

8

Preserve Archives. Conserve, preserve and maintain First Nations Archives to sustain culture and language and create meaningful employment.

THE ISSUE

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.

First Nations media organisations have been making audio and video recordings in First Nations communities since the early 1980s with a significant component of their archives in magnetic tape format. The recordings are held by these 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. On-country archiving work is more cost-effective, enabling local decision-making about access and media handling, and identifying cultural metadata for cataloguing.

Stretching from the early 1980s through to the present the collections provide an unbroken record of language usage, cultural knowledge, traditional skills, community events, family histories and oral histories. The collections have a high value for education, cultural identity, language teaching, cultural and linguistic heritage, and for researchers into First Nations media history.

The collections are important for the provision of culturally meaningful employment for First Nations people living in remote communities, and have the potential, with additional resourcing, to expand employment. Preservation and enhancement of the remote First Nations audiovisual collections is a vital activity for the cultural heritage and well being of local communities and as a contribution to the Indigenous cultural heritage of the nation.

A digitisation program, including collection management support, training and digitisation equipment, is urgently needed to enable the digitisation of significant media in the collections. There are over 30 organisations that would benefit from the provision of archiving funding.

IRCA has led the development of the National Plan for Preserving First Nations Audiovisual Collections. The Plan has broad support from First Nations media organisations and partners. Progress has been made on methods and standards. However, digitisation progress has been hampered by lack of funding for the equipment, software, training, employment and support needed to manage digitisation and preservation on-country.

IRCA calls on the Australian Government to fund a coordinated funding program over 5 years to enable digitisation of high priority items in First Nations media collections.

Indigenous Remote Communications
Association
2/70 Elder Street Alice Springs NT 0870.
Ph 08 8952 6465
w www.irca.net.au

Budget request: \$2 million per annum over 5 years. \$10 million total

Preserve Archives. Conserve, preserve and maintain First Nations Archives to sustain culture and language and create meaningful employment.

CONTEXT

National Plan for Preserving First Nations Audiovisual Collections

In response to concerns about the loss of First Nations archives, the Indigenous Remote Communications Association initiated a Reference Group in October 2013 of First Nations representatives and major State/Territory/Australian collecting agencies to work towards the development of a Plan that would set the pathway for ensuring that the significant cultural and language resources held in the collections is not lost to the communities or the nation.



The Reference Group's work during 2014 resulted in the development of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Audiovisual Collections Plan and its release in November 2014. The Plan can be located at <https://irca.net.au/projects/archiving-project/about-archiving-plan>

Where are the Collections?

First Nations audiovisual collections are located across remote, regional and urban Australia. Examples of the collections are:

1. **The collections of the Remote Indigenous Media Organisations (RIMOs).** RIMOs coordinate Remote Indigenous Broadcasting Services, also known as BRACS. RIMOs provide coordination services to 106 RIBS and media support to another 30 remote communities. The RIMOs are:
 - Central Australia Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA). Alice Springs, NT
 - Ngaanyatjarra Media (NG Media). Irrunytju, WA
 - Pilbara and Kimberley Aboriginal Media (PAKAM). Broome, WA
 - Pintupi Anmatjerre Warlpiri Media (PAW Media). Yuendumu, NT.
 - Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Media (PY Media). Umuwa, NT
 - Queensland Remote Aboriginal Media (QRAM). Cairns, Qld.
 - Top End Aboriginal Bush Broadcasting Association Australia (TEABBA). Darwin, NT.
 - Torres Strait Islander Media Association (TSIMA). Thursday Island, Qld.
2. The collections of **regional and urban radio stations** such as:
 - 6DBY Derby.
 - Koori Radio.
 - Noongar Radio.
3. The collections of **specialist remote community museums and cultural centres** such as:
 - Buku-Larnggay Mulka Centre. Yirrkala, NT.
 - Kanamkek-Yile Ngala Museum. Wadeye, NT.
4. **Specialist organisations and programs** working directly with remote communities to build and further develop remote audiovisual collections. These include:
 - Ara Irititja Archival Project.
 - Community Stories program of the Northern Territory Library.
 - Living Archive of Aboriginal Languages ARC project.
 - Strehlow Research Centre. Alice Springs.