



South Eastern Indigenous Media Association Inc.

Submission No. 1503

**Witness Submission to the Standing Committee on
Communications, Information Technology and the Arts**

**House of Representatives
Parliament House
AUSTRALIA**

Community Broadcasting Inquiry

**Public Hearing
Melbourne
20 July, 2006**

From

**Peter Johnson
Station Manager**

3KND/ South East Indigenous Media Association

Thank you for the opportunity of speaking to your committee.

The written submission presented to this committee details the successful operation that the South Eastern Indigenous Media Association, SIEMA, and their broadcast service 3KND has now well and truly been established in the first three years of our media broadcast and operations.

In summary, we've been on air 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for just over 3 years. We've trained over 80 Indigenous broadcasters and won awards for our training, in particular the Victorian Indigenous **Wurreker** award for excellence in training.

Thousands of hours of culturally relevant and community based programs have been produced and broadcast. This is set against our stations policy of 70% indigenous music programming.

This music policy is one of the points of difference we have from the other indigenous radio stations located interstate. The SEIMA boards' point in setting this particular policy is that if **we** don't play indigenous music, a powerful communication from our indigenous artists, then this would betray **our** reason for being on air. We also have a 100% indigenous broadcaster policy.

Whilst our local community **focus** is considered **core** business, the National Indigenous Radio Service broadcasts a selection of our programs across Australia.

These national broadcasts from our Melbourne studios provide a linkage to communities from across the country; mob in the far north east of our vast continent tuning into the south east, and of course we listen to them too!

Every morning, for example, following our successful breakfast show, we broadcast the '**Talk Black**' show from Bumma Bipperra media in Cairns. Our listeners are regular participants in this national talkback hour. **Where** would they hear this program and how would they participate in the national indigenous media forum without the broadcast service made possible by 3KND?

We have also produced and broadcast our own National talkback show, '**Talkabout**' and music show '**Songlines National**' where we linked and in turn joined the broadcast stations: 4K1G in Townsville,

Radio Larrakia in Darwin, PK media in Halls Creek NT , Koori Radio in Sydney, Radio Goolari in Western Australia and PY media in South Australia, where they broadcast in their own language.

Whilst servicing our Melbourne based community *is* our priority, these 3KND initiated linkages forge communication and contact previously unavailable to the Melbourne indigenous community.

Unlike most Australian organisations however, we started from a position of ingrained disadvantage. The history of Indigenous peoples in Australia is well known. Incontestably, these people went through - and many are still going through - dispossession and hardship as a result of colonisation by a European power that was not especially interested in the prospects and welfare of the original people of this land.

Of course, that's the past. It was bad, and a lot of bad things happened. But, it's the future we're interested in, and various governments have shown they are also interested in redressing the problems and injustices still dogging us from the past.

SEIMA and 3KND came into being as a consequence of government policy and your ongoing support is welcome and essential.

In the words of the old song, we prefer to *'accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative'*.

Continued funding and support will facilitate this desire and will benefit all Indigenous groups in Melbourne and Victoria in a variety of ways. From sheer entertainment to current affairs, to career opportunities undreamed of in past years.

In the three short years of our operation, we have seen and reported remarkable results.

However, for us to sustain our efforts and continue the work being done by and on behalf of Indigenous people, we certainly want and need your continued involvement.

We'd ask that you look at our proposals in a friendly way, not just as a piece of business that must be done. This might seem an odd request, but friendship, mentoring and community spirit are all extremely important in the Indigenous, as well as the wider community. Something good, even great has been started at SEIMA/3KND.

We feel it is absolutely imperative that the ball is not dropped, at anytime, by anyone.

To give you an idea of what I mean, think of *what* it was like on the day we first opened the doors at 3KND. We opened them with ambition in our mind, hope in our hearts ... tempered with a little fear of the unknown. We also had a big 'Welcome' mat.

All we had was a small building in Preston, in the northern corridor of Melbourne where a high proportion of the Indigenous community lives. We had an array of equipment, some new some old, a broadcast license and a well-formed, ambitious plan. But we knew that we were stepping into the unknown.

Fortunately, our experiences have been positive, more than positive. Our results have been remarkable and gratifying.

We've seen shy young kids and inexperienced people walk in through our doors, not knowing quite what they're doing, and ... weeks or months later, we've seen them transformed into assured, proficient people, confident in what they're doing, whether it be as contributing broadcasters, producers, or technical support.

You can't overestimate the value of self-esteem, the absolute necessity of self-confidence in the development of high morale in young and old alike. The merit of SEIMA is not measured just by the actual work we do, valuable as that may be.

What we see is the whole ethos surrounding 3KND sending *positive* ripples out through all Indigenous groups and the wider community, and all the interests and activities undertaken by those groups.

While the founders of SEIMA understood there would be benefits, even they have been astounded by the far-reaching results of this rather small media organisation. Far more than in the general community, what Indigenous media does is give a voice to these groups and interests, a voice that spreads across Australia, and brings in reciprocal programming from other states and territories.

But it's not just that it's a voice: It's a voice that's spreading the word. And the word is *achievement* ... it's success ... it's 'you can do it'

For the first time, Indigenous people are getting a concentration of good news about the achievements of their fellows in a wide range of fields.

Whether it's sport, medicine, law, music, dance or other forms of entertainment, Indigenous people are hearing about Indigenous achievements in Melbourne, Victoria and all over Australia.

What this does, is build the self confidence of people, and it builds self-expectation too: if Kathy can do it, so can I; if Christine Arnu and Erni Dingo can do it, so can I; if Michael Long can do it, so can I; if Lorice Odonahue can do it, so can I.

While Indigenous success and achievement has been on an upward gradient for many years, it used to happen quietly, in isolation.

With this media organisation spreading the word, SEIMA has become an actionable example, projecting role models: listeners better understand that all things are possible if you have the desire and put in the time and effort.

You can see then, the vital necessity of SEIMA continuing its' work. It would be a disaster for the indigenous community, if it all fell in a heap, through lack of funding and other support. And it wouldn't help the rest of Australia either.

There is a wealth of information in the material with which you have already been provided, but there are a couple of things I would like to highlight now.

Firstly, with the help of the Victorian Government, soon we will be moving to new premises. This will enable us to upgrade our programming and our services, to all our audiences. We currently have application in process with the broadcasting authorities to expand our broadcast signal to rural and regional Victoria.

As well as the radio station, we are also establishing a recording studio, in association with our sister organisation Songlines, an Aboriginal corporation dedicated to mentoring and showcasing young people in all areas of music performance. Performers and technicians from all areas of the music business come to Songlines and 3KND to advise and assist young Indigenous performers, helping to put them on the right track.

Then, when they have reached a high enough level, the youngsters are able to record at the SEIMA studio. Then 3KND includes their music in

its programming. Music recording, and broadcasting, under the one roof.

Again, it is easy to understand how valuable this process is in building the confidence and expectations of young kids who, in the past, have all too often drifted into unhelpful pursuits and sometimes hopelessness.

Clearly, this whole process is about funding.

Everything needs to be paid for and there are many competing interests. What I must emphasise now, is that our success doesn't necessarily reward us in **material** ways; broadcast services, albiet supported by a high proportion of volunteer members, are still an expensive service to run.

While we are always under financial pressure, this pressure is worsening because, in real terms, our funding is decreasing. This simply, and sadly means it is ever more difficult to maintain our programs, let alone plan for expanded services.

Good and positive things are happening. But without appropriate funding these things **could** start to unravel badly. Given the high degree of our success and our optimistic forecasts of what we want to do, this would be a tragedy.

From a standing start around three years ago, we are now proudly established as a **thriving** resource in a **hungry** community.

We do regard **problems** as opportunities in waiting. But, to remain a thriving and positive force, we need your continued support; your understanding and the funding **only you** can deliver.

The silent voice of the Victorian indigenous community used to only be heard through its art; now its voice is also heard through its **own** community radio service, 3KND

We are travelling well. But we have a long way still to go.

We'd like you to join us on the journey.