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Operational & Employment Funding. Address the need for adequate operational and employment funding of First Nations broadcasting and media services.

THE ISSUE

The current funding levels allocated to First Nations media organisations are inadequate to maintain essential broadcasting and media services, employ and train a professional workforce, and undertake necessary technological changes as a result of convergence. Coupled with reduced sponsorship income, many organisations are under significant financial stress.

Communications and media are essential and primary services in First Nations communities. It is also a growing field of employment for First Nations peoples. However, this has not been acknowledged in government policy, severely impacting on the funding available to these services under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy and its predecessors. The 1999 'Digital Dreaming' report noted the operational funding for the sector was "demonstrably inadequate" and needed to be increased from \$12 million (as it was at that time) to \$22.35 million.

Despite a significant increase in the number of First Nations media organisations across Australia, and demand for funding more than doubling since 1996, the funding level for operations have remained virtually unchanged at about \$15 million per annum for the last decade. The lack of CPI increases over those years has meant a loss of around \$3.6 million to the sector in real terms.

Since 2009, employment funding of \$6 million per annum has been provided additional to operational funding. However, this does not address the issue of inadequate operational funding. Nor does it address the expansion of funding needed to meet the Australian Government's requirement for 90% First Nations employment in Indigenous Advancement Strategy funded organisations.

Nevertheless, despite these funding challenges the sector has returned \$2.87 of social and cultural value for each dollar invested as shown in the 2017 Social Return on Investment Study of Indigenous broadcasting service. That study found that First Nations broadcasters are contributing towards more of the Government's priorities than is currently recognised. The study also noted that there is a minimum resourcing threshold that must be maintained to enable Indigenous Broadcasting Services and their staff to diversify their activities and seek alternative income streams.

The generally low socio-economic status markets within which First Nations broadcasters operate are not conducive to membership fund raising, and as community broadcasters they are limited to 5 minutes in the hour for income producing sponsorship. The financial sustainability of the First Nations broadcasting and media sector needs urgent attention through the provision of adequate funding.

IRCA calls for a funding increase to \$30 million per annum, indexed annually for CPI, for operational and employment funding of the existing First Nations broadcasting organisations.

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Budget request: Additional \$9 million per annum to provide for \$30 million per annum funding.

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CONTEXT

First Nations broadcasting and media locations

- 103 Remote Indigenous Broadcasting Services
- 26 regional and urban radio services
- 8 Remote Indigenous Media Organisations
- 1 national radio news service
- 1 public TV broadcaster
- 3 community TV broadcasters
- 1 commercial TV service

First Nations broadcasting and media reach

Remote, Regional and Urban radio services reaches:

- Around 320,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons, including around 101,000 very hard to reach people in remote Indigenous communities.
- Approximately 47% of the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population.

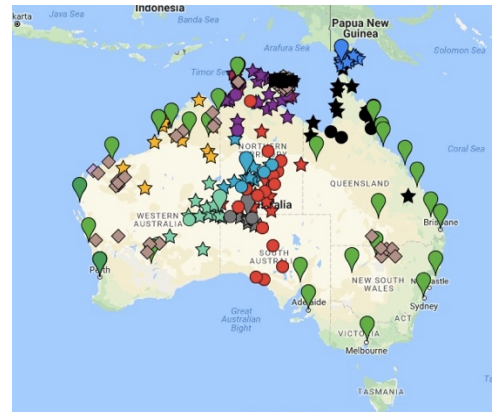


Image 1 First Nations radio services
<https://irca.net.au/our-industry/radio-services>

First Nations radio listenership¹

- 32% Nationally
- 20% Urban
- 24% Regional
- 63% Remote
- 80% Very Remote

First Nations radio engagement (nationally)²

For positive stories on First Nations people	48%	Makes me feel included	34%
For the First Nations focus in programs/news & current affairs	48%	First Nations voices/personalities	39%
To hear people talking in my own language	28%	I think of it as my station	32%

¹ Figures from 2016 Indigenous Media and Communications Survey conducted by McNair Ingenuity and IRCA.
<https://irca.net.au/projects/indigenous-communications-and-media-survey-2016>

² ibid

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FIRST NATIONS BROADCASTING SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT KEY FINDINGS

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

1. Indigenous Broadcasting Services provide much more than radio – they are community assets that contribute to strengthening culture, community development and the local economy

- Indigenous Broadcasting Services effectively execute their core business of broadcasting Indigenous information, news, interviews, music, community events and stories to large audiences.
- They also achieve a wide range of valuable outcomes that go much further than simply delivering a radio service.
- Indigenous Broadcasting Services core funding enables them to help keep culture alive by creating culturally rich environments and by recording, preserving and broadcasting culture in an appropriate way.
- Indigenous Broadcasting Services also play a crucial role increasing community cohesion, building community resilience and supporting people into meaningful employment.

2. The outcomes achieved by Indigenous Broadcasting Services appear consistent but the activities they undertake are varied

- All three Indigenous Broadcasting Services analysed are delivering outcomes consistent with the four themes of communication, strengthening culture, stronger communities and increased employment and participation.
- But their approach to achieving those outcomes vary dramatically; from a Claymation video studio in Yuendumu to puppets delivering public safety messages in Port Augusta and a programme supporting young musicians to develop their careers in Sydney.

3. The activities Indigenous Broadcasting Services undertake are tailored to the specific needs of the community which helps build trust amongst the community

- Indigenous Broadcasting Services must have the trust and support of the community in order to operate effectively. Without that trust and support, Indigenous Broadcasting Services would not have such significant and engaged listener bases.
- Community needs vary greatly and Indigenous Broadcasting Services understand and respond to those community needs, which in turn builds the necessary community trust. Examples of activities that have built that trust include managing a cultural archive of national significance, facilitating job skills training and CV writing support and running Indigenous festivals for 35,000 Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to celebrate culture.
- Indigenous Broadcasting Services further build trust through a close connection to the community. All three Indigenous Broadcasting Services analysed are controlled and largely staffed by local Indigenous people, they have welcoming physical premises and cultivate an active network of connections to members of the community.

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FIRST NATIONS BROADCASTING SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT KEY FINDINGS

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

- Across all analyses, the stakeholder group experiencing the greatest share of value are listeners and community members.
- Other stakeholders experiencing significant value from Indigenous Broadcasting Services include employees, volunteers, Indigenous musicians, artists and the Australian Government. Value was split relatively evenly across outcome themes, which reinforces the interrelationship of outcomes.
- All three Indigenous Broadcasting Services are achieving substantial value. Different ratios are influenced by the size of an IBS's listener base, the level of investment the IBS receives, the relatively high costs of servicing a remote area and the investment a RIMO must make to service multiple RIBS.

5. Indigenous Broadcasting Services are contributing towards more of the Government's priorities than is currently realised

- The Australian Government's Indigenous Broadcasting and Media Priorities are being achieved by Indigenous Broadcasting Services and nearly all of those priorities can be mapped to material outcomes identified in this analysis.
- Indigenous Broadcasting Services are contributing to more of the Australian Government's IAS objectives than is currently realised. Indigenous Broadcasting Services contribute to all of the objectives under the Culture and Capability programme – including culture, community development and reconciliation – as well as priorities under other programme streams through employment, support for education and wellbeing outcomes and investment in remote Australia.

6. Indigenous Broadcasting Services can leverage government funds to generate additional revenue – and greater impact – but only if they have sufficient resourcing available

- The Indigenous Broadcasting Services receive approximately 75 per cent of their funding through PM&C and an additional 8 per cent from other government sources (at the state and federal level).
- Indigenous Broadcasting Services have demonstrated their capacity to generate their own revenue but there is a minimum resourcing threshold that must be maintained to enable Indigenous Broadcasting Services and their staff to diversify their activities and funding.

For more information see <https://irca.net.au/about/social-value-study-2017>