
CALL FOR ACTION 8

Roll-out of effective broadband to remote Australia

Issue

The lack of access to effective terrestrial and mobile broadband, as well as the lack of affordable broadband where it is available, is hampering:

- 1. The development of a 21st century Indigenous media and communications sector.**
- 2. Digital inclusion of remote Indigenous community members.**

Remote Indigenous media organisations are important broadcasting and media services supporting targeted health, education and other government messaging in language to remote communities. Their capacity to fulfil their information and community development roles is being hampered significantly by inadequate broadband in remote and regional Australia.

Digital technologies provide the opportunity for RIBS and RIMOs to significantly enhance their operations through actions such as:

- *Effective monitoring of local RIBS operations* by RIMO technical staff creating cost savings for technical servicing.
- *Targeted information campaigns* for individual remote communities.
- *A high quality live content feed* from anywhere a 3/4G service is available field.
- *Uploading culturally rich video and multimedia content* to TV services such as ICTV and NITV providing for community well-being through affirmation of the strength of language and culture.

Remote Indigenous people are by far the most digitally excluded demographic group in Australia, and the 'divide' is likely to increase as the rest of Australia gets connected to high-speed broadband and government services (e.g. MyGov) increasingly move online. Dedicated activities are needed to increase awareness and IT skills, develop relevant online content and apps, community access facilities and to provide means of affordable pre-paid access to NBN through WiFi distribution. Broadband speeds in most remote communities are currently frustratingly slow preventing access to basic online services. There is a high level of congestion on most satellite services, particularly the interim NBN satellite. The launch of NBN's Sky Muster has not yet alleviated concerns regarding roll out timeframes and congestion during peak times. Remote communities may be waiting years to get their service installed with no affordable interim solution while they're waiting.

IRCA calls for:

- **Focus on remote community sites in the black-spot mobile remediation commitments announced in May 2016.**
- **Provision of community WiFi for enabling affordable access to NBN.**
- **Programs to provide skills development, access facilities and relevant content to improve digital inclusion in remote Indigenous communities.**