



To the Secretary of the Environment and Communications References Committee:

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### Responses to questions on notice for FNMA from Senator Lidia Thorpe

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Please find below responses from First Nations Media Australia to Senator Lidia Thorpe's Questions on Notice for FNMA regarding the Inquiry into *Revive: National Cultural Policy* at the Environment and Communications References Committee's public hearing in Canberra on 14 April 2023.

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**1. You state that 'arts and culture employment must be underpinned by a concerted, accredited training effort to support the progression of First Nations people to coordination, management and technical roles'. Can you please elaborate on what this must look like, who should be involved and importantly how culturally safe pathways can be formulated to allow for promotion and movement into management positions for First Nations people in the industry.**

First Nations Media Australia recommends that management mentorship and shadowing programs be developed across the creative industries to build capacity and skills for First Nations people 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 where there are higher levels of non-Indigenous employment in management, training and technical roles due to limited current workforce capacity and experience in these areas and low levels of secondary and tertiary qualifications. This requires 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. Mentoring and shadowing programs are often more appropriate for training in upskilling in management and coordination roles, as these types of jobs and skills cannot be easily taught through courses.

The in-house training capacity of existing arts, broadcasting and media organisations also needs to be supported to provide 'train the trainer' courses (Cert 4 Training and Assessment and targeted up-skilling workshops), especially in production, technical and IT skills. In-house and on-the-job training is the preferred training delivery model for many organisations, and reduces the costs of off-site training, utilises existing relationships, integrates training into daily work practice and projects, and builds skills using locally applicable facilities and software. Flexible funding and resources are needed to facilitate this and build local training capacity,



because existing organisational funding barely covers operations. RTO partnership arrangements can enable in-house delivery of accredited training with RTOs managing the assessment and administration.

To increase targeted employment of Indigenous staff for management and coordination roles in the creative industries, a suitable recruitment agency/ies could be established or identified as a preferred supplier/s. Increased cultural awareness and cultural safety standards are essential for providing pathways and retaining First Nations employees, especially in arts and media organisations outside of the First Nations sector. Although some larger organisations like ABC have RAP plans and Indigenous representatives, cross-cultural training should be provided for all staff, as well as adequate support for new workers from remote or regional coming into these larger organisations with appropriate support structures and employment pathways.

There has been significant government investment in increasing Indigenous employment at ABC, SBS and other organisations, and in creating pathways for Indigenous employees into mainstream media organisations. However, the not-for-profit First Nations media organisations which are the training ground for these recruits have had no additional resourcing to retain experienced staff and capacity due to relatively low wages and conditions, leading to skills drain on an already under-resourced sector. This hinders the development of pathways to progression between trainer, coordinator and management roles within these organisations.

**2. This Policy will see the establishment of a 'dedicated First Nations-led Board within Creative Australia to enable self-determination, support the telling of First Nations histories and stories, and build the capacity of First Nations creative workers.' How do you think this board should function in order to enable and support self-determination?**

FNMA supports the establishment of a dedicated First Nations-led Board within Creative Australia to enable self-determination, support the telling of First Nations histories and stories, and build the capacity of First Nations creative workers. The Board must be representative of all First Nations people, reflecting the diversity of peoples, cultures, histories, experiences and circumstances across the Country; it must also have the capacity to operate autonomously and provide independent advice to Creative Australia about how the communication and preservation of First Nations stories and histories, and development of First Nations creative industries workers should be best supported.

The role of the Board should extend beyond making funding decisions to support creative initiatives and projects. Its commitment to self-determination should be grounded in principles of Indigenous peoples making their own decisions at national, state/territory and local levels, including in driving local and regional initiatives that are supported by appropriate government resourcing and investment. It should provide avenues for genuine engagement with Indigenous peoples in the creative industries (arts, culture, broadcasting and media sectors) to provide input into funding and programming initiatives to enhance training and employment opportunities including ensuring appropriate language and cultural practices.

Genuine consultation and engagement with Indigenous people and communities on policy including creative industries, media and programming initiatives during employment program lifecycles are essential for success. The involvement of First Nations people in decision-making positions on Boards such as for Creative Australia and in management contributes to building stronger, more connected and resilient communities. This also allows for greater engagement and transparency when implementing programs in relation to employment strategies for Indigenous peoples in the media sector.

**3. Art is work, and art is an act of practising culture for First Nations people. Do you support an Artist's Living Wage, which would provide a weekly income for artists who can prove their engagement in an ongoing art practice? How might this operate in a way that supports self-determination?**

First Nations people in the creative industries sector, including arts, media and broadcasting workers, typically fulfil multiple roles within their communities – for example, as reporters, content producers and community broadcasters – on a volunteer basis or with limited remuneration, often without tertiary qualifications or relevant skills development or adequate pathways. First Nations people, especially in regional and remote areas where most Indigenous community broadcasters are located, often face limited educational and employment options, and experience high levels of poverty and socio-economic marginalisation.

The provision of an Artist's Living Wage would support Indigenous self-determination insofar as it would enable First Nations people to live and maintain their connections to Country, and to practise their culture and preserve their languages, and to participate in communicating their culture to young generations. It would also provide employment opportunities for younger generations of First Nations people to work as digital creative content producers, especially in areas where there are few social and economic engagement options for young people. A 2017 report into 'Social Return on Investment analyses of Indigenous Broadcasting Services' found that the First Nations media and broadcasting sector played a significant role in providing:

...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'.

The provision of Artist's Living Wage would have a significant impact in improving the social, economic and cultural fabric of First Nations people's lives and communities. Data from NTCOSS indicates that many households in the Northern Territory were able to cover basic needs such as accommodation, food, winter clothes, whitegoods or repairs to motor vehicles when the Coronavirus supplement temporarily raised welfare recipients' income above the poverty line during 2020. (See: <https://ntcoss.org.au/media-releases/cost-of-living-report-no-29/>) It is important to emphasise that while provision of a basic living income would assist in building community capacity and cohesion, other avenues to support the self-determination of First Nations creative producers in their creative and cultural practices would be still required, such as professional development, mentoring, career pathways and salary structures, to build long-term capacity and self-governance.

For further discussion of these issues, we recommend that the Committee refer to First Nations Media Australia's *Our Media Matters: Calls for Action*: <https://firstnationsmedia.org.au/about/policy/calls-action>, and the *Workforce Development Action Plan 2019-2024 and Stronger Voices, Stronger Communities: First Nations Media*

*Employment and Skills Development Strategy:*

<https://firstnationsmedia.org.au/projects/workforce-development-action-plan-2019-2024>),

which was developed by Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research for the First Nations Media and Broadcasting sector.

We apologise sincerely for the delaying in submitting these responses to Senator Thorpe and the Committee.

Best wishes,

Dr Eleanor Hogan on behalf of Professor Shane Hearn

2 May 2023

Created:	2023-05-02
By:	Eleanor Hogan
Status:	Signed
Transaction ID:	CBJCHBCAABAAAwusLWUWBtcMhpW-pGt2gOQsYHGINwKy

## "QoN" History

-  Document created by Eleanor Hogan  
2023-05-02 - 3:44:15 AM GMT
-  Document emailed to Eleanor Hogan for signature  
2023-05-02 - 3:50:33 AM GMT
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Signature Date: 2023-05-02 - 3:53:35 AM GMT - Time Source: server- Signature captured from device with phone number XXXXXXXX3869
-  Agreement completed.  
2023-05-02 - 3:53:35 AM GMT

