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Expand Training & Career Pathways Programs for the First Nations broadcasting and media sector.

THE ISSUES

1. Low level of employment in First Nations broadcasting and media due to restricted funding, plus challenges in establishing First Nations career pathways in regional and remote areas.
2. Wage levels in funded programs are inconsistent with modern Award rates.

The First Nations broadcasting and media sector provides an effective opportunity to address high unemployment rates in First Nations communities, especially with emerging roles in a rapidly changing convergent media industry. It provides a culturally appropriate employment environment that builds on the culture and language skills already held by First Nations peoples. The 2017 Social Return on Investment study of First Nations broadcasters found that these organisations strengthen employment through:

- Offering flexible working arrangements in culturally safe environments.
- Creating work opportunities that are aligned with the interests of individuals.
- Building pride through being connected with these organisations.



The Australian Government's target of 90% First Nations people in Indigenous Advancement Strategy funded organisations provides a target that now requires a funding commitment for expansion of employment funding. There has been no substantive increase in funding to the sector for nearly 20 years. Operational funding for the the approximately one hundred and twenty (120) Indigenous remote, regional and urban radio stations has stayed steady at around \$15 million per annum and is unable to cater for expanded employment. Employment funding of \$6 million per annum now integrated into Indigenous broadcasting funding under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy has been welcome but insufficient to enable the 90% target to be met across the board.

Expanding employment needs to be underpinned by a concerted, accredited training effort. The target of 90% First Nations employment requires targeted career pathways development programs and ongoing support for First Nations people to progress to coordination, management and technical roles. IRCA is currently developing a **Skills Development and Employment Strategy** consistent with First Nations learning and delivery needs. This will provide a framework for employment expansion, addressing new and emerging media jobs, job retention and management career pathways development. The strategy development is being led by key First Nations people in the broadcasting and media sector.

IRCA calls for funding for implementation of IRCA's training and employment strategy.

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Budget request: \$5 million per annum

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CONTEXT

IRCA Skills Development and Employment Strategy

The Strategy is due for completion in July 2018. The Strategy is being coordinated by Pauline Clague and Matthew Walsh of the Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research of the University of Technology, Sydney. The team is working to IRCA's brief, namely:

- Development of a Skills Development and Employment Strategy for the First Nations media industry, that includes:
 - Audit- Undertake survey of existing employment and training within the sector, and current plans/strategies by member organisations and stakeholders
 - Employment and Career Development Action Plan
 - Training and Skills Development Action Plan
 - Strategy and action plan templates for member orgs to address the IAS Indigenous Employment Target policy
 - Recommendations of future projects and policy actions

Employment rates

In 2014, two hundred and seven (207) remote First Nations people were employed across one hundred and fourteen (114) remote Indigenous media services. Most of these were working on work-for-the-dole salary levels under the National Jobs Program. This is a very low rate of employment reflecting the low levels of funding for the sector. The wage rates are not consistent with national Awards and do not reflect the levels of training, experience, cultural knowledge and language capability.

Profile of First Nations broadcasting and media employers

First Nation broadcasters reach nearly 50% of the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. The sector comprises:

- 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 47% of the First Nations population.
 - A wide range of First Nations news and current affairs services 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, National Indigenous Times, Land Rights News
- A regional satellite TV service reaching 240,000 remote households and a free to air national TV service.
- Over 230 radio broadcast sites across Australia.
- Around 35 First Nations community owned and managed not-for-profit media organisations.

A map of First Nations broadcasters is available at <https://www.irca.net.au/our-industry/radio-services>