
CALL FOR ACTION 6

Adequate funding for maintenance of self-help radio services in remote Australia

Issue: Maintenance of ABC radio services and retransmitted Remote Indigenous Media Organisation regional radio services provided through self-help services is no longer funded. This has left many communities without a channel for emergency service warnings, with the problem compounded by increasing failures in the Direct-To-Home digital switchover implementation.

Maintenance funding for approximately twenty-four (24) Indigenous very remote and sixty-two (62) ABC mainland radio services is no longer available. These services have been historically operated as self-help radio services in remote Indigenous communities. Local government services that provided maintenance funding for ABC self-help services have been restructured over the last ten years. Consequently, local and regional councils have progressively ceased funding infrastructure, programs and services for which there is no dedicated funding line. Remote Indigenous Media Organisations (RIMOs) that provided maintenance services for their regional Indigenous radio service in self-help sites, have had their funding reduced significantly in real terms and are no longer able to stretch to maintaining these specific services.

Cultural, civic and emergency information provision to communities with these retransmitted self-help services is at risk as the equipment and infrastructure deteriorates over time.

The Direct to Home radio service implemented under the Digital Switchover program in remote Indigenous communities is increasingly compromised due to weather impact on satellite streams, accidental damage, loss of satellite access cards and vandalism.

There has been a consequent decline in the quality of radio services in the remote locations in question, with vital information at risk of not being received.

IRCA calls for:

Provision of urgent funding at a minimum of \$172,000 per annum, adjusted for CPI annually, for a regionally coordinated repair and maintenance program for radio self-help sites. The program to be provided through Remote Indigenous Media Organisations.