



Media Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Loss of ABC Short Wave Service in Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities

Statement by the Indigenous Remote Communications Association

The Indigenous Remote Communications Association (IRCA) calls on the Australian Broadcasting Commission to reinstate its short wave radio service to ensure the safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in remote Australia.

Short wave radio is a vital service in the many communities without mobile reception or a radio service. The technology of short wave radio addresses the essential need for emergency information for people that are not able to link into other broadcast or satellite technologies, through remoteness, limited infrastructure and mobility. Within remote Northern Territory and South Australia alone, IRCA estimates that over 1800 people in 25 Indigenous communities do not have a radio service or mobile phone service, as well as many homelands and outstations. Many remote communities in Western Australia, Queensland, the Torres Strait and New South Wales would be expected to be in the same situation.

The ABC's response that the ABC services can be supplied through a VAST service, NBN or Indigenous radio services is inadequate. VAST services are satellite delivered and only operate at fixed premises, not when people are working away from home, travelling or at sea. NBN Sky Muster Internet services are similarly limited to fixed locations and are a long way off being rolled to all remote premises. Satellite services are also unreliable during cloudy conditions, limiting their effectiveness to convey emergency information when it is most needed.

The Indigenous radio services are FM services with transmission reach generally within a limited area around communities. Short wave radio specifically addresses the limitations of FM radio through enabling reception over long distances and is vital for

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups such as Rangers' programs and people living on homelands for cultural reasons and land protection. The ABC's response to having Indigenous radio services carry emergency warnings is welcomed as recognition of the vital role of Indigenous radio as the first choice for remote communities. However, Indigenous radio is severely underfunded and the transfer of emergency service announcements needs to be accompanied by additional funding for the sector.

IRCA recognises the vital role of the ABC's short wave radio service in reaching the very remote locations where lack of funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services have not enabled them to reach.

IRCA and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander radio services have long valued the relationship with the ABC as the national broadcaster and see the services as complementary. IRCA now calls on the ABC to reinstate the ABC short wave radio service as a matter of urgency.

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For more information about Indigenous Remote Communications Association visit <http://irca.net.au/>
