



Discussion paper



Communications – a key element of Closing the Gap

First Nations Media Australia

June 2019





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1. Executive Summary

Key proposal: inclusion of communications as a specific target area within the new Closing the Gap framework and associated Schedules.

First Nations Media Australia is the national peak body for First Nations media and communications. This paper provides background information to support First Nations Media Australia's position that 'Communications' should be included as a target area within a renewed Closing the Gap Framework for 2019-2029 to address a number of significant structural barriers to Closing the Gap.

This proposed target area addresses the mechanisms and capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to interact with services. We define communications in this context as follows:

1. **Digital Inclusion** - digital literacy/skills, affordability, awareness, online safety – which is increasingly being considered a basic human right and is essential to social inclusion;
2. **Access to Appropriate Online Services** - in tele-health, justice, education and training, Centrelink/ MyGov, banking, and other essential services where face-to-face delivery is not available locally. This requires free access, support with setup and training and helpdesk services for language speakers;
3. **Telecommunications Access** – equity of access to communications infrastructure and appropriate services for: household or mobile telephony, broadband/internet, last mile sharing (eg WiFi) and/or community access information and communication technology equipment/facilities;
4. **Access to relevant news, information services and emergency warnings** – reliable and trusted media services delivered via appropriate means (radio, TV, online, print) and available in language where required;
5. **Appropriate delivery of media and information services** - This addresses Article 16 of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which outlines the right to participate in First Nations-owned and controlled media services and to have access to all forms of non-

Indigenous media without discrimination. Effective, community-controlled media services empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders' self-determination, enable self-representation and promote social cohesion in the wider community.

Each of these categories, which are expanded in more detail within this paper, include a number of measurable targets. Collectively, they are a critical tool for improvements against the other Closing the Gap objectives.

2. Communications – A Key Priority

Effective communication is essential to the ongoing viability of First Nations communities. In the rapid transition to e-government and online service delivery and retail, communications technologies can reduce the tyranny of distance by providing people with access to services (e.g. banking, health, education, libraries, news, entertainment, shopping).

Communication expands opportunities for social and economic development, enterprise, employment and connection to the broader economy – each being areas of focus to address economic disadvantage. Communication enables dispersed families to remain connected and Australia's unique First Nations culture and languages to continue and develop.

Communication is a fundamental component of self-determination and social inclusion. It is a strength-based action that supports connection, belonging, expression of identity and understanding within the broader Australian population.

There is significant work to be done to close the digital gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians. This includes:

1. rollout of infrastructure to provide access to communications technologies;
2. building awareness within First Nations communities of relevant online services and uses;
3. developing appropriate resources and support mechanisms to help digital ability and address issues of cyber-safety and online fraud;
4. supporting First Nations sovereignty in truth-telling processes; and
5. supporting access to and participation in First Nations media as a means of meeting Closing the Gap targets across a range of areas.

Together, these activities form the basis of Communications as a target in the Closing the Gap framework.

A. Digital Inclusion

As context, when the National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA) was approved by COAG (November 2008) only 64% of Australian households had internet access (a marked increase from 16% in 1998)¹. The iPhone was launched that year and social media was an emerging concept just starting to be embraced by younger demographics. Apps were yet to be adopted. Very few remote Indigenous communities had mobile or WiFi access. The internet was yet to become integral to accessing information.

In the ten years since the NIRA was developed, Government and non-government services have increasingly moved online.² Mobile banking emerged in the 2010s, MySpace was sold to NewsCorp in 2011, LinkedIn, Instagram and a plethora of online meeting services emerged. Five years after the NIRA was approved, online lodgement of tax returns began (2013), followed by the launch of MyGov in July 2014 to manage Medicare, Centrelink and other government service interactions. Today, digital connectivity is required to access banking, health, education, libraries, news, entertainment, shopping and other services that underpin connection to the broader economy. The context in which we approach a new Closing the Gap framework in 2019 is quite different to the technological landscape of 2008.

Digital inclusion is recognised as one of the key social justice challenges facing policy makers and communities worldwide. It is about using technology as a channel to improve skills, to enhance quality of life, to drive education, access employment opportunities and promote social and economic wellbeing.³ In 2019, digital inclusion equates to social inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia, and is essential to Closing the Gap.

With remote Indigenous people still the most digitally excluded population group in Australia, none of the current target areas address the impediments to accessing affordable communications and information services in terms of

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Social Trends 2008:

<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Chapter10002008>

² Government services have been transitioning to online delivery under the Digital Transformation Strategy

³ Digital Inclusion Index, <https://digitalinclusionindex.org.au/about/about-digital-inclusion/>

infrastructure, capacity and service reach. These factors each contribute to a 'digital gap' for First Nations Australians, which can be addressed through a Communications target focused on the mechanics of information technology.

A new framework on Closing the Gap must consider the technological advancements made in Australian society since 2008. It should recognise the impact of access to information and digital inclusion on health and wellbeing outcomes. It should establish digital inclusion as a primary function of Closing the Gap and a measurable target to monitor progress against.

B. Access to Online Services

While the NIRA (through the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Public Internet Access) acknowledged internet access as background to Closing the Gap, digital inclusion was not understood as a structural barrier to accessing key services for health, education, justice, employment, banking, emergency information and support and more.

A refreshed Closing the Gap agreement provides a key opportunity to address a structural and skills issue that directly impacts the ability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to firstly, engage with internet delivered services and resources that enhance employment and educational opportunities and secondly, ensure access to online government (MyGov) services and safety nets.

For this reason, the Broadband for the Bush Alliance has been calling for a dedicated Remote Telecommunications Policy and Strategy (RTPS) for some years, which should include:

- Public Internet access through community WiFi and LTE systems;
- Unmetered access to online government services, banking etc;
- Delivery of a variation on the Mobile Black Spots Program to target remote areas where there is market failure;
- Roll-out of broadband services, including mobile coverage, to priority remote communities; and
- NBN to begin a progressive terrestrial network expansion program to reduce satellite congestion, rain fade and to meet increasing demand by heavy users.

The introduction of a Communications target to the Closing the Gap framework was suggested to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in 2017 as a key recommendation from the Broadband for the Bush Indigenous Focus Day. It was recommended that Indigenous Digital Inclusion be adopted by the COAG as a key performance measure within the Closing the Gap framework. First Nations Media Australia (then known as IRCA) wrote letters to all COAG members urging this be considered as part of the Closing the Gap Framework Review with 17 Indigenous and stakeholder organisations as signatories including; the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN), Batchelor Institute, Central Australia Aboriginal Legal Aid Service, Central Australian Youth Link Up Service, Centre for Appropriate Technology, Desert Knowledge Australia, infoXchange, Internet Australia, Northern Australian Aboriginal Justice Association, Regional Development Australia (NT) and many First Nations media organisations⁴. Given this background, the COAG is aware of the emerging need to support access to online services through previous consultation processes.

C. Telecommunications Access

Today, telecommunications access *is* an essential service and digital inclusion is itself considered a human right. This is of particular importance for people living in communities where there is limited direct access to services. Without affordable digital inclusion, it becomes increasingly difficult for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to live, learn, work, establish businesses and access essential services throughout Australia.

The Australian Government acknowledges digital inclusion and connectivity as a primary requirement for economic and social participation. Digital inclusion initiatives must be supported by accessible and affordable telecommunications. In recent years Government has invested in addressing mobile black spots, providing nbn Skymuster services to remote and regional communities, maintaining the community phone programs, establishing WiFi trials, and a \$50million digital inclusion program aimed at the elderly.

⁴ See copy of letter at broadbandforthebush.com.au/forum-2017/

However, a significant proportion of Australians still do not have access to telecommunications services that the majority take for granted. More than 2.5million Australians are still not online⁵. This includes 24.7% of Indigenous Australian households who do not access the internet from home, compared with the national average of 14.7%. Levels of home internet access for Indigenous Australian households diminish further with remoteness, with up to 45.2% of households in remote and very remote locations unable to access the internet⁶. Research conducted by Telstra in 2013 identified 5 key barriers to digital inclusion: 1) Infrastructure (network reach); 2) Hardware in the home; 3) Affordability (of equipment and services); 4) Propensity (including awareness and relevance); and 5) Appropriate web services (need for user-friendly interfaces, especially for people with limited English and text literacy).

Affordable access is the key to reducing the digital divide and closing the gap on First Nations disparity. The latest Closing the Gap figures highlight the need to address the underlying issue of poverty in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that is contributing to delays in reaching Closing the Gap targets. Centrelink is a vital safety net for this reason. Yet many people are unable to access online or phone-based Centrelink services, resulting in breaches and further loss of income. The 2015 [Dropping off the Edge](#) report notes that low family income is a central factor in shaping individual and family life opportunities, with research evidence indicating that family income is interwoven with the influence of other forms of disadvantage. The report includes lack of internet access as one of 22 forms of disadvantage⁷.

The 2018 research report *Falling Through the Net: The Digital Divide in WA*, by Bankwest Curtin Economic Centre, found 26 per cent of the state's lowest income earners did not have access to the internet in 2016-17, compared to 99 per cent of high-income earners who did⁸. The report found that as digital connectivity was becoming a necessity, the cost of services causes 'digital stress' for lower income

⁵ Digital Inclusion Index, *Digital Inclusion in Australia*, <https://digitalinclusionindex.org.au/about/about-digital-inclusion/>

⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2016

⁷ Vinson, T and Rawsthorne, M (2015). Dropping off the Edge: persistent communal disadvantage in Australia. Jesuit Social Services/Catholic Social Services Australia, page 6-8

⁸ https://www.smh.com.au/national/western-australia/digital-divide-one-in-four-of-wa-s-poorest-don-t-access-the-internet-20180802-p4zv7w.html?utm_source=newsletter_235&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=webnews444

earners, with the poorest 40 per cent of households spending more than 10 per cent of their budget on digital services like internet connections and devices. The report author, Professor Duncan called for 5 training programs to improve digital literacy and providing alternative arrangements to ensure everyone had access to government services online. He argued that a 'whole of state' digital strategy was needed for WA, coordinated across all levels of government with support from the education, industry and community sectors. We believe this need extends nationally.

Communication enables agency. For many remote Indigenous people, a home telephone or mobile telephone service is the highest priority to enable unmediated communications with services and social networks across vast remote regions. Yet, after over 20 years of the Universal Services Obligation, 5 Regional Telecommunications Reviews and numerous other programs, over 30% of remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are still without access to basic home telephony.

A large proportion of small to medium sized remote First Nations communities (population between 50 and 200 approximately) are reliant on a single means of telecommunications access or have no access at all. Typically, where provided, this is a single payphone or community phone, connected via high capacity radio concentrator (HCRC) microwave link or satellite link respectively. The Homelands Review (2015/2016 data) found that around 80% of the approximately 400 occupied outstations/homelands in the Northern Territory (i.e. 320 outstation/homelands) did not have access to mobile coverage and fell into the single means of access category⁹. In total only 20% had mobile compared to approximately 81% of the broader Australian population. A similar situation exists in the Kimberley and North Queensland.

The NT Government submission to the Regional Telecommunications Review 2018 argues that "Aboriginal Australians have low digital inclusion rates, exacerbating disadvantage - more work needs to be done to identify mobile phone and broadband data models that suit the cultural and economic needs of remote

⁹ The Northern Territory Homelands and Outstations Assets and Access Review (CAT, 2016) www.icat.org.au Centre for Appropriate Technology. Alice Springs. 2016

Aboriginal Australians." The NT Government's response also highlights the lack of appropriate infrastructure. Currently, there are 21 remote communities with no mobile phone service, 33 with no fixed internet service and 37 connected to the NBN via unreliable or unsuitable satellite services." (NT Government 2018) At present, the mix of telecommunications services in remote communities includes: payphones, satellite community phones, landline community phones, ADSL, mobile coverage, WiFi hotspots, small cell mobile coverage and, in some NT sites, mobile phone hotspots.

Despite improvements in telecommunications infrastructure, the gap in digital inclusion is widening for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. While there have been improvements in the last three years in telecommunications access in many parts of Australia through the introduction of the nbn Skymuster satellite, the Mobile Black Spots program, State co-investment programs, and the Community Phones Program, these infrastructure projects only go partway to delivering effective digital inclusion outcomes. NBN satellites to date have not been designed to support backhaul of mobile. Ka Band satellite services (i.e. NBN Skymuster) are especially susceptible to rain fade and can therefore be unavailable under heavy rainfall conditions when most needed, particularly in northern Australia where communities can be cut off for up to 5 months of the year due to monsoonal weather. During critical periods of cyclones and storms satellite-delivered communication needed to receive emergency information (by internet, radio or TV) are often unavailable due to rain fade.

The Government now recognizes these structural barriers and recently announced further investment in the mobile black spot program and regional connectivity activities with budget allocations announced for 2019-2021 to help address them. The need for an Indigenous Digital Inclusion Plan was included in the Government's recent response to the Regional Telecommunications Review, although funding has not yet been allocated to this purpose. A new Closing the Gap framework presents an opportunity to align these planned activities with the broader communications target framework.

D. A Strong Community-Controlled Media Industry

Supporting a strong First Nations owned media industry enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to **access to relevant news, information services and emergency warnings and to actively participate in the appropriate delivery of media and information services** for their communities. In this way, a strong First Nations media sector is essential to a new Closing the Gap framework to:

- build bridges with the wider community;
- facilitate complex public dialogue and support initiatives through key community messaging;
- support the expression of identity; and
- share culture.

It also addresses a key structural barrier in portraying essential, accessible and culturally appropriate information to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The First Nations media sector consists of 40 First Nations community owned and managed not-for-profit media organisations reaching 230 regions. Those services reach approximately 320,000 people through terrestrial broadcast, complimented by a National Indigenous Radio Service providing news and current affairs services (NIRS), a regional satellite TV service reaching 240,000 remote households (ICTV), a free to air national TV service (NITV), a nationally distributed newspaper (Koori Mail) and relevant online services (such as indigiTUBE and IndigenousX).

Collectively our sector is integral to communications in Australia as a local and trusted voice, an important means of two-way dialogue through impactful audience engagement and as a primary service in many locations for the delivery of emergency, community safety and health information.

Indigenous broadcast licenses are issued by the Australian Communications & Media Authority (ACMA) under the community media license type. Community broadcasters are united by six guiding principles, including working to:

- Promote harmony and diversity and contribute to an inclusive, cohesive and culturally-diverse Australian community, and

- Pursue the principles of democracy, access and equity, especially for people and issues not adequately represented in other media¹⁰.

First Nations media organisations contribute to Closing the Gap by continually working to address stereotypes in mainstream culture, through strengthening culture within communities and through sharing responses to current events from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' perspective. In this way, they are actively participating in the truth-telling process every day and through our work, empowering local voices to share their own experiences, challenges, strengths and truths.

First Nations media offers a unique opportunity to contribute first-hand responses to political and social events from a First Nations perspective about our nation's history. The First Nations media sector holds a range of evidence from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' perspective that could contribute to acknowledgement and acceptance of the facts of Australia's history.

First Nations media is an essential service. Its practitioners are professionally trained to act as a key conduit for information relevant to communities across the country. First Nations broadcasting and media provide a voice for their communities. They are uniquely placed to hear and share communities' strengths, priorities and concerns. In providing news and information to a community, they provide the community with the information they need¹¹.

The capacity within the First Nations media sector to report and translate information in a manner appropriate to the needs of their local audience will be vital to the establishment of regional assemblies or voices, communication surrounding a referendum or any form of national debate relating to Constitutional Recognition over the coming few years. First Nations media organisations can help facilitate dialogue that is locally relevant or nationally relevant as required.

¹⁰ Community Broadcasting Codes of Practice, <https://www.cbaa.org.au/resource/codes-practice-introduction>

¹¹ <https://www.irca.net.au/about/social-value-study-2017>

First Nations media practitioners are themselves active spokespeople in their communities. The nature of their work fosters ongoing relationships with a broad range of community organisations and stakeholders, alongside direct audience engagement. They are trained to use their networks to draw on expert advice for any given topic. And they have the capacity to do so over a period of ongoing consultation, rather than trying to resolve complex issues within a single public meeting.

First Nations media resonates with audiences as a means of two-way dialogue, with some listeners describing talkback programming as a public meeting in the community through direct participation in radio broadcasts¹². These functions are likely to be increasingly important to both Government and communities as new partnership arrangements for working together on Closing the Gap develop in the coming years.

First Nations media has measurable, demonstrable outcomes in terms of audience reach, employment outcomes and social impact. The sector was recently studied through a Social Return on Investment (SROI) lens by Social Ventures Australia, commissioned by the Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet¹³. This approach identifies values and strengths rather than deficits and creates a positive framing for the work of community organisations.

Overall the SROI study found that for every dollar invested in First Nations broadcasting and media, \$2.87 of cultural, social and economic value is returned. The study considered case studies in urban (Koori Radio), regional (Umeewarra Aboriginal Media) and remote (PAW Media) areas.

The SROI study found benefits from supporting First Nations community-controlled media organisations in each setting which include:

- Indigenous Broadcasting Services provide much more than radio – they are community assets that contribute to strengthening culture, community development and the local economy.

¹² Forde, S, Meadows, M, Ewart J, & Foxwell, K, *Community Media Matters*, Griffith University Press, Canberra, 2007, page 56

¹³ <https://www.irca.net.au/about/social-value-study-2017>

- The activities Indigenous Broadcasting Services undertake are tailored to the specific needs of the community which helps build trust amongst the community.
- Indigenous Broadcasting Services are achieving a range of social returns on investment, heavily informed by their context, and value flows to a variety of stakeholder groups.
- Indigenous Broadcasting Services are contributing towards more of the Government's priorities than is currently realised.

For example, the SROI found that Umeewarra Media in Port Augusta provides a significant return on investment (4.3:1) through providing “an essential service that strengthens community:

- By providing a trusted communication platform, Umeewarra keeps the Aboriginal community of Port Augusta and surrounding towns connected and informed about issues that matter to them.
- Its activities not only serve community communication needs but also strengthens their connectivity and resilience and are highly valued by stakeholders.
- Umeewarra cultivates a culturally safe space, both on air and at their studios, where the Aboriginal community feel they belong. This enables them to support the community to connect to one another, to those they've lost touch with and to social services, as well as to support them through grief and into employment.
- Umeewarra has built the community's trust through more than 30 years of operation, which allows it to have the impact it does for the community.
- That trust is enabled by Umeewarra being an Aboriginal owned and operated organisation, and being an active member of, and responsive to, the needs of the community”¹⁴.

The First Nations media sector is well positioned to communicate government messaging in effective forms, in language where appropriate, and in ways that better connect with First Nations peoples. They are highly trusted and are a preferred channel for receiving government information. First Nations broadcasters are place based and experienced in working with local

¹⁴ <https://irca.net.au/sites/default/files/files/ibs-umeewarra-media-sroi-summary.pdf>

communities to enhance employment, training and social inclusion opportunities. They are highly valued by their communities as shown in Table 1 outlining results from a 2016 audience survey.

Table 1. Reasons for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people listening to remote First Nations radio.

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 Australian Government has supported the First Nations media sector by providing funding for basic equipment and minimal staffing. However, the First Nations media sector has not been adequately recognised for the role it can contribute to social cohesion, social inclusion, strengthening culture and providing access to essential information. If information is power, then the provision of information of one-to-many through media is key to Closing the Gap.

First Nations broadcasters currently reach 48 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia. In remote communities local First Nations radio rates highly as 90 per cent audience share¹⁵. However, 52 per cent of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population are still left without a local media service and without access to the benefits described in this section. A new Closing the Gap framework should aim to provide sovereign media services to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people no matter where they live.

¹⁵ <https://irca.net.au/projects/indigenous-communications-and-media-survey-2016>

E. Building on Existing Initiatives

Incorporating Communications as a Closing the Gap target builds upon a range of Federal and State/Territory Government activities already in progress. It would provide a measurable framework to integrate existing and future initiatives in the new Closing the Gap framework, as well as aligning with the proposed Indigenous Digital Inclusion Plan announced in March 2019¹⁶.

Digital inclusion has become a requirement for engagement in public dialogue through media and therefore underpins participation in Australia's democracy. Media organisations across the country are currently recording, broadcasting, preserving and archiving the stories of our nation every day on extremely limited budgets. Digital inclusion enables access to essential online services, emergency information and platforms to maintain First Nations languages. It connects families and communities, enables connection to the broader digital economy and the national narrative. While these activities are currently underway, a commitment to digital inclusion will enable the First Nations media sector to more fully contribute Closing the Gap objectives.

Government has supported participation in broadcasting for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through funding provided to First Nations media organisations through the Prime Minister & Cabinet's Indigenous Advancement Strategy and the Department of Communication & the Arts' Community Broadcasting Program. However First Nations media has endured a stagnant policy environment since the mid-1990s despite a number of reviews (such as [Digital Dreaming](#); 1999 and the [Stephens Review](#); 2010) resulting in limited focus on the sector's funding needs and a lack of bipartisan action to support First Nations communications.

First Nations Media Australia has partnered with Telstra to support digital inclusion education activities in 18 remote communities and town camps across the Northern Territory through the inDigiMOB project. inDigiMOB forms partnerships with communities and local organisations to create a suite of appropriate resources to meet the needs of individual communities for digital inclusion. Some examples

¹⁶ See Recommendation 8 of the Government's [response](#) to the 2018 Regional Telecommunications Review.

include resources to help navigate online banking, use Google, avoid online scams, choose a phone plan, use social media safely and utilise map functions. It is hoped this program will be expanded to other jurisdictions based on its success in the Northern Territory.

The 'Be Connected' program is funded to increase digital inclusion rates among older Australians to reduce vulnerability to scams, increase participation in society, decrease social isolation and reduce disadvantage. However, these are mainstream activities; they are not tailored to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, presenting a structural barrier to engagement of older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in existing initiatives.

We know that the Australian government understands the need for improved access to communications for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This is evidenced by the Australian Government investment in NBN and the Mobile Black Spots program. These programs, along with the learning from previous RTR reports, the Productivity Commission's review of the Universal Services Obligation, and the Mobile Roaming review all clearly point to the fact that the competitive market model (even if subsidised) is unlikely to provide further communications infrastructure and services in remote Australia. Clearly government funded solutions are needed to fill the gaps, with current funding for communication services through the NBN rollout, Mobile Black Spots program, Universal Service Obligation contracts, Developing the North, Regional Development Australia, Indigenous affairs, digital literacy programs, as well as State and Territory programs.

However, without a cohesive policy guiding these funding activities, the projects are ad hoc with little coordination or complementarity. Much more needs to be done to address the issues of limited community access facilities, last-mile distribution (WiFi etc), affordability for people on low incomes, low digital literacy, impacts of cyber-safety issues and online fraud, and accessibility of online services for people with limited English/text literacy or disabilities.

The new Closing the Gap framework provides an opportunity to develop a coherent and holistic policy approach specific to the contextual needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia.

F. Measurable Outcomes

Monitoring of digital inclusion statistics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within the new Closing the Gap framework will help identify specific areas of need for Government support as well as progress of activities implemented in First Nations communities. Digital inclusion can be measured through multiple lenses to track progress against a Closing the Gap target; accessibility, affordability and digital ability.

Accessibility is already monitored through the rollout of infrastructure, census data and telecommunications data. This type of data is available through each jurisdiction and provides a baseline for monitoring progress against the access component of digital inclusion. For example, the Northern Territory has identified 21 remote communities with no mobile phone service, 33 with no fixed internet service and 37 connected to unreliable or unsuitable satellite services¹⁷.

Affordability can be measured against median income and publicly available service rates. The Government's [Universal Service Obligation](#) supports consumer protection in this regard. Digital ability levels can be measured through simple survey methods. We would argue that appropriateness (of training models, language resources/tools, interfaces and content) is also a key requirement of digital inclusion for First Nations communities.

Telstra, RMIT University and the Centre for Social Impact at Swinburne University partners with Roy Morgan Research to monitor digital inclusion through the [Digital Inclusion Index Report](#). The third of these reports was published in August 2018. It identifies a widening gap for digital inclusion between high and low income households and a low, but improving, rate of digital inclusion for Indigenous Australians.¹⁸ Digital ability, as well as access, is identified as a key area requiring focus from policy makers.

The Social Ventures Australia SROI study provides a baseline for measuring the impact of First Nations media organisations moving forward. Audience data can

¹⁷ Northern Territory Government, submission to the Regional Telecommunications Review

¹⁸ Digital Inclusion Index, August 2018, <https://digitalinclusionindex.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Australian-digital-inclusion-index-2018.pdf>

also be collected through regular surveying, which has already been developed and conducted by McNair YellowSquares and is relatively cost-efficient for the Government to collect as part of a three-year evaluation cycle.

The Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research prepared an Employment & Skills Development Strategy for the First Nations media industry. This research provides baseline data for the measurement of employment and training targets, alongside regular reports provided directly to PMC which contain relevant data from First Nations media organisations.

G. Potential Communications Targets

1. Ensuring all First Nations populations have equivalent access to digital technologies and ability to utilise online services by 2029.
Performance indicators could include:
 - Number of communities in remote and regional locations with no mobile service and/or internet connectivity (Baseline data 2018)
 - Percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with access to home phone, mobile and/or internet connectivity.
 - Digital ability rates (Baseline data 2018).

2. Providing access to First Nations owned media services to 80 per cent of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population by 2029.
Performance indicators could include:
 - Growth in First Nations media organisations broadcast footprint (baseline data 2019)
 - Audience growth (baseline data 2016)
 - Access to community-controlled audiovisual content.

3. Reach the Government's target of 90% Indigenous employment for IAS funded activities by 2024.
Performance indicators could include:
 - Development of career pathways (baseline data 2018)
 - Growth in employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the First Nations media sector by 500 employees.