

CBF Consultation Paper

Developing a Supporting Content Framework



**Response of the Indigenous Remote
Communications Association**



December 2017



This submission is made by the Indigenous Remote Communications Association (IRCA) following sector consultation. It is expected that some radio services, RIBS and RIMOs will make individual submissions in which case the IRCA Submission should not be taken to displace those submissions.

About the Indigenous Remote Communications Association

The Indigenous Remote Communications Association (IRCA) is the peak body for Indigenous media and communications. It was founded in 2001 as the peak body for remote Indigenous media and communications. In late 2016 it transitioned to the national peak body for First Nations broadcasting, media and communications.

Up to 105 Remote Indigenous Broadcasting Services (RIBS), 33 additional licensed retransmission sites across Australia, 8 Remote Indigenous Media Organisations (RIMOs) and 28 urban and regional First Nations radio services are eligible for representation by IRCA.

About the First Nations broadcasting and media sector

First Nations broadcasters are not-for-profit community organisations providing a primary and essential service to their communities. They reach nearly 50% of the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, but are prevented from providing a primary radio service to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples due to a lack of funding.

First Nations broadcasters and media producers also connect non-Indigenous communities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and culture, developing greater understanding and building stronger relationships.



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 Block
 - 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.
- Is a multimillion dollar industry with over 35 First Nations community owned and managed not for profit media organisations.
- Holds the capacity to be a preferred supplier for all government messaging to our communities.
- Is the most relevant and appropriate service with the highest listenership, community engagement and local ownership of all media services.
- Is delivered in the first language of many remote peoples.
- In remote communities, is the most reliable and ubiquitous radio and media services.

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Submission

1. **Beginning points: self-representation, language, diversity, strength and growth**

The Indigenous Remote Communications Association (IRCA) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Consultation Paper on *Developing a Supporting Content Framework*. The Consultation Paper has high relevance to the First Nations broadcasting sector particularly in relation to the news and current affairs component.

Before addressing the specific matters in the Consultation Paper, it is important that the role of First Nations broadcasters as the primary providers of news and current affairs to their communities is clearly understood. At a purely operational level, the delivery of a First Nations news service is a requirement for First Nations media organisations receiving funding through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy. At a strategic level, the delivery of a First Nations news service is a statement of the rights of First Nations peoples to establish their own media in their own languages and to have access to all forms of non-indigenous media without discrimination.

Statement of Principle

First Nations broadcasters are the primary providers of First Nations news and current affairs to their communities and are the key providers of mainstream news and current affairs to their communities in forms that are appropriate and relevant.

It is of the utmost importance that the First Nations broadcasting sector is supported in building its capacity in gathering news stories, developing journalist skills, news presentation skills, developing platforms to share content within the sector, as well as make available, where appropriate, to other sectors.



The way in which First Nations issues are represented in non-Indigenous media is of vital interest to First Nations peoples. **First Nations peoples and issues are consistently misrepresented in news and current affairs.** Recommendation 208 of the 1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Report specifically noted “that many Aboriginal people throughout Australia express disappointment in the portrayal of Aboriginal people by the media”¹.

The poor representation in non-Indigenous media directly impacts on the development and implementation of government Indigenous policy². Mainstream reporting often takes a deficit approach focusing on the “problem of First Nations peoples” rather than addressing the many successes, or in fact the structural inequalities arising from dispossession and racism that underpin the so-called “problem”. A study of First Nations policy development and its intersection with mainstream media reporting found that:

- “Between 1988 and 2008, Australia’s news media paid **very selective attention to Indigenous policy issues, unless they were the site of controversy or politically salient.**
- Indigenous broadcasting policy received virtually no public attention, while health and bilingual education received occasional intense media attention. Newspaper journalists told the story of Indigenous health policy **through a small number of routine and predictable news frames.**³”

In this context, First Nations peoples highly value First Nations broadcasting content. The 2016 Remote Indigenous Communities Media and Communications Survey identified positive stories

¹ <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/IndigLRes/rciadic/national/vol5/5.html#Heading5>

² Kerry McCallum (ed). 2012. The media and Indigenous policy: how news media reporting and mediatized practice impact on Indigenous policy. p4. Available at http://www.canberra.edu.au/about-uc/faculties/arts-design/attachments2/pdf/MIP-Report_Combined_Final.pdf

³ Kerry McCallum (ed). 2012. The media and Indigenous policy: how news media reporting and mediatized practice impact on Indigenous policy. p.vii. Available at http://www.canberra.edu.au/about-uc/faculties/arts-design/attachments2/pdf/MIP-Report_Combined_Final.pdf



and First Nations focus in the top three reasons for listening to First Nations broadcasters. Importantly, having content delivered in local languages featured in the top 6 reasons.

Table 1 Reasons for listening

1	For positive Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stories 77%
2	Hearing about own people and community 67%
3	For the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander focus in programs and news 56%
4	Hearing people talk in own language 56%
5	Supports local employment 51%
6	Feel proud when listening 51%

The 2016 Survey evidenced news as important content for First Nations audiences, with local news and national news rating in the top 6 content preferences as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Content preferences

1	Music 92%
2	Community events 76%
3	Local news 73%
4	National news 66%
5	Live sports broadcasts 60%
6	Local interviews 55%

The First Nations broadcasting sector has developed significant news and current affairs content, programming and capacity including but not limited to:

- 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



First Nations TV producers are also looking to increase their provision of news, as well as expand the drawing area for sourcing news and current affairs content.

A diverse range of delivery platforms is in place in the First Nations sector, for news and current affairs through local terrestrial broadcasts, online services, satellite delivered services, streaming content, apps and podcasts.

Building from this, is a groundswell amongst First Nations broadcasters to grow and strengthen the capacity of the sector in journalism and to create appropriate platforms, protocols and processes for sharing content.

IRCA does not support any changes that would homogenise and mainstream news and current affairs provision or that would reduce opportunities for the further growth and strengthening of the First Nations news and current affairs capability.



2. Specific responses to CBF consultation questions on news and current affairs programming

Which programs do you consider to be flagship community broadcasting news and current affairs programming? What evidence is there to support this view?

IRCA does not support this approach to funding. We consider it has the potential to narrow the range of news and current affairs programs and homogenise news and current affairs programming.

Rather than identifying individual programs as flagships, we strongly encourage the CBF to address the needs of specific community broadcasting sectors, such as the First Nations sector, at a whole of sector level to grow and sustain the news and current affairs programming efforts of a given sector.

Should the CBF treat funding for flagship community broadcasting news and current affairs programming as invitational grants? Why, or why not?

IRCA sees this suggestion as having the potential to narrow, mainstream and homogenise the range of news and current affairs programming and consequently does not support this approach.

IRCA would prefer to see the CBF invite news and current affairs programming proposals from the First Nations sector, encouraging broadcasters and news services to propose innovative approaches to news gathering, content management and delivery platforms that will enhance the overall news capacity of the sector

Should the CBF put funding for flagship community broadcasting news and current affairs programming to public tender? Why, or why not?

IRCA does not support this approach given the generalised nature of “public tender”. As set out in the *Beginning Points* section, there are a range of issues to do with the detrimental framing and impact of news and current affairs on First Nations peoples. Capacity, strength,



experience and cost effectiveness that tend to guide public tender selections are certainly important, but the significant issues for First Nations peoples with regard to news and current affairs need to be addressed by building further capacity **within** the First Nations sector.

If additional funds are made available to the CBF to support the production of news and current affairs, should the CBF put the project/s out to public tender?

Additional funding for news and current affairs would of course be most welcome. Whilst IRCA is not supportive of a public tender process as per our previous response, a targeted news and current affairs funding pool for the First Nations sector would have significant benefits. IRCA proposes that where such funding becomes available that, subject to further consultation, it be made available for components such as:

- Training for community journalists
- Attachments and mentoring programs with quality news organisations including First Nations news organisations and Indigenous units in national broadcasters
- Collaboration and sharing platforms
- News desk editorial support
- News gathering and production equipment
- Support for news staff costs

Do you have any other views or information that you would like the CBF to consider in relation to supporting journalism in the community broadcasting sector?

Please refer to the Beginning Points section. However, we reiterate the principle that:

First Nations broadcasters are the primary providers of First Nations news and current affairs to their communities and are the key providers of mainstream news and current affairs to their communities in forms that are appropriate and relevant.



3. Specific responses to CBF consultation questions on ongoing and emerging content

Do you think that the CBF should introduce a set maximum number of funded content projects per organisation? If so, what should the maximum be? If not, why not?

IRCA understands the difficulty that faces CBF with limited funding availability. We are not opposed to a cap on the number of funded projects per funding year. A cap of 5 per funding year as per previous arrangements would seem fair. Alternatively, the CBF may wish to consider setting a minimum percentage for new content projects.

What do you think about the suggested funding cycle model for ongoing programs or recurrent content projects? What are the positives and negatives from your perspective?

IRCA does not support the suggested funding cycle. The nature of programming in the First Nations sector, including its very local relevance in many cases, is not conducive to attracting the kind of alternative funding to the level that the CBF envisages in the suggested model. Good programs could easily cease simply due to the application of a formula regardless of continuing need.

We encourage the CBF instead to require that applicants for continuing programs provide information that:

- Sets out evidence of ongoing need and/or the program's effectiveness for relevant performance or operational areas
- includes some level of outcomes evaluation within the capacity of the applicant.

If a funding cycle were to be introduced, what would you suggest for the length of the cycle?

IRCA does not support the funding cycle suggestion.



Do you have any other views or information that you would like the CBF to consider in relation to supporting established content projects in the community broadcasting sector?

IRCA encourages the CBF to support innovation in and expansion of content sharing platforms.

Do you have any other views or information that you would like the CBF to consider in relation to seeding support for emerging content projects in the community broadcasting sector?

No.