

6

**Upgrade Infrastructure.** Upgrade broadcasting and digital infrastructure to meet current industry standards and work health and safety requirements.

## THE ISSUES

1. Broadcasting, transmission and digital networking equipment has not been upgraded in a coordinated program since the IRRR of 2007-2009.
2. Broadcasting facilities in many remote communities are not compliant with workplace health and safety requirements.

A targeted broadcasting, infrastructure and digital network upgrade program is needed to bring First Nations radio services up to industry standard. Lack of a capital equipment and R&M funding program over the last 15 years, has hampered the First Nations broadcasting sector in migrating to new IT based technologies. The last coordinated upgrade program was the Indigenous Remote Radio Replacement Program 2007-2009. Contingency funding previously available through Australian Government Indigenous broadcasting funding has not been available since 2015/2016.

Changes in the broadcasting and transmission industry are characterised by increasing utilisation of Internet technologies and by rapid advances especially in relation to smart technologies. Smart technologies provide for cost-effective network management and monitoring of remote broadcast facilities saving R&M and travel costs for remote Indigenous media organisations. In addition, the utilisation 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.

Associated with the equipment upgrade need, is the failure of a number of remote radio studios (Remote Indigenous Broadcasting Services (RIBS)) to meet workplace health and standards requirements. Inadequate building conditions, including lack of toilets, were identified in around 19 of the 103 RIBS in the 2014 Audit of Remote Indigenous Broadcasting Services. Employment retention is affected by poor working conditions, with the condition of buildings also putting them at risk of vandalism and consequent disruption to broadcasting services.

At the community level, remote Indigenous communities are experiencing failures in the Direct-to-Home satellite TV and radio services delivered through VAST. Up to 1/3 of households have no access to VAST. Funding of a rectification program is urgently needed.

### Definitions:

- Smart technologies are those capable of adapting and responding automatically to changes in its operating environment and providing data to support operational decision making.

### IRCA calls for:

- Funding of a broadcasting and digital infrastructure and equipment upgrade program.
- Funding of a facilities upgrade program.
- Provision of a R&M program, through remote housing, for VAST DTH installations in remote communities.

Indigenous Remote Communications  
Association  
2/70 Elder Street Alice Springs NT 0870.  
Ph 08 8952 6465  
w [www.irca.net.au](http://www.irca.net.au)

**Budget request: \$2 million per annum**

**6 Upgrade Infrastructure.** Upgrade broadcasting and digital infrastructure to meet current industry standards and work health and safety requirements.

**CONTEXT**

**First Nations Broadcasting and Media Radio Services**

- 103 Remote Indigenous Broadcasting Services
- 26 regional and urban radio services
- 8 Remote Indigenous Media Organisations
- 1 national radio news service

**2014 RIMO and RIBS Audit**

RIMO	No of RIBs buildings needing significant R&M	RIMO	No of RIBs buildings needing significant R&M
CAAMA	10	QRAM	4
PAKAM	3	TEABBA	2

**Indigenous Remote Radio Replacement Program**

The Indigenous Remote Radio Replacement (IRRR) Project was initiated through a commitment of \$3.3 million under the Australian Government's Backing Indigenous Ability (BIA) program.

**VAST DTH Installation Status Remote Indigenous Communities 2016**

Working and in use	Doesn't work, not in use or don't have	Don't know
64%	34%	2%

Source: Remote Indigenous Communications and Media Survey, 2016. <https://www.irca.net.au/projects/indigenous-communications-and-media-survey-2016>

**Examples of RIBS Buildings**



Bidyadanga RIBS



Yungnora RIBS