

Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FIRST NATIONS MEDIA PUSH AGAINST THE TIDE



PHOTO: CONVERGE BRISBANE. Photographer LaVonne Babongie.

The responsibility of First Nations media to push against the tide of mainstream dialogues about and on behalf of First Nations people was a recurring theme at last week's **CONVERGE** conference in Brisbane, 13-15 March.

Indigenous Remote Communications Association (IRCA) held the *First Nations Media National Conference* with event host Brisbane Indigenous Media Association (BIMA), where around 100 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media personnel from across the country met up to strengthen relationships and work together as a unified and powerful voice.

Representatives travelled from many areas of remote and regional Australia - including the Pilbara Kimberley, mid-west and Ngaanyatjarra regions of WA, the Torres Strait Islands, Alice Springs and Central Australia – as well as most urban centres. Government and industry stakeholder organisations also attended and heard first-hand the innovative and appropriate ways that First Nations media organisations are sharing their communities' views, stories and culture locally, national and internationally.

The theme for the conference *Dandiiri Beerwah Dahgu, Inta Naree Yanmana Ngani* translates in Yuggera language to meeting together, moving in one direction. "We came together to develop a shared vision for the future direction for our industry, and worked out tangible steps to get there. We demonstrated how we can achieve unity despite our diversity. Our national body has great power to speak strongly for our needs and aspirations, and advocate on behalf of the First Nations media sector," said IRCA Chairperson Dot West.

The dynamic panel discussions covered topics such as the changing employment and skills needs within the convergent industry, promoting the value and importance of First Nations media, the impact and opportunities of digital disruption, new ways of creating and sharing content, growing news and current affairs capacity, and how to engage mainstream media in allowing the people with agency to speak on issues affecting them. Showcase presentations by First Nations media organisations gave case studies of the range of services, business models and delivery platforms to address changing community needs, media and policy landscape.

Day 2 of the forum focused on developing policy positions and key directions forward. "We tread a fine line between community and government, urban and remote, and it's important all those voices are heard," said IRCA Chair, Dot West. "Social and financial capital are very important for us to have agency to be heard on a large scale. It's our responsibility to make sure there is an industry here in respect of those who have been and those who are coming up." The lead up to **CONVERGE** saw the launch of the national Our Media campaign to increase national awareness, gain support and lobby the government to work effectively with the First Nations media industry to produce a policy that takes into account the many changes in technologies, platforms and community needs that have occurred over the last two decades **#ourmediamatters**.

The conference is proud to announce *First Nations Media Australia* as the new national peak body name for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media, as voted by **CONVERGE** delegates. "IRCA has made strong inroads in representing the rights and access for Our Media in the bush, and now as the national peak body will have a larger role in pushing to achieve this across the country."

The conference included the Annual General Meeting which announced the new board, chaired by Dot West and made up of Daisy O'Byrne, Sylvia Tabua, Elizabeth Napaljarri Katakarinja and new members Tanya Orman, Victor Weetra, Nelson Conboy, and Phil Walley-Stack.

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Thank you to Yuggera Nation for hosting the annual conference at the State Library of Queensland. Delegates received a warm welcome from Traditional Owner Shannon Ruska, a welcome ceremony by Brisbane Aboriginal Sovereign Embassy and a stunning opening from Nunukul Yuggera Aboriginal Dance Company.

Dandiiri Beerwah Dahgu, inta naree yanmana ngani – meeting together, moving in one direction. Media organisations and workers continue to forge the way, setting the policy directions for the future of First Nations media across Australia.

IRCA acknowledges the significant support and contribution from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Community Broadcasting Foundation (CBF), National Indigenous Television (NITV), Australian Film, Television and Radio School (AFTRS), Spots and Space, Koori Mail and Focus Banners.

Check out the event highlights on Facebook and Twitter **#ourmediamatters** **#convergebris18**. To find out more visit irca.net.au/events/converge.

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IRCA General Manager Daniel Featherstone is available for interviews

CONVERGE 2018 photos:

Day 1 <https://www.flickr.com/photos/irca/albums/72157666730525738>

Day 2 <https://www.flickr.com/photos/irca/albums/72157664922097617>

Indigenous Remote Communications Association (IRCA) is now the national peak body for First Nations media. IRCA's name is in transition to First Nations Media Australia. Founded in 2001 as the peak body for remote Indigenous media and communications, IRCA undertook a structural change and expanded its membership and role to become the national peak body in 2016/2017. 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 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander radio services are eligible for representation by IRCA, along with not-for-profit TV, print and online media organisations and practitioners.