



OPENING SPEECH

TUESDAY 23 MAY 2017 | TADAM LOCKYER, IRCA CHAIRPERSON

Thank you Kumalie for the wonderful welcome to country.

Welcome to Day 1 of the Converge Summit. This is an event with a strong historical connection. It is happening here in central Australia where many of the early developments in our sector began – the establishment of CAAMA in 1980, the first Aboriginal owned and controlled radio station in Australia. The first community TV broadcasts happened in remote communities in 1985 at Yuendumu and Ernabella, initially as pirate broadcasts of local produced videos. The first Aboriginal owned commercial television station Imparja television was established in 1986 and began broadcasting in 1987. In the cities, Aboriginal radio programs had begun earlier in Adelaide and Townsville in 1972, in Hobart in 1979 and on Radio Redfern in Sydney starting out as shows on 2SER in 1981 and Radio Skid Row from 1984.

The Broadcasting for Remote Aboriginal Communities Scheme was established in 1988, in response to concerns raised in many meetings about the impact on our languages and culture of beaming mainstream media into our remote communities from the AUSSAT satellite which was launched in 1985. The slogan 'Fighting Fire with Fire' was born in those meetings. This meant that rather than be passive receivers of western media, we needed to learn to use the tools of media to produce our own media to tell our stories and keep our languages and culture strong.

Our industry has come a long way since those early days. Our industry now includes:

- Over 103 Remote Indigenous broadcasting services and another 40 retransmission sites, supported by 8 Remote Indigenous Media Services
- 30 regional and urban broadcast media organisations
- 1 commercial TV service (Imparja), one national public service (NITV) and one national community service (ICTV), and four local TV services
- 1 national radio service and news service
- One national newspaper (Koori Mail) and several Land Council-run newspapers, and numerous online new services
- Many websites and online content sharing portals for streaming radio and allowing view or listen on demand services
- Many Indigenous broadcasters on generalist community radio stations
- Many production companies and individual practitioners

It was great to hear some of the stories of the pioneers of our sector and the early struggles to build our sector last night and I look forward to hearing more tonight. It was those pioneers and leaders, some of

whom are in the room with us today, who fought for years to get access to the airwaves and the right to our own media services. We have them to thank for getting the Indigenous Broadcasting Program established in the mid 1990s and a recurrent funding stream to keep our organisations running and paid jobs for at least some of our people.

We have grown and diversified into a multi-media multi-platform industry in a convergent era. We have a broad range of organisations, running a broad range of services and activities, mostly broadcasting but with many also communicating with and delivering information to their communities via other platforms.

Unfortunately, the funding for the broadcasting sector has hardly increased in real terms in the last 20 years, even though the size of the sector funded through this program has doubled in size. This growth is a success story, but the government have yet to recognise this success with increased funding, despite the recommendations of at least three government reports since the late 1990s.

This year we are celebrating 50 years since the referendum that gave our people the right to vote and be counted as citizens in this country, and 25 years since the Mabo decision that recognised our rights over our traditional lands. But how far have we really come? There are discussions about to start up at Uluru about Constitutional reform in this country to recognise our existence in the Constitution. Most of the indicators on our health, education, housing and employment have changed little since the Rudd apology in 2007 and the start of the Closing the Gap policy. The reduction in funding for Indigenous Affairs under the establishment of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy has still not been addressed and many important community based programs and services have been abolished as a result.

Our media is as important as ever to give our communities a voice, to ask the questions of our politicians, to record the stories of our old people, to set the history books right, to challenge the stereotypes and misrepresentation of other media services and to help set the agenda for our people.

Nationally our audiences rate the top three reasons for listening to our radio as:

- To hear about their own people and communities – 61%
- For the Indigenous focus in the programs/news and current affairs – 48%
- For positive stories on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – 48%

Our audiences listen in to our radio for a range of content. Music is very important to our communities as we well know. Its part of our day to day life and our struggles. Our audiences across all regions rate music as their most preferred radio content (88% nationally) with Indigenous music the highest rated genre (52% nationally) and, for any of the Country and Western fans in the audience, Country and Western follows close behind (51% nationally). For news, our audiences rate local and regional news (75% nationally) as preferred content, with national news following at 67%. More key statistics from the 2016 Indigenous Media and Communications Surveys are available at this summit.

We have come together here to share what is special about the work we do. That is our focus over the next two days – to find the common ground and tell the story of why our communities value the work we do, the work that no other media service can do.

While we all work in very different ways and different places across Australia, it is important to come together to share in our ongoing struggle to grow our sector into the future. Together we can build a powerful and connected media industry for our children and grandchildren to learn and benefit from.

To work together we need an effective peak body. We have had several national peak bodies over the years, NAIBA in 1982-5, NIMAA in 1992-2001, AICA from 2004 to 2015 and now, as a result of an executive decision by the government to fund only one peak body, IRCA has been asked to expand its representation to take on that role. This transition from its remote peak body role began in mid 2016

and we expect to be operating as a national peak body from mid 2017 and providing a full range of services and support by mid 2018.

Despite having not asked for this expanded role, the IRCA Board and its membership chose to accept the government's decision, and then to make the changes needed to be an effective national peak body and support the development of the whole industry. This required a lot of planning meetings and consultation, a complete change of IRCA's membership structure from individual to organisational voting membership, a significant change to the Constitution, a new Strategic Plan to take us forward during the transition and an organisational restructure.

The IRCA Board have had a very busy last 18 months working out these changes and the staff have been busy providing the support to make it all happen. Our new Constitution and membership model was approved at a General Meeting at our Remote Media festival in Yirrkala in late September 2016 and we began calling for new members once the Constitution was approved by ORIC in November 2016. Some changes to the Constitution have already been identified and no doubt there will be more but we will develop these as we grow.

Our funding deed is in two parts:

- Firstly, to continue our role in representing and resourcing the remote sector and
- Second, to expand our services to the regional and urban sector.

This means we will continue to run all of the activities that we normally run for the remote sector, including:

- the annual national remote Indigenous Media festival,
- a remote media audience Survey,
- development of a suite of apps for RIMOs as well as an IndigiTUBE radio app to access all remote services,
- a remote media archiving strategy,
- the annual Indigenous Focus Day as part of the Broadband for the Bush Forum,
- digital inclusion projects including inDigiMOB digital mentors project (with Telstra) and
- a range other member services and support activities.

Many of these activities can now be extended, where useful, to the expanded membership. New specific activities and member services will also be needed for other parts of the broadcasting and media industry. A survey was sent out to get your input into the services IRCA should offer and the advisory groups to set up around key issues. If you haven't completed that survey, we encourage you to do so. Your feedback on that survey will be reviewed tomorrow. We can't do everything at once, but this will help guide the planning for IRCA going forward.

Back to the purpose of this Summit. This is IRCA's first chance to bring together our new membership and get your input face to face on the role and function, and most likely a new name, for the new peak body.

However, this is not the primary focus. We believe the more urgent business, and the reason most of you have come all this way, is about the planning for the direction for the industry itself and the development of a new policy model from the grass roots.

We need to come together around our core values, the important role that our organisations play in our communities, and forcefully describe how we are already delivering those values through our activities. These are the things we need to keep doing. We need to look at all the changes in policy and technology and the way our audiences access media today, and look at how we are responding to those changes. And what support do we need to respond effectively. This will lead to the

development of a policy direction that is driven by our sector to define our own development pathway, not one defined by government or other agencies. Your input on where we should be going as a sector, and the key issues that need to be addressed, will inform the development of the policies and strategies and actions needed for our industry to strengthen and expand.

Before I finish, I would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication my fellow Board members have put in to get IRCA to this point. The Board includes Sylvia Tabua (Secretary), Karl Hampton (Treasurer), Simon Japangardi Fisher, Gilmore Johnston, Daisy O'Byrne, and since last August, Dot West and Kirstie Parker.

As all the current Board will be stepping down tomorrow to make way for new elections under the new Constitution, this Summit marks the end of a long road for this group. I feel very proud to have been part of this team and what we have achieved. I wish those who are re-standing at tomorrow's General Meeting all the best going forward, and to those new members that come onto the Board I trust that you will put in the same level of commitment to supporting the future of our sector.

Once again, thank you for coming all this way to participate in the Converge Summit. We thank you for coming along to Converge and being a part of this important event. We hope you get a lot out of these couple of days from what is in the program and the conversations you have with others here. I look forward to hearing your ideas and talking with you over the next two days. On that note, I will hand back to our MCs Lola and Patrick to introduce the next presentation.