language skills already held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; and
- increase efficiency for Government and non-Government funded projects through support for coordination roles to oversee project-based activities.

Social Ventures Australia found that First Nations media organisations strengthen employment outcomes through offering flexible working arrangements in culturally safe environments, creating work opportunities that are aligned with the interests of individuals and build pride.³⁷ First Nations media organisations present a range of options for career development, including but not limited to accredited training. Mentorships, cadetships, project-based training, digital inclusion activities, archiving and coordination roles each provide opportunities to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with our sector and support people to develop real and meaningful jobs.

To expand our training and career pathways programs, we request:

- \$2.2million per annum to bring wage levels in line with Award rates;
- \$200k per annum toward the implementation of our Workforce Development Action Plan;
- \$500k per annum toward formalized training activities for sector-wide skills development;
- \$600k per annum toward mentorship, job shadowing and non-accredited training support; and
- \$1.5million per annum toward employment support for new mid-level positions to establish career pathways between broadcaster and executive levels (approx. 20 positions nationally).

Support for these activities could potentially be drawn from the Department of Education funds.

Budget request:	\$5million per annum
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6. Upgrade infrastructure

Due to a lack of capital equipment and repair and maintenance funding over the past 15 years, upgrades to broadcasting, transmission and digital networking equipment has been ad hoc and often driven by emergency replacements to restore basic transmission for essential emergency services. Transmission equipment is particularly exposed to damage from extreme weather events (cyclone, lightning, fires). Increased occurrences of extreme weather conditions not only intensifies wear and tear on broadcast equipment, but also produces greater reliance on First Nations broadcasters for localised, emergency information, particularly in the many

³⁷ Social Ventures Australia, *More Than Radio – a community asset: Social Return on Investment Analyses of Indigenous Broadcasting Services*, 2017

regions where First Nations broadcasting organisations are the only local media servicing the area.

Broadcasting, transmission and digital networking equipment has not been upgraded in a coordinated program since the rollout of the Indigenous Remote Radio Replacement Program in 2007-09 which invested \$3.3million in a two-phase replacement of obsolete radio equipment. Contingency funding previously available through the Indigenous Broadcasting Program has not been available since 2015-16. Access to very limited supplementary funds for equipment through the Community Broadcasting Foundation has become increasingly competitive with mainstream community broadcasters experiencing similar pressures on broadcast equipment. This lack of access to funds for capital expenditure has meant some essential items have been drawn from operational funds, while many First Nations media organisations have not had the necessary resources available to maintain their existing infrastructure effectively, let alone meet the rapid technology changes emerging through smart technologies.

Smart technologies provide for cost-effective network management, monitoring of remote broadcast facilities and staff training and support which offers efficiencies in repairs and maintenance activities and reduced travel costs. The use of modern IP network technologies and broadcast software systems has advantages for radio services with multiple broadcast sites, enabling targeted, location specific information and sponsorship messages. This has the potential to enhance audience engagement with relevant information campaigns. In this way, investment in network infrastructure upgrades increases the return-on-investment for Government campaign activities and previous equipment investment. Providing funding support for the introduction of smart technologies directly aligns with the first of five priority outcomes set by the Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet for Indigenous broadcasting and media for the 2017-2020 financial years: *"1. Use of new technology to improve content and audience reach and reduce costs."*³⁸

Associated with the equipment upgrade need is the failure of a number of remote radio studios to meet basic workplace health and safety standards. Inadequate building conditions, including lack of toilets and air-conditioning, were identified in around 19 of the 103 studios audited in 2014, a number that has likely grown since the audit was conducted. Poor working conditions affects employment retention. The condition of buildings also puts them at risk of vandalism and consequent disruption to broadcasting services.

There is some shared infrastructure between telecommunications and broadcasting that can be used to build on existing government investment in broadcast infrastructure and to generate maximum public value from new infrastructure

³⁸ Social Ventures Australia, *More Than Radio – a community asset: Social Return on Investment Analyses of Indigenous Broadcasting Services*, 2017

rollouts. First Nations media organisations may be called upon for technical skills, capacity building activities and infrastructure requirements as part of the Government's proposed Indigenous Digital Inclusion Plan announced in March 2019.³⁹ If this results in a funded program, it would present a potential opportunity to grow communications jobs through the provision of IT, technical and training expertise.

While minimum standards for workplace conditions are enshrined in OH&S requirements, minimum industry standards for transmission hubs and IP implementation needs the establishment of an industry benchmark. We request an investment of funds, potentially drawn from the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Cities and Regional Development, for the following activities:

- \$100k to update our 2014 audit and establish industry benchmarks for IP networking requirements;
- \$600k toward the repair and maintenance of existing infrastructure;
- \$650k toward the upgrade of remote broadcasting studios to meet minimum OH&S requirements; and
- \$650k toward the rollout of smart technologies to increase industry efficiency.

Budget request:

\$2million per annum

7. Primary channel for government messaging to First Nations audiences

Our sector seeks to be recognised as the primary channel for the production and distribution of First Nations targeted information campaigns. Currently, many Government information campaigns are delivered through non-Indigenous organisations with limited understanding of effective messaging for First Nations audiences. Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander radio is the preferred source for news and Government information.⁴⁰ Audiences do *want* to receive relevant information through First Nations media sources. And the First Nations media industry has the capacity to produce professional content that aligns with cultural protocols, reach nearly 50 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and where appropriate, present material in local languages. First Nations Media Australia calls on the Australian Government to establish policy identifying First Nations media organisations as the provider of First Nations focused Government information campaigns. This action is budget neutral.

Budget request:

\$0

³⁹ See Recommendation 8 of the Government's [response](#) to the 2018 Regional Telecommunications Review.

⁴⁰ <https://www.firstnationsmedia.org.au/projects/indigenous-communications-and-media-survey-2016>

8. Preserve archives

The unique and culturally important media archives of First Nations broadcasting and media organisations are at risk of loss due to the unavoidable deterioration of magnetic tape and the lack of resourcing for digitisation and archive management. There is now consensus among audiovisual archives internationally that magnetic tape that is not digitised by 2025 will in most cases be lost forever. Preservation and enhancement of the remote First Nations audiovisual collections is a vital activity for the cultural heritage and wellbeing of local communities and as a contribution to the Indigenous cultural heritage and truth-telling processes for the nation.

First Nations media organisations have been making audio and video recordings for around 40 years. These collections include significant events in our national history, First Nations perspectives on key events and important content for the maintenance of culture. They provide an unbroken record of language usage, cultural knowledge, traditional skills, community events, family histories and oral histories. The collections have high value for education, cultural identity, language teaching, cultural and linguistic heritage and for researchers. These recordings are held by First Nations media organisations in a range of formats and under a range of environmental and storage conditions. The cultural importance and sensitivity of the content necessarily means that the collections need to be maintained on-country under the custodianship of cultural law keepers. Social Ventures Australia noted the trust Indigenous Broadcasting Services have developed within communities makes them well placed to manage *“a cultural archive of national significance.”*⁴¹

Localised archiving work is cost-effective, enables local decision-making about access and media handling and identifying cultural metadata for cataloguing, and provides meaningful employment opportunities in remote and regional locations. In response to concerns about the potential loss of First Nations archives, we initiated a Reference Group in October 2013 made up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives and major State/Territory and federal Government agencies (including the National Film & Sound Archive and AIATSIS). The Reference Group's workings resulted in the development of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Audiovisual Collections Plan in 2014. The plan outlines agreed standardised methods and metadata cataloguing for a digitisation process. Over 30 organisations are identified as beneficiaries of the Plan.

However digitisation progress has been hampered by a lack of funding for the equipment, software, training, employment and support needed to manage digitisation and maintenance activities on-country. The New Zealand Government is resolving the same issues by supporting Te Mangai Paho to fund a digital archiving projects for \$575,000 annually to travel to different regions and archive magnetic

⁴¹Social Ventures Australia, *More Than Radio – a community asset: Social Return on Investment Analyses of Indigenous Broadcasting Services*, 2017

tape materials.⁴² Our solution to digitisation requirements is similar to the activities currently being carried out to preserve Maori media archives, in that it has an overarching national strategy combined with mobile equipment that can move around communities and digitise content on location, provide training to individuals to maintain and grow collections moving forward and leave collections to be managed by custodians for appropriate community access using open source software management tools. We just need to cover a much larger geographic region than our New Zealand equivalents. We propose identifying 6 collection sites and 3 mobile digitisation suites to digitise sensitive materials on country, moving location on a weekly basis. Each of these locations/mobile suites would provide employment opportunities for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people, as would the ongoing management of community collections. Funding is also required for digital storage equipment.

Due to the finite deadline for digitising content currently stored on magnetic tape, this project requires budget support for five years only. However it is urgent in nature. To save the back-catalogue of recordings collected over the past 40+ years from permanent loss, we require an investment of \$2million per annum for five years, making a total investment of \$10million and preserving an archive of priceless history. This funding would be used toward digitisation equipment, the employment of Community Archive workers and the resourcing of outsourced digitisation services for high-risk material.

Budget request:	\$2million per annum for five years
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9. Annual content production fund

Content production is vital to the maintenance and preservation of First Nations languages and culture. First Nations produced content also serves to enhance social cohesion, truth-telling, education and understanding of First Nations culture across the wider Australian society. Eighty-one per cent of Indigenous licensed radio stations report regular engagement with marginalised or disadvantaged communities through their program content.⁴³ Social Ventures Australia noted the core business of Indigenous Broadcast Services is to broadcast information, news, interviews, music, community events and stories to large audiences and that content funding allows our services to “*keep culture alive by creating culturally rich environments and by recording, preserving and broadcasting cultural in an appropriate way. IBSs also play a crucial role in increasing community cohesion, building community resilience and supporting people into meaningful employment.*”⁴⁴

⁴² Te Mangai Paho, *Annual Report 2016-17 & Annual Report 2017-18*

⁴³ Survey Matters, *Community Broadcasting Sector Programming and Community Development Census*, Community Broadcasting Association of Australia, June 2017

⁴⁴ Social Ventures Australia, *More Than Radio – a community asset: Social Return on Investment Analyses of Indigenous Broadcasting Services*, 2017

Proportions of locally produced content broadcast on Indigenous licensed radio stations have increased from 64 per cent in 2002-03 to 90 per cent in 2015-16. This contradicts trends in the general community broadcasting sector in which locally produced content has dropped from an average 74 per cent to 72 per cent over the same time period.⁴⁵ These figures demonstrate a rising interest in producing content. Yet live programs only represent 33 per cent of content broadcast on radio, supplemented by locally produced music automation systems. However, funding provisions have not kept pace with audience and industry demand, placing increased pressure on operational funds and constricting the production capacity of content broadcast. The capacity for content production in the sector, other than for live radio shows, has been significantly compromised by:

- The loss of video content funding through changes to the Indigenous Broadcasting Program in 2007
- Inadequate funding under the IAS for content production, which is currently supposed to be drawn from already over-extended operational funds
- Limited, competitive content funding provided through the Community Broadcasting Foundation has remained static for five years at \$1.1 million which is also accessible to general licensed community radio stations. Hours of Indigenous content broadcast on general community radio stations increased by 43 per cent between 2011-12 and 2015-16.⁴⁶ Static content funding provided by the Department of Communications and the Arts to this program means this increase has placed significant pressure on the competitive nature of content support for Indigenous-produced content across the whole community broadcasting sector.

Alternative sources of funding for First Nations media content, beyond NITV for video content, are limited. Local producers are unlikely to have the level of broadcast credits required for funding through screen agencies and need support to develop their own skills and provide on-the-job training and mentoring for others. Similarly, existing levels of funding rarely allow for producing the cross-platform content, podcasts and online content modern audiences seek. The production of radio and television content projects varies between about \$5,000-\$60,000 depending on the scope and production requirements of the series or documentary.⁴⁷ An investment of \$2million per annum would likely fund around 50-60 radio and video projects per annum to produce one-off documentaries, interviews, series and increase audience engagement through increased outside broadcast activity and multiplatform content delivery. Increased funding support for content production exponentially

⁴⁵ Survey Matters, *Community Broadcasting Sector Programming and Community Development Census*, Community Broadcasting Association of Australia, June 2017

⁴⁶ Survey Matters, *Community Broadcasting Sector Programming and Community Development Census*, Community Broadcasting Association of Australia, June 2017

⁴⁷ Community Broadcasting Foundation, funded projects: <https://cbf.org.au/grants/successful/>

increases the capacity of First Nations broadcasters to increase social value through engagement with stakeholders, musicians, artists and the Australian Government.⁴⁸

The First Nations media sector has a number of distribution platforms for making content available to audiences, including the VAST satellite delivery of community television services in remote Australia through ICTV, the indigiTUBE national online platform, the National Indigenous Radio Services which distributes radio content for rebroadcasting nationally and localised and networked television and radio services. The Jumbunna Institute reports, *“Establishing ongoing opportunities for hands-on media production and broadcasting is the best way to build skills and create jobs, while creating a repository of significant multi-media content. Increased funding for content production in the areas of radio documentaries/podcasts, dramas, news and current affairs, language and cultural content, music and so on will build capacity of First Nations media organisations to employ and training local media practitioners to produce, broadcast and archive locally significant stories for the community and where relevant to national and even international audiences.”*⁴⁹ Therefore, we request an annual, competitive content fund to enable increased production outputs, improved production values and integrated training for First Nations medias producers to extend content production capacity in our sector.

Budget request:

\$2million per annum

⁴⁸ Social Ventures Australia, *More Than Radio – a community asset: Social Return on Investment Analyses of Indigenous Broadcasting Services*, 2017

⁴⁹ Clague, P, *Employment and Skills Development Strategy Report*, Jumbunna Institute of Indigenous Education and Research, December 2018

Total budget request

Key:

Optimal funding requirement to produce outcomes described in this submission.

Absolute minimum requirement (no shading) to meet existing obligations, or reduced program scope for new activities.

Item	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Addition to current Operational & Employment funding levels	\$9m	\$9m	\$9m	\$9m	\$9m	\$9m
Addition to current Operational & Employment funding levels (indexation and employment transition funding only, no self-sustainability or expanded activities included)	\$5.4m	\$5.4m	\$4m	\$4m	\$4.2m	\$4.4m
Live and Local Expansion Program	\$3m	\$3m	\$3m	\$3m	\$3m	\$3m
Live and Local Expansion Program (capital cities only)	\$1.2m	\$1.2m	\$1.2m	\$1.2m	\$1.2m	\$1.2m
Strengthen News Services	\$1m	\$1m	\$1m	\$1m	\$1m	\$1m
Strengthen News Services (reduced reach version)	\$0.7m	\$0.7m	\$0.7m	\$0.7m	\$0.7m	\$0.7m
Expand training & career pathways programs	\$5m	\$5m	\$5m	\$5m	\$5m	\$5m
Expand training & career pathways programs (award wages, strategy implementation and minimal training only)	\$2.9m	\$2.9m	\$2.9m	\$2.9m	\$2.9m	\$2.9m
Upgrade infrastructure	\$2m	\$2m	\$2m	\$2m	\$2m	\$2m
Maintain infrastructure (no smart technologies introduced)	\$1.35m	\$1.35m	\$1.35m	\$1.35m	\$1.35m	\$1.35m
Preserve archives	\$2m	\$2m	\$2m	\$2m	\$2m	-
Preserve archives (reduced scope, 3 sites, 1 mobile unit)	\$1.6m	\$1.6m	\$1.6m	\$1.6m	\$1.6m	
Annual content fund	\$2m	\$2m	\$2m	\$2m	\$2m	\$2m
Annual content fund (reduced scope, approx. 30 projects)	\$1.3m	\$1.3m	\$1.3m	\$1.3m	\$1.3m	\$1.3m
TOTAL BUDGET REQUEST	\$24m	\$24m	\$24m	\$24m	\$22m	\$22m
MINIMUM REQUIREMENT	\$14.45m	\$14.45m	\$13.05m	\$13.05m	\$11.65m	\$11.85m