



## The House Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs



## **Inquiry into Pathways and Participation Opportunities for Indigenous Australians in Employment and Business.**

First Nations Media Australia Submission

**January 2020**



### About First Nations Media Australia

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This submission is made by  
First Nations Media  
Australia. Some members  
may make individual  
submissions in which case  
the First Nations Media  
Australia submission  
should not be taken to  
displace those  
submissions.

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First Nations Media Australia is the peak body for Indigenous media and communications. It was founded in 2001 as the peak body for remote Indigenous media and communications. In late 2016 it transitioned to the national peak body for First Nations broadcasting, media and communications.

Its members are media organisations, individual producers, freelance filmmakers, journalists and allies. We support the First Nations media sector through advocacy, industry promotion, collaborative projects and capacity building through providing forums, networks and resources for our members and the broader industry. This also extends to digital inclusion and support for regional telecommunications.

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 First Nations radio services are eligible for representation by First Nations Media Australia.

### About the First Nations broadcasting and media sector

First Nations broadcasters are predominantly not-for-profit community organisations providing a primary and essential service to their communities. First Nations broadcasters and media producers also connect non-Indigenous communities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and culture, developing greater understanding and building stronger relationships.

The scope of the First Nations media sector includes:

- **Radio:** Over 230 radio broadcast sites coordinated by 35 licensed, community-owned, not-for-profit organisations. These radio services able to reach around 320,000 First Nations people, including around 100,000 very hard to reach people in remote Indigenous communities, or approximately 48% of the First Nations population. They broadcast live shows, plus interviews, radio documentaries, news, emergency information, community events, government and other messaging within community broadcasting guidelines.
- **Video & film production:** Production of culture and language-based content for broadcast & online distribution.
- **TV:** National (NITV) and regional (ICTV) TV services; local TV services (Goolarri TV at Broome, Larrakia TV at Darwin). ICTV satellite TV service reaches 240,000 remote households.

- **News production:** National, regional and local news and current affairs services for broadcast, as well as print and online news media, including:
  - National Indigenous Radio Service (NIRS) and its National Indigenous News and Weekly News-in-Review
  - Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association's news service, including its Strong Voices program
  - Koori Radio's news and current affairs programming
  - NITV News and Living Black
  - Print media including Koori Mail and National Indigenous Times
- **Print and Online:** A national newspaper (Koori Mail) alongside a strong web presence of journalistic sites such as IndigenousX, National Indigenous Times and indigiTUBE, a dedicated online platform showcasing aggregated content complimented by an app streaming 24 radio services. First Nations media organisations have a strong social media following and publish content online daily.



“As Aboriginal broadcasters, we have the opportunity to share our stories about our people and our culture from our lived experience – and that is what a lot of our non-Aboriginal listeners appreciate. Often on mainstream radio they hear negative stories about Aboriginal people. So we have the opportunity to address the imbalance and promote positive stories and role models in our community.” – Christine Ross

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## 1. Introduction

First Nations Media Australia welcomes the opportunity for input to the inquiry into opportunities for employment and economic development for Indigenous Australians. The First Nations media and communications industry provides a range of employment opportunities to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in remote, regional and urban locations to undertake meaningful work in a culturally safe environment. Beyond employment and economic development outcomes for First Nations communities, this work is nationally significant to the fabric of Australian society.

First Nations media, referred to within government policy as Indigenous broadcasting, performs all of the functions of general radio broadcasting, employing around 500 people nationally. In addition, First Nations broadcasting maintains and strengthens Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, significantly contributes to the maintenance and revitalisation of Indigenous languages, contributes a First Nations perspective to Australia's national dialogue and educates both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander audiences and the broader community on matters relevant to First Nations communities. First Nations radio is an essential component of truth-telling processes and the expression of First Nations voices. Collectively, First Nations broadcasting services reach 48% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations, including 100,000 people considered very hard to reach. In remote communities local First Nations radio rates highly as 90 per cent audience share.<sup>1</sup> In 82 regions across the country, First Nations radio is the only radio service available (29 community licensees, 50 TCBLs and 3 retransmission sites). At a further 16 locations, First Nations radio is the only local service available, alongside retransmitted national services from other locations.<sup>2</sup>



"I am an Arrernte woman from Ntaria with Anmatjere and Warlpiri connections. Media is a keeping place for our peoples' stories. We know the cultural protocols for our own local community and make productions to fit into these protocols. This makes sure they are appropriate for community people. We own what we do in the media and can keep it in the community." – Elizabeth Katakarinja

<sup>1</sup> <https://irca.net.au/projects/indigenous-communications-and-media-survey-2016>

<sup>2</sup> ACMA, Radio and Television Broadcasting Stations, April 2019 and ACMA Temporary Community Radio Broadcasting Licenses list, 1<sup>st</sup> May 2019



First Nations radio it is the most reliable and ubiquitous media service available to audiences. The sector is based in local communities and employs local people as broadcasters and media producers. It is a local and trusted voice attaining measurable, demonstrable outcomes in terms of audience reach, employment outcomes and social impact. The Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet commissioned a Social Return on Investment (SROI) study, conducted by Social Ventures Australia, which found that for every dollar invested in First Nations broadcasting and media, \$2.87 of cultural, social and economic value is returned.<sup>3</sup> The study focused on three Indigenous Broadcasting Service (IBS) case studies, finding, “all three IBSs analysed are delivering outcomes consistent with the four themes of communication, strengthening culture, stronger communities and increased employment and participation.”<sup>4</sup>

The media environment is evolving with emerging technologies expanding audience reach and meeting audience expectations. The content environment available to audiences is increasingly fragmented. Yet there is growing convergence in cross-platform content output, disrupting previous divisions between screen, audio and online media outputs. This blurring of lines between digital, communication and media technologies creates opportunities for significant growth for the communications industry.

In its *Australia's Tech Future* report, the Australian Government identified, “while it is hard to predict the skills in demand in the future, we know employers are looking for workers who have a combination of transferrable digital skills and collaborative, creative, communication and entrepreneurial and problem-solving skills.”<sup>5</sup> The First Nations media industry is well-placed to expand on existing activities to generate new employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in these roles, as well as prepare workers with the skills to meet these emerging business demands.

This submission provides an overview of existing employment opportunities and career development pathways available within the dedicated First Nations media industry. It does not include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working in the broader media industry in the discussion but acknowledges career pathways into mainstream media roles. It explores those career pathways and others, as well as available opportunities to build in existing government initiatives. It provides examples of successful business initiatives and partnerships and discuss' the barriers and solutions to achieving growth outcomes, including linkages between digital inclusion, access to information and the provision of media services.

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<sup>3</sup> Social Ventures Australia, *More Than Radio – A Community Asset: Social Return on Investment analyses of Indigenous Broadcasting Services*, Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet, Canberra, November 2017

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Department of Industry, Science and Technology, *Australia's Tech Future*, Australian Government, Canberra, December 2018 <https://www.industry.gov.au/data-and-publications/australias-tech-future>

## 2. Existing Employment

The First Nations media industry currently resources 43 organisations and over 120 licensed services with between 500-600 staff around 79% of whom are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This includes part-time and casual employees, working in organisations in urban, regional and remote locations.<sup>6</sup> Approximately 28 per cent of those positions are full time, with 72 per cent are part-time or casual.<sup>7</sup> While primarily a function of budget restrictions, this workforce structure allows flexibility to meet the discrete needs of workers in different settings. Social Ventures Australia noted, “Broadcasters offer flexible working arrangements in culturally safe environments. They create work opportunities that are aligned with the interests of individuals, and there is pride associated with working for these organisations.”<sup>8</sup>

The majority of employees in the First Nations media sector are employed as broadcasters and administrators. However, the sector also provides opportunities for employment as technicians, IT specialists and a broad range of audio and screen production roles. The First Nations media industry has responded to an evolving media landscape by expanding operations beyond traditional radio and television broadcasting to include newer communication formats such as podcasting, online formats such as websites, streaming and social media publication. Audiences demand multimedia content delivery, which has resulted in the expansion of media worker skills to a broad range of screen, online and audio formats which in turn generates employment and economic development opportunities.

First Nations media organisations draw on the skills developed for broadcasting to broaden income sources and retain staff. For example, the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA) offers film/TV production, music production and distribution, technical services and audio and lighting services to major events in central Australia such as the *Parrtjima Festival of Light*. Goolarri Media in Broome offers commercial film production services, training services and runs events such as the internationally recognized *Kimberley Girl Program* and *A Taste of Broome*

Importantly, First Nations media organisations provide *meaningful* employment.

“...meaningful employment, training and participation opportunities for Indigenous Australians... Many of the providers are located in rural and remote areas where there are limited opportunities for work, particularly for work that is culturally aligned. We heard through consultations that some employees had reduced their use of alcohol and other substances as a result of their employment with the broadcasters, which they found more meaningful than alternatives such as ‘work for the dole’.”

– Social Ventures Australia, 2017

<sup>6</sup> Clague, P, Employment and Skills Development Strategy Report, Jumbunna Institute of Indigenous Education and Research, December 2018

<sup>7</sup> Survey Matters, Financial Health of Community Radio Survey, Community Broadcasting Association of Australia, October 2017

<sup>8</sup> Social Ventures Australia, November 2017

annual tourism event. Yolngu Radio in Arnhem Land offers a range of translation services, including cultural awareness training and cross-cultural publications.

The role that First Nations media organisations play in the delivery of essential information cannot be overestimated. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander broadcasters translate and relay key information from a range of government agencies and services in languages that are accessible to communities around the country every day. First Nations media serves to strengthen and retain Indigenous languages, particularly in remote and regional Australia. There are strong linkages between language and economic development for remote communities, making it a focus of remote business development for the Australian Government and providing a policy framework for Indigenous Language and Arts funding.<sup>9</sup> This is discussed further in section 5.

Where available, First Nations media organisations offer studio space and professional film and video equipment, and programs to develop the skills of artists.<sup>10</sup> This provides opportunity for musicians to distribute professional recordings of their work. Some media organisations have started formalised record labels to support the economic development of music in their regions. Others amplify live performances to a broader audience through outside broadcasts. Examples of these recordings can be viewed on the [indigiTUBE](#) content platform. This work provides technical training and employment opportunities and contributes to the development of the Indigenous music and film industry, now recognised on the world stage.<sup>11</sup>

The First Nations media industry has strong links with a broad range of creative industries, providing a platform for the promotion and career development of First Nations musicians, entertainers and artists. First Sounds is one example of a partnership between First Nations Media Australia's indigiTUBE platform and the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia's Amrap project to increase airplay for First Nations musicians, resulting in economic benefits to both the musicians and the broader music industry. Indigenous musicians and film producers benefit from mentorship and the facilities available to them through First Nations media organisations. Social Ventures Australia found that, "other stakeholders experiencing significant value from Indigenous Broadcasting Services include employees, volunteers, Indigenous musicians, artists and the Australian Government. Value was split relatively evenly across outcomes themes, which reinforces the interrelationship of outcomes."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.niaa.gov.au/sites/default/files/reports/closing-the-gap-2016/chapter-04/index.html>

<sup>10</sup> Social Ventures Australia, November 2017

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.



## Case Study: Umeewarra Aboriginal Media – Port Augusta

Umeewarra Media has three employees and 25 volunteers. The station provides some employment opportunities and a number of training opportunities in the form of internships. Umeewarra also assists people in employment with other organisations. Assistance includes advertising job opportunities on the radio, helping people to prepare resumes and job applications, receiving resumes and job applications and forwarding them to employees and providing a safe space in which job readiness training providers run their training sessions and employees hold interviews.

Approximately 80 per cent of all the Aboriginal people employed in Port Augusta are assisted in the employment process in some way by Umeewarra by hearing the role advertised on radio and/or receiving CV writing support or attended job skills training or interviews at Umeewarra.

Approximately 25 people per month visit Umeewarra for employment-related support from Umeewarra staff or volunteers. Others visit Umeewarra to attend interviews or training sessions with potential employers or external employment support providers. Umeewarra also provides free educational classes to the community in technology and social media.

Umeewarra supports approximately 305 people in obtaining employment each year.  
(Source: Social Ventures Australia, 2017)



(Image: Dre Ngatokoua, broadcaster at Umeewarra Media)

### 3. Pathways

The First Nations media industry provides a range of employment pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people both within the sector and feeding into mainstream media and other industries. Employees in the communications sector are highly skilled, with a higher proportion of the workforce with postgraduate and Bachelor level degrees, graduate diplomas and certificates, and advanced diplomas and diplomas compared with other industries.<sup>13</sup> The First Nations media industry offers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people a culturally safe environment in which to develop 'work ready' skills and to continually upgrade those skills to define their own career paths. For this reason, we see many media workers move into communication roles in other industries, such as the mining and resources industry, politics and the public service and information technology. We also see employees develop skills within our industry and then transition to other roles in media, including becoming freelance agents or starting small businesses themselves.

First Nations media organisations are proficient in engaging and recruiting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, providing employment opportunities in local communities and support for achieving the goals of individual people. The First Nations media industry provides a range of mechanisms for media workers to receive training, mentoring and continued professional development throughout their career such as: pathways training with local First Nations trainers, accredited training delivered by First Nations RTOs and community media partners, upskilling at industry events like the Remote Indigenous Media Festival and professional mentoring. First Nations media organisations provide an open door for community involvement.



"I'm a Bundjalung Dunghutti woman and the General Manager of the Koori Mail, Australia's only national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander print newspaper. The Koori Mail provides employment and training opportunities for our people."

– Naomi Moran

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander journalists work across both First Nations dedicated services and mainstream media outlets, including public broadcasters (ABC & SBS). First Nations radio stations are licensed as community broadcasters. They provide a fertile training ground for career development such as:

- participation in school programming contributing to job-ready skills development. Many First Nations media organisations operate school-

<sup>13</sup> Bureau of Communications research analysis and Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011), Census of Population and Housing.

based programming to engage young people with confidence-building communications activities and demonstrate potential career paths for the future. Media is viewed as a fun incentive to increase school attendance, and a means of self-expression;

- support for career development with the sector drawing on industry-led pathways and accredited training. A 2014 census of Indigenous Broadcasting Services estimated 11,940 training hours had been provided in that year by RIBS and RIMOs to Indigenous people in remote communities. There are two First Nations RTOs operated by First Nations media organisations, Goolarri Training and 4AAA Training (run by Brisbane Indigenous Media Association). They are supplemented by strong partnerships with the Community Media Training Organisation (CMTO), Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Education, the Australian Film, Television and Radio School (AFTRS), Media RING, the Jawun secondment program and multiple cross-industry training relationships.
- supporting the early careers of media workers who transition to roles in mainstream media across all platforms including the ABC, SBS, newspaper and online reporters and television reporters. Many of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people contributing to mainstream media outlets as both employees and spokespeople, were trained within not-for-profit First Nations media organisations. Mainstream media remains a crucial partner to our sector and integral to the Government's Indigenous media initiatives. Organisations such as Fairfax, Foxtel, BBC Australia, Channel 9 and public broadcasters have created internships or Indigenous identified positions as part of Media RING and Reconciliation Action Plans. The limitation of these ad-hoc initiatives is that they are often short term, and dependant on connections to and commitment from Media RING; and
- screen industry career development. The First Nations media sector has been instrumental in the early careers of some of Australia's most successful filmmakers, generating economic outcomes in both the domestic and export markets. Warwick Thornton, Rachel Perkins and Dylan Lewis are just three examples of successful filmmakers who got their start in the not-for-profit First Nations media sector and have achieved international acclaim.

Top End Aboriginal Bush Broadcasting Association (TEABBA) provides a good example of a pathways model that aims to support a range of career objectives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees. Broadcasters complete formal qualifications (TAFE certificate) in Event Management to develop the leadership and planning skills required to deliver outside broadcast events, but also to build confidence and transferable skills for a range of scenarios. Broadcasters are encouraged to participate in professional development training, including undertaking VET qualifications in Project Management and Training and

Assessment, which has resulted in organizational capacity to deliver appropriate and engaging training to emerging media workers.

Each of these industry partnerships contributes to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees throughout a career pathway that aligns with their own personal goals and objectives. There is significant potential for the First Nations media industry to expand this role with Government support.

## 4. Future Opportunities

The First Nations media and communications industry has significant potential to increase its contribution to Closing the Gap. First Nations media organisations across the country act as training and skills development hubs, empowering people to move into a range of roles within other sectors, such as tourism and resources. The communications sector provides enabling services to support opportunities and outcomes in service sectors, such as health and education, and promotes inclusiveness and participation.<sup>14</sup>

We define communications in this context as:

1. **Digital Inclusion** – social inclusion through digital literacy/skills, affordability, awareness and online safety;
2. **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;
3. **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.

“We heard through consultations that some employees had reduced their use of alcohol and other substances as a result of their employment with the broadcasters, which they found more meaningful than alternatives such as ‘work for the dole’. We also heard that while some employees develop their skills and move to other media organisations in urban and regional settings, many value the opportunity to stay and work on country in their communities. Employees are also positive role models in their communities and inspire others to contemplate media careers.” – Social Ventures Australia, 2017

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<sup>14</sup> Department of Communications and the Arts, *The Communications Sector: recent trends and developments*, Bureau of Communications Research, Commonwealth Government, Canberra, October 2016

The communications sector has been identified as a critical enabler of economic and social activity.<sup>15</sup> There is industry desire to increase activities to a scale that would require twice the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff that are currently employed across the sector (another 500-600 jobs). However, budget constraints currently prevent the training of new staff and the capacity to provide career opportunities to people who do undertake training. These barriers are explored further in Section 6.

The Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research has partnered with First Nations Media Australia to develop a First Nations Media Employment and Skills Development Strategy in consultation with the sector which outlines a career development action plan, policy recommendations and assistance for First Nations media organisations to meet the IAS Indigenous employment target of 90% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment set by the Turnbull Government. To achieve this aim, the *Strong Voices, Stronger Communities* report recommends investment in training and targeted employment programs such as traineeships and pathways roles in areas such as management, training, project management, production, technical and IT services.<sup>16</sup> First Nations Media Australia has since developed the recommendations of this report into a comprehensive First Nations Media Workforce Development Action Plan.

First Nations Media Australia identifies opportunities for future employment expansion in the following areas:

a) Media

Expanding the provision of services for the 52% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations currently not receiving an appropriate First Nations radio service will provide new employment opportunities for a range of media professionals and administrative personnel. Adelaide, Canberra, Hobart, Dubbo, Newcastle, Wagga Wagga, Wollongong, Sunshine Coast and Toowoomba are all examples of areas with high First Nations populations but no dedicated First Nations media service. Adelaide, Newcastle, Sunshine Coast in particular have higher than average unemployment levels which the establishment of new media services could contribute to addressing.

Establishing ongoing opportunities for hands-on media production and broadcasting is the best way to build skills and create jobs, while creating a repository of significant multi-media content. Increased funding for content production in the areas of radio documentaries/podcasts, news and current affairs, language and cultural content, dramas, music and so on will build capacity of First Nations media organisations to employ and training local media

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<sup>15</sup> Department of Communications and the Arts, *The Communications Sector: recent trends and developments*, Bureau of Communications Research, Commonwealth Government, Canberra, October 2016

<sup>16</sup> Clague, P, *Employment and Skills Development Strategy Report*, Jumbunna Institute of Indigenous Education and Research, December 2018

practitioners to produce, broadcast and archive locally significant stories for the community and where relevant to national and even international audiences.

b) Community journalism

The reduction of localized news services in regional and remote Australia has been identified as a concern to Government. The First Nations media sector has needed to fill the gap in news and weather services for many remote and regional communities, as the ABC has scaled back its local news and weather coverage for these less populous areas over the past five years. Some steps are underway to address this issue through the Small and Regional Publishers Innovation Fund administered through the ACMA. First Nations Media Australia seeks to increase the news and current affairs capacity of First Nations broadcasters both to address this geographic deficit at a national level and to increase the diversity of news reported.

Journalism must include the full range of First Nations media voices in mainstream media and in First Nations radio, television, print and online news services. A news capacity building project has been designed to foster collaboration between existing news services and develop opportunities for employment for both cadet journalists and experienced reporters. A national multimedia platform for sharing news content is currently in development and funding for a national coordinator has been secured. This is definitely an area of future growth for the First Nations media industry and an opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to contribute to a national platform without having to move away from their community.

c) Digital Archiving

Over approximately 40 years the First Nations media industry has amassed archives of nationally significant content which is largely stored on magnetic tape (eg. VCR formats). This tape is now degrading, meaning all collections not digitized by 2025 will be rendered unplayable – an issue requiring urgent action. Stretching from the early 1980s through to the present, the collections provide an unbroken record of language usage, cultural knowledge, traditional skills, community events, family histories and oral histories. The collections have a high value for education, cultural identity, language teaching, cultural and linguistic heritage, and for researchers into First Nations media history. The cultural sensitivities relating to these recordings makes sending them to centralized Government agency inappropriate. First Nations communities must retain control of



"I have cultural connections to Central Australia and work in the media industry. Our media is archiving our history and will allow all generations to access stories, culture and to reconnect with families."  
– Jacinta Barbour



community collections with oversight from Traditional Custodians. On-country archiving work is more cost-effective, enabling local decision-making about access and media handling, and identifying cultural metadata for cataloguing.

This presents an opportunity for the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in culturally meaningful roles to as Community Archive Workers, needed to coordinate the extensive and time-consuming work of digitising, cataloguing and managing community access and sharing protocols. A National Plan for Preserving First Nations Audiovisual Collections has been developed by First Nations Media Australia in partnership with the National Film & Sound Archive, AIATSIS and Traditional Custodians. Both infrastructure and human resources are now required to undertake this urgent work.

#### d) Digital Inclusion

Today, digital connectivity is required to access government and non-government services such as banking, health, education, libraries, news, entertainment, shopping, Medicare, Centrelink, MyGov and other services that underpin connection to the broader economy. Therefore, telecommunications access is an essential service, while digital inclusion is itself considered a human right. This is of particular importance for people living in remote 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. 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.<sup>17</sup> Exclusion from the digital world can exacerbate other forms of social exclusion such as unemployment, low education and poverty.<sup>18</sup> In 2020, digital inclusion equates to social inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia, and is essential to Closing the Gap.

Indigenous Australians face additional barriers around skills, affordability and access to culturally appropriate technology.<sup>19</sup> Currently, First Nations peoples living in urban and regional areas have an Australian Digital Inclusion Index score of 55.1, which sits 6.8 points below the national average.<sup>20</sup> Digital Inclusion levels decrease further in remote communities, largely due to access and affordability barriers. More than 2.5million Australians are still not online<sup>21</sup>. This includes 24.7% of Indigenous Australian households who do not access the internet from home,

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<sup>17</sup> Digital Inclusion Index, <https://digitalinclusionindex.org.au/about/about-digital-inclusion/>

<sup>18</sup> Department of Industry, Science and Technology, *Australia's Tech Future*, Australian Government, Canberra, December 2018 <https://www.industry.gov.au/data-and-publications/australias-tech-future>

<sup>19</sup> Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, *Submission to the Digital Economy Strategy Consultation Paper*, November 2017

<sup>20</sup> Digital Inclusion Index, *Digital Inclusion in Australia*, <https://digitalinclusionindex.org.au/about/about-digital-inclusion/>

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

compared with the national average of 14.7%. Home internet access reduces significantly for Indigenous Australian households diminish with remoteness, with up to 45.2% of Indigenous Australian households in remote and very remote locations unable to access the internet<sup>22</sup>. Even in urban areas, where access to the internet is higher, measures of digital inclusion for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are lower than the Australian average. ABS data has shown Indigenous households are about 75% more likely than non-Indigenous households to not have an internet connection.

The Australian Government acknowledges digital inclusion and connectivity as a primary requirement for economic and social participation. Access to reliable, fast and inexpensive telecommunications and mobile networks has been identified as a key infrastructure need for Australian businesses.<sup>23</sup> In recent years Government has invested in addressing mobile black spots, providing nbn Skymuster services to remote and regional communities, maintaining the community phones programs, establishing WiFi trials, and a \$50million digital inclusion program tailored for the elderly. However, these actions do not address digital literacy within First Nations communities or affordability issues that act as barriers to business development through digital exclusion. Digital inclusion initiatives must be supported by accessible and affordable telecommunications.

There is some shared infrastructure between telecommunications and broadcasting that can be used to build on existing government investment in broadcast infrastructure and to generate maximum public value from new infrastructure rollouts. First Nations media organisations may be called upon for technical skills, capacity building activities and infrastructure requirements as part of the Government's proposed Indigenous Digital Inclusion Plan announced in March 2019.<sup>24</sup> If this results in a funded program, it would present a potential opportunity to grow communications jobs through the provision of IT, technical and training expertise.

First Nations Media Australia is responding to digital literacy through its inDigiMOB program, a four-year Telstra-funded digital inclusion initiative for remote communities in the Northern Territory. To date, inDigiMOB has delivered digital inclusion and cyber safety awareness training to 9,240 workshop participants across 21 communities in the Northern Territory, employing 112 Indigenous Digital Mentors in the process using a peer support model to tailor skills programs to local needs and levels of digital access, engagement and skills. There is significant demand to expand these activities to other States.

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<sup>22</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2016

<sup>23</sup> Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, *Submission to the Digital Economy Strategy Consultation Paper*, November 2017

<sup>24</sup> See Recommendation 8 of the Government's [response](#) to the 2018 Regional Telecommunications Review.

e) Communications growth industries

Communications is a growth industry with significant potential for desirable employment and economic development outcomes. Content is now facilitated by a range of outlets with cross-platform delivery increasingly regarded as a business necessity.<sup>25</sup> This creates increased business development opportunities for First Nations media organisations in content production and translation services. It also generates demand for communications agencies which draw on skills and experience developed in the First Nations media industry. For example, 33 Creative is a First Nations owned communications agency based in Sydney which offers PR, media and events services to a broad range of clients. Company founder, Mayrah Sonter got her start in the industry in Redfern and presented NITV's Living Strong program among other NITV productions. First Nations Media Australia is frequently approached to provide PR and communications services and views this is a potential area of growth for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media workers.

Similarly, Government and government agencies should be using First Nations media organisations to design and develop campaign collateral to ensure government messaging reaches and resonates with First Nations audiences. Currently a significant amount of campaign material is provided by non-Indigenous communication agencies in Sydney and Canberra. The Federal Government plays a significant role through various programs, schemes and initiatives which indirectly help to build capacity within the First Nations media sector.

Utilising First Nations media organisations to produce and record messages, in language if required, will contribute to sustainable employment within the media industry. First Nations media organisations have the capacity to support cultural tourism initiatives, education activities and complement land and sea management programs with translation and recording services and multimedia production services.

Digital technologies are integrated in a range of business settings from agriculture to virtual reality. These developments open opportunities for media workers to build capacity and training in areas of journalism, multimedia and online production, marketing, social media communications, drone cinematography, animation, digital graphics and desktop publishing, web development, photography, technical and IT roles and app development.

First Nations broadcasters are beginning to use their multimedia skills and knowledge of Country to provide cultural mapping services. For example, PAW Media and Communications in Yuendumu, Northern Territory has recently partnered with Uber Air to create the IndigiVR project, which shares stories

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<sup>25</sup> Department of Communications and the Arts, *The Communications Sector: recent trends and developments*, Bureau of Communications Research, Commonwealth Government, Canberra, October 2016

recorded via drone footage through virtual reality headsets. The project will tour nationally in 2020 demonstrating a balance between new technology and recording history. PAW Media staff reflected on the benefits of having young people engaged in media a different way through this technology.

This type of organizational partnership demonstrates just one type of business relationship using media skills for digital mapping. Another is Bilbie Virtual Songlines, founded by Brett Leavy, previous General Manager of the National Indigenous Radio Service. This company provides virtual heritage software and simulations, again drawing on skills and experience attained within the First Nations media industry to develop a highly successful business employing First Nations and non-Indigenous staff.

There are employment and economic development opportunities available from the expansion of traditional media to reach populations who currently do not have a dedicated First Nations media service. There are new contributions to the national dialogue to be made from communities that are currently underrepresented in the media landscape through the expansion of community journalism, which does not necessarily require moving away from family support networks. There are also new roles emerging in digital communication technologies which can be carried out in a range of settings with reliable telecommunications.

## **5. Building on Government programs**

In addition to self-generated revenue and philanthropic supported employment, the First Nations media industry engages with a number of existing Government programs to provide employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. These include the Department of Employment's JobActive program, the Community Development Program, the Community Broadcasting Program and supplementing government health and education initiatives.

### **a) Department of Employment – JobActive**

Some First Nations Media Australia members in regional and urban areas have drawn on the Department of Employment's JobActive program to progress job seekers through an internship and into part-time administrative roles. Cherbourg Radio, for example, hired a young, unemployed Aboriginal person into an administrative support role in early 2019 and has since progressed that person to a broadcasting role. The station is currently seeking a new administrative support person to back-fill this career progression. Bumma Bippera Media in Cairns has had similar success with the JobActive recruitment process, developing good relationships with local job provider agencies and receiving some support to find appropriate local candidates.

The JobActive program provides support for the establishment of new roles and the recruitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander personnel. It does not provide a solution to many First Nations media organisations struggling to support ongoing roles. It is also only available to organisations in certain regions with limited public information available to determine the boundaries between Department of Employment jurisdictions and Community Development Program (CDP) regions. For example, in Alice Springs the JobActive program can support internships for job seekers residing in some parts of Alice Springs, but not all. It does not extend to the town camps (less than 5 minute drive from the city center in many cases) or the surrounding areas, making it unavailable to many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who could potentially find work within Alice Springs. Our members have reported conflicting information between Department of Employment and NIAA staff overseeing the CDP program, pointing to the complexity of determining the boundaries of each program even within government agencies.

First Nations Media Australia is currently working with Department of Employment personnel at a Federal level to support clearer information for media organisations seeking to hire new staff and to build new pathways into sustainable roles. However, the industry needs additional support to establish positions over a longer term period than the available \$10,000 salary subsidy through the JobActive program. This program may be a viable pathway for transitioning volunteers to paid employment. While First Nations media organisations are funded to provide employment opportunities, employees are supported by volunteer staff at around 70% of them, a common feature of the community broadcasting sector.<sup>26</sup>

#### b) Community Development Program (CDP)

In 2018 the Australian Government announced an additional 6,000 CDP positions for remote communities.<sup>27</sup> In 2019 this appears to have been reduced to an additional 1,000 CDP positions which are currently open for employers to apply for in 2020.

While the CDP program does provide support for some remote media workers, the implementation of the program has been problematic. Participation in media was identified as an approved CDP activity by Minister Scullion at a Federal level, yet our members have reported a number of Regional Officers would not recognize media work as an approved activity, while others would. This inconsistency in the implementation of the CDP has been a barrier to providing employment in specific regions. The CDP program is an important employment strand for most organisations within the sector, but this does not create real jobs, especially the type of jobs required within the sector due to restrictive and inflexible requirements. An entry program similar to the former National Jobs Package,

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<sup>26</sup> Social Ventures Australia, November 2017

<sup>27</sup> Australian Government response to the Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee inquiry report, Australian Government, Canberra, 8<sup>th</sup> November 2018

enabling a direct employment model, is needed to increase youth engagement and employment throughout the remote, regional and urban sector.

Some broadcasters are employed on Community Development Program (CDP) arrangements, however there are numerous obstacles to accessing this program that prevent it being a widespread solution to the workforce needs of the media industry. The direct employment model, coupled with a maximum number of hours undertaken and onerous reporting requirements each make the CDP challenging for media organisations to utilise effectively.

Where CDP is used, the rate of pay is problematic. CDP payments amount to less than a minimum wage (\$290) to provide a professional broadcast service. The wage disparity between commercial counterparts in metropolitan cities who regularly earn more than \$1m annually and First Nations broadcasters carrying out the same role in their communities is stark. The award wage for a radio broadcaster is \$916.60 per week.<sup>28</sup> The average salary for a Radio Announcer in Australia is \$52,803 annually (approx. \$1,015 weekly). However, radio announcers working in capital cities reported earnings significantly above this level; Sydney (47.9% more), Perth (42%) and Brisbane (32.6%).<sup>29</sup> The minimum award wage for a full-time employee working in the commercial radio industry (which includes support staff and trainees) is \$740.80 per week.<sup>30</sup> By comparison, CDP workers receive \$290 per week for working 25 hours (around \$11.60 per hour) and must work continuously in order to receive payments.<sup>31</sup>

In 2018 the Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee recommended that “participation in community development program work activities should be compensated at an hourly rate commensurate with the national minimum wage.” In its response, the Australian Government did not support this recommendation, citing income support is not a wage.<sup>32</sup> As CDP is the only available support for remote media organisations to employ broadcasters in communities, in effect this means broadcasters are working for below minimum wage rates. This creates a barrier to both the recruitment and retention of personnel.

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<sup>28</sup> FairWork Ombudsman, Pay Guide: Broadcasting, Recorded Entertainment and Cinemas Award 2010, Australian Government, effective 1<sup>st</sup> July 2019. <file:///Users/admin/Downloads/broadcasting-recorded-entertainment-and-cinemas-award-ma000091-pay-guide.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> Payscale, Average Radio Announcer Salary in Australia, 2019  
[https://www.payscale.com/research/AU/Job=Radio\\_Announcer/Salary](https://www.payscale.com/research/AU/Job=Radio_Announcer/Salary)

<sup>30</sup> Fuller, David, Commercial Radio Industrial Awards – Rates of Pay, Commercial Radio Australia, 2019  
<http://www.commercialradio.com.au/hr-training/commercial-radio-awards-pay-rates>

<sup>31</sup> Burton-Bradley, Robert, Inside the CDP, NITV News, 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2017,  
<https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/nitv-news/article/2017/11/01/inside-cdp-allegations-fake-work-unsafe-conditions-and-payments-dead-people>

<sup>32</sup> Australian Government response to the Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee inquiry report, Australian Government, Canberra, 8<sup>th</sup> November 2018



### c) Community Broadcasting Program

Recognising that CDP does not provide a living wage, First Nations media organisations in remote locations receive some funding contribution from the Department of Communications and the Arts through the Community Broadcasting Foundation to cover specific radio program costs (music purchases, subscriptions etc).

In addition, First Nations media organisations in all locations apply for project-based support to produce documentaries, animations, special series, outside broadcasts, language revitalization initiatives, podcasts and multimedia productions across radio and screen content. This is a highly competitive grant process which provides around \$1.1m annually in content production support nationally. In effect, this fund supports around 40 projects in varying lengths across the country, providing intermittent casual employment for skilled media personnel. This activity provides support for the development of freelance careers in media and filmmaking.

This form of project-based employment supports on-the-job learning, a proven effective method of acquiring skills for content making however it does not provide reliable ongoing employment.<sup>33</sup> Project work is often sporadic, causing peaks and troughs in household income and making it difficult for individual planning. A model that provides for ongoing employment to complete a number of projects would be more sustainable from both a personnel perspective and a skills development perspective – allowing an individual to accumulate a variety of skills across numerous projects with some income security.

### d) Indigenous Languages & Arts

The First Nations broadcasting sector delivers programming in over 20 languages nationally, including the first language of many people in remote communities. At the time of European settlement in Australia, Indigenous people spoke around 200 distinct languages, at least 50 of which are now extinct<sup>34</sup> and 110 critically endangered with fewer than 100 speakers.<sup>35</sup>

First Nations Media Australia runs a content sharing and showcase platform called



“I come from Milingimbi in northeast Arnhem Land, NT. My main role is as a Yolngu Radio producer and presenter. Most of the time I present my work in Yolngu language. This way I am helping to keep language alive.”

– Sylvia Nulpinditj

<sup>33</sup> Clague, P, November 2018

<sup>34</sup> Willmot, E, *Out of the Silent Land*, Report of the Task Force on Aboriginal and Islander Broadcasting Communications, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Canberra, 1984

<sup>35</sup> AIATSIS & FATSIL, *National Indigenous Languages Survey Report 2005*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies in association with the Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages, Canberra, 2005, page 3

indigiTUBE featuring work created by and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The project is currently funded through the Australian Government's Indigenous Languages & Arts program. It features a significant amount of content in Indigenous languages, promotes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander musicians and shares cultural stories. The project launched in November 2018 and shows significant potential for income-generating activities for First Nations content-makers and musicians, further promoting the work of First Nations broadcasters.

#### e) Support for Economic Development & Closing the Gap

Effective communication is essential to the ongoing viability of First Nations communities. Beyond direct employment outcomes and building on government initiatives, the First Nations media sector provides significant support for the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses. First Nations media organisations offer promotion for arts, tourism, retail, design and many other areas of business, supporting business growth for other sectors. In addition, First Nations media organisations make a significant contribution to Closing the Gap through the amplification of government services and messaging, particularly in relation to health and education.

First Nations broadcasters provide a primary service to First Nations communities and people. They are the preferred channel for First Nations audiences due to their cultural appropriateness, local relevance and positive representation of First Nations issues as compared with negative stereotyping prevalent in mainstream media. This contributes significantly to the emotional and social wellbeing of First Nations audiences and the visibility of positive, identifiable role-models who are carrying out a range of employment activities in their communities. This is particularly important for young audiences.

“Indigenous Broadcasting Services are contributing to more of the Australian Government’s IAS objectives than is currently realized. Indigenous Broadcasting Services contribute to all of the objectives under the Culture and Capability programme – including culture, community development and reconciliation – as well as priorities under other programme streams through employment, support for education and wellbeing outcomes and investment in remote Australia.” – Social Ventures Australia, 2017

Government agencies have at times introduced various short term and ad hoc schemes aimed at creating job opportunities within the First Nations media sector, such as Indigenous employment programs managed by Screen Australia and internships initiatives. However, these ad hoc programs are often project-based and require people to move away from their communities to take up available employment. These activities do not provide sustainable jobs within the sector and often come with strict rules and guidelines for compliance, which means that only large media organisations within the sector can qualify. The Government could support the sector directly with operational and employment funding to provide more appropriate employment solutions and support career pathways, rather

than working around the constraints of the various employment programs designed for short-term outcomes.

## 6. Barriers

While the opportunities for expanding employment in the First Nations media industry and developing skills that can be carried into other industries are great, there are some significant barriers to achieving success in these areas. Tight operational budgets prevent business development and associated project employment. Access barriers such as distance and language act as a barrier to involvement and to career progression. Staff retention due to the inability to offer competitive or even award wages stifle career pathways. Each of these issues is explored in this section.

### a) Operational Resources

The primary barrier to achieving increased employment objectives has been funding. First Nations media organisations around the country have consistently met and/or exceeded the objectives of various funding programs for up to 40 years, ensuring continued funding support. While this support has been welcomed and has provided a stable base for media organisations to develop supplementary income streams, they are still largely reliant on Government funding and are unlikely to become independently sustainable. While First Nations media organisations derive some income through sponsorship (including Government messaging), production services, translation services and other specialist expertise, they generally operate in regions and low socio-economic demographics with little commercial appeal.

Over the past 15 years, economic pressure and a shift to online campaign delivery has resulted in shrinking sponsorship income with Indigenous licensed radio stations reporting a reduction from an average 248 minutes of sponsorship per week in 2011-12 to 97 minutes per week in 2015-16, with an average revenue rate of \$10 per minute. Unlike other community broadcasters, Indigenous licensed radio stations have not been able to turn to their audiences for financial support. Membership/subscriber revenue for Indigenous stations is just \$1 per member (on average) as compared to an average \$38 per member across the wider community broadcasting sector, with audiences for some license types (fine music/educational) paying up to \$66 per member to support their preferred station.<sup>36</sup> Societal and socio-economic pressures mean that First Nations broadcasters can't supplement other revenue streams in this way.

First Nations media provides an essential service with public value in an environment of market failure and has received ongoing funding support on this basis. The key rationale for allocating resources to the purposes of First Nations media remain the same across all delivery platforms. First Nations radio provides

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<sup>36</sup> Survey Matters, Financial Health of Community Radio Survey, Community Broadcasting Association of Australia, October 2017

essential information services, significantly contributes to social cohesion, our national dialogue and meets key human rights obligations agreed by Government. However, the sector has been bereft of policy support and shuffled between government departments since the early 1990s.

In comparison, in 1993 the Federal Government established the Australian Film Commission's Indigenous Unit which has provided funding and significant support for a range of Indigenous content creation including Australian and international award-winning features. This has resulted in a mature, robust and professional film industry.

While funding support has been relatively stable, Australian Government funding for the Indigenous broadcasting sector has not increased in real terms since 2006-07.<sup>37</sup> This is despite the number of First Nations media organisations increasing significantly and the demand for funding more than doubling since 1996. The effect of a stagnant funding environment has been a continual squeeze on operational funding with service delivery costs rising (electricity, wage rates, rent, etc) and audience expectations expanding such that media organisations who are funded to deliver radio only, must deliver multiplatform content to retain audience currency. A lack of CPI increases over the past decade has meant a loss of around \$4m to the sector in real terms.

Compounding this, the Community Broadcasting Program, which provides some supplementary funding to First Nations radio stations, had indexation paused from 2014. Over the five years the indexation pause is in effect, the result is a \$4.024 million reduction in funds in real terms to community broadcasting which has ripple effects for First Nations broadcasters. In 2015-16 a sample group of 31 Indigenous licensed radio stations surveyed reported collective income of \$11,230,451, an average increase of 36 per cent over the five years since 2011-12. However collective expenditure levels for the same group of stations amounted to \$12,052,982, an increase of 69 per cent in the five years since 2011-12 and an income to expenditure percentage of 107 per cent. It is also worth noting income levels for rural and remote radio stations actually fell by 7 per cent between 2007-08 and 2015-16, while stations in metropolitan and regional areas experienced some income increase, but not enough to keep pace with rising operational expenses.<sup>38</sup> These statistics demonstrate an unsustainable trend in income to expenditure levels, but stagnant funding levels restrict opportunities for First Nations broadcasters to grow their self-generated funding capacity.

In a content-driven media environment, First Nations media organisations have had to prioritise broadcast personnel while making some tough decisions in relation to support personnel. The result is a hollowing of administrative resources

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<sup>37</sup> Australian Government, Review of Australian Government Investment in the Indigenous Broadcasting and Media Sector, 2010

<sup>38</sup> Survey Matters, Financial Health of Community Radio Survey, Community Broadcasting Association of Australia, October 2017

across the industry, which leaves gaps in career pathways into management positions and lack of human resources for business development, fundraising, promotion, financial management and programming oversight. In many cases, a Station Manager is expected to carry out all of these roles. Similarly, individual broadcasters in the First Nations media sector are delivering the same amount of content that would a team of 4 or 5 people would be working on at an equivalent mainstream service.

A lack of operational funding has limited opportunities for mentoring and job-shadowing to develop management and senior-level expertise. In the media industry, this represents the difference between the current 79% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment level across the sector and the 90% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment target set by the Government for all IAS funded programs in 2017. There are currently about 46 First Nations media organisations which are funded through NIAA for the delivery of broadcasting activities, of which 22 have a non-Indigenous manager. Nineteen of those organisations have more than 90% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment levels.<sup>39</sup> This is an area of focus within our industry to upskills and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into management positions. The development of management mentorship and shadowing programs would build capacity and skills in specific areas such as management, production and coordination. Many of these roles are currently filled by non-Indigenous staff, particularly in remote and regional areas, as the experience needed to fulfil these roles takes a long period of time to build. These types of jobs cannot be easily taught through courses and would be more suited to shadowing, where specific skills can be learnt on the job.

Similarly, a lack of operational funding has constrained the sector's capacity for business development and increased dependence on government funding, rather than increased financial sustainability. Indigenous Broadcasting Services receive approximately 75% of their funding through NIAA and an additional 8% from other government sources at the state and federal level.<sup>40</sup> Social Ventures Australia found that, "Indigenous Broadcasting Services have demonstrated their capacity to generate their own revenue but there is a minimum resourcing threshold that must be maintained to enable Indigenous Broadcasting Services and their staff to diversity their activities and funding."

Further, the report found there is a minimum resourcing threshold required for First Nations media organisations to explore new projects that may attract more funding, employ more community members and better suit the needs of their community, if they have capacity to hire and train staff to do so.<sup>41</sup> An increase in operational funding would go some way to addressing this issue, allowing media

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<sup>39</sup> Clague, P, 2018

<sup>40</sup> Social Ventures Australia, 2017

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

organisations to employ more staff, but also to generate new projects that have economic and employment outcomes within their communities.

b) Access barriers

In delivering locally produced and culturally appropriate media services, First Nations media organisations create employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in remote, regional and urban locations. This is particularly important for people who do not want to move away from community to pursue career pathways in capital cities. Finding meaningful work in close proximity to home mitigates access barriers such as travel costs and language barriers and means that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander can respond to cultural obligations with less disruption to both employers and employees. Many of the providers are located in rural and remote areas where there are limited opportunities for work, particularly for work that is culturally aligned.

c) Recruitment and retention

While the First Nations media industry is well placed to create employment opportunities, the sector is largely reliant on government funding programs to support those roles. A review of employment funding levels is needed to bring salaries in line with Industry award rates. A relevant award is needed for non-broadcaster or production roles. A tiered system is needed for wages and conditions that are relevant to job duties, skills/training, experience, use of language or cultural knowledge. Currently highly skilled and experienced media practitioners are working on sub-award salary levels or having to leave the sector to seek better paid jobs in other sectors. Many FNMOs rely on volunteers, trainees, part-time and casual staff who are at the lower end of the pay scale, with many on work for the dole type programs. The low wages offer little incentive for career advancement within the sector. To increase retention, First Nations media organisations needs to build capacity to ensure that key roles are being done by people in award-wage level employment positions.

Even in urban environments, First Nations media organisations operate under significant budgetary restrictions in a stagnant funding environment and increased pressure on sponsorship and fundraising income. They cannot offer competitive wages to trained personnel in comparison with other media outlets or other industries. Consequently, First Nations media organisations become a training ground for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to learn communication skills and carry them off to other industries. While the impact of this role is largely positive for communities, the media organisations receive no recognition or compensation for acting as a work-ready training hub and lose efficiencies in the continual cycle of training and replacing new staff.



## 7. Summary

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. First Nations media organisations play a crucial role in increasing community cohesion, building community resilience and supporting people into meaningful employment.<sup>42</sup> However, Government could achieve greater outcomes through increased investment in the industry.

While the First Nations media industry provides a relatively small number of jobs nationally, the economic outcomes generated by those positions for the broader community are significant. First Nations media organisations provide a near 3:1 ratio of public value, generating a social return on government investment through supporting pathways to employment, promoting local businesses and providing access to information for the community.

The communications sector offers a rich tapestry of roles and expertise which can be utilised to support broader Government objectives relating to digital inclusion and telecommunications access. Similarly, the First Nations media industry is well-placed to provide communications expertise to a range of business interests and has the capacity to grow its role as an employment hub for First Nations communities. Emerging technologies present new and exciting opportunities to engage young people in media and communications roles, as well as providing meaningful employment in digital archiving roles without having to leave their communities.

Achieving these outcomes will require increased Government investment. The industry has developed 9 Calls for Action which identify minimum requirements from Government to grow the capacity of the sector to deliver employment and economic returns for communities. First Nations Media Australia recommends a minimum requirement to achieve these aims would be:

- \$3.6million to address CPI;
- \$1.8million for personnel support requirements to meet the Government's 90% Indigenous employment target with funding potentially drawn from the Department of Jobs and Small Business;
- \$2.6million to support activities that increase organisational sustainability and reduce reliance on Government funding with funds potentially drawn from the Department of Jobs and Small Business;
- \$2.2million per annum to bring wage levels in line with Award rates;
- \$200k per annum toward the implementation of the sector's Workforce Development Action Plan;
- \$500k per annum toward formalized training activities for sector-wide skills development;

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<sup>42</sup> Social Ventures Australia, 2017

- \$600k per annum toward mentorship, job shadowing and non-accredited training support; and
- \$1.5million per annum toward employment support for new mid-level positions to establish career pathways between broadcaster and executive levels (approx. 20 positions nationally). Support for these activities could potentially be drawn from the Department of Education and Training funds.



### Case Study: PAW Media, Yuendumu

PAW provides employment and opportunities to participate in purposeful activities through the development of musical and media talent, which benefits both community members and Government. **Outcome: More Indigenous people experience meaningful, high-skilled, employment.**

PAW supports people into meaningful employment by training, offering flexible working arrangements and creating work opportunities that are aligned with the interests of individuals. PAW is a culturally safe environment. There is pride associated with working for PAW; a well-regarded, community controlled, organisation. People experience fulfilment regardless of the number of hours they work per week. Indigenous employees at PAW are proud of the content and programs they produce and have a certain standing in the community. They also develop their skills on the job – in language, literacy and numeracy and in audio-visual and digital literacy skills, in what is a highly technical industry.

"It gives me goose bumps. It is so great to see these young people doing what they are good at, especially singing in language. It's so important because it talks about feelings, it talks about country. They are singing what's in them, so when they sing about country, they are talking about their Jukurrpa (dreaming), and all their places and that is so great. We don't hear much in English about that. They sing it because they feel it, [they think]: 'I want to sing about this place, I want to sing about how I feel, even if I'm feeling happy or feeling sad'. They sing it because they're feeling it. This is their home." -Radio listener, Yuendumu

Technical skills development will also be extended to the community, with plans in place to hold digital literacy classes. **Outcomes: Decreased drinking and substance abuse; and Decreased welfare dependence.**

A smaller number of employees expressed more significant benefits of employment. Employees stated that by working with PAW in Yuendumu, they could avoid going to work in Alice Springs which they said has associated alcohol and drug challenges. They also expressed that they valued the financial independence that came with having a job, and that without the job, they would be relying on welfare. **Outcome: Increased skills through mentoring in a professional studio.**

PAW fosters the significant musical talent of the community of Yuendumu and local communities. Musicians are mostly self-taught and are assisted by PAW through mentorship and access to resources including a rehearsing and recording space. PAW fosters a vibrant music scene by providing opportunities for musicians to perform at community concerts, play their songs on air and be featured on a CD which PAW produces.

**Outcome: Increased fulfilment, confidence and pride.**

(Source: Social Ventures Australia, 2017)