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Broadcasting Act Reform. Recognise First Nations broadcasting as a separate category of broadcasting under the Broadcasting Services Act 1992.

THE ISSUE

The inclusion of First Nations broadcasting in the category of community broadcasting negatively impacts First Nations broadcasters access to spectrum, their participation in the co-regulatory processes of the broadcasting industry and their financial position.

The First Nations broadcasting sector has lobbied for decades for a separate licence category. First Nations broadcasters provide a primary service to First Nations communities and people. They are the preferred channel for First Nations audiences due to their cultural appropriateness and for their positive representation of First Nations issues as compared to the negative stereotyping in mainstream media. As representatives of the First Nations of Australia they have a right under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People to their own media.

Through their inclusion in the BSA under the community broadcasting category, First Nations broadcasters are required to compete for spectrum with community broadcasters. This has led to significant gaps in the provision of First Nations broadcasting in capital cities such as Adelaide, Canberra and Hobart, as well as in regional areas with large First Nations populations.

The lack of separate categorisation has meant that First Nations broadcasting has been marginalised in consultations and discussions on broadcasting regulation and reform as led by the Department of Communications and the Arts. There are impacts of regulation on First Nations broadcasting that need specific consideration.

Furthermore, the inclusion of First Nations broadcasting under the community broadcasting category of the BSA reduces the sustainability of First Nations broadcasting due to the limitations on sponsorship (maximum 5 minutes per hour). First Nations audiences are generally characterised by low income levels. Alternative income models of fees based membership and community fund raising are extremely limited in their applicability to First Nations broadcasting.

A separate category of First Nations broadcasting would enable alternative income streams through opening up advertising and sponsorship at an appropriate level.

IRCA calls for:

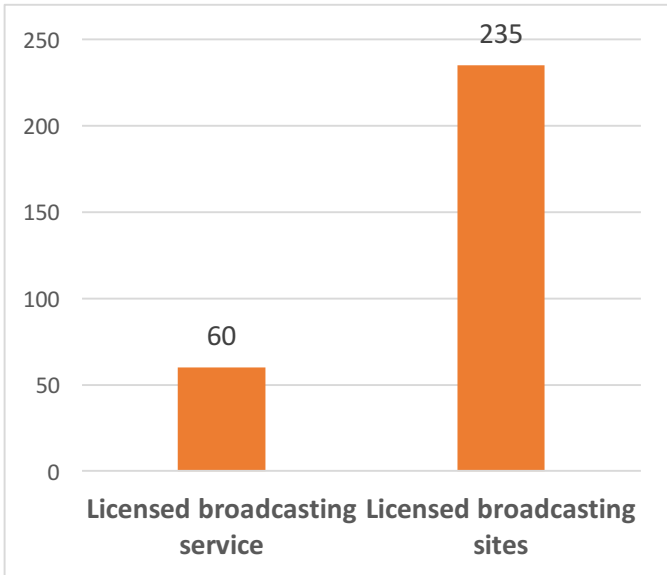
- The Australian Government to reform the Broadcasting Services Act 1992 to provide for a separate broadcaster license category for First Nations broadcasting and to make the necessary regulatory changes for spectrum allocation and codes of practice.
- The relocation of First Nations broadcasting policy and funding management to the Department of Communications and the Arts.

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Budget request: Budget neutral

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CONTEXT



ACMA licence statistics: First Nations broadcasting services and First Nations broadcast sites (transmission & retransmission)



Why First Nations people listen to their radio stations

