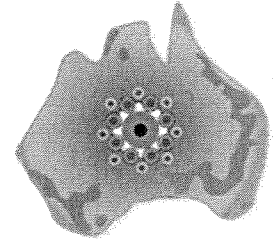


**INDIGENOUS REMOTE COMMUNICATIONS ASSOCIATION**

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**Additional Information to accompany IRCA's presentation to the 'Language Learning in Indigenous Communities' Senate Inquiry (12/4/12)**

Indigenous Remote Communications Associations thank the Senators for the opportunity to present to the hearing held in Alice Springs on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2012.

The representatives from IRCA included IRCA Chairperson Noel Heenan, PAW Media Indigenous media workers Simon Japangardi Fisher, Elizabeth Napaljarri Katakarinja, Lionel James and Dennis Charles, ICTV Board member Lousie Cavanagh and IRCA staff Daniel Featherstone (Interim Manager) and Linda Hughes (Marketing & Communications Officer).

While the IRCA representatives made many points about the important role of Indigenous media and broadcasting in maintaining Indigenous languages, there were several key points that they felt they hadn't adequately conveyed within the format of the hearing. These points are additional to those made in the written submission, as follows:

**THE IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE**

- Confidence in speaking language is central to cultural pride, identity, self-respect and empowerment. Remote Indigenous people who cannot speak their 'mother tongue' through forced removal or prevention of language use, often feel culturally disconnected or lost. As Lionel James says, "Language makes you feel whole and strong".
- See Appendix 1 - Diagrammatic Interpretation of the Inter-connectedness of Language designed by Lionel James.
- Indigenous languages need to be conveyed and learnt orally- there was no written form traditionally. Only those people who can read written English can read written language.

**HISTORY OF REMOTE INDIGENOUS MEDIA**

- Remote Indigenous TV broadcasting began in the early 1980s in Yuendumu NT and Ernabella SA as a response to the introduction of English-based mainstream TV services with the launch of AUSSAT.
- This led to the Broadcasting for Remote Aboriginal Communities Scheme (BRACS), with nearly 150 communities now able to broadcast local radio and TV programming, primarily in local Indigenous languages.
- The remote Indigenous media sector regularly employs about 3-400 Indigenous media workers as broadcasters, producers, journalists, trainers, translators, cultural officers, archivists, performers etc. However, employee

numbers has been reduced since abolition of CDEP and shifting to the National Jobs Package (fixed 20hrs/week), restricting the flexibility of project-based or casual employment.

- Languages are regionally specific; broadcast services and distribution of language content need to cover similar footprints for audiences to understand the languages spoken.

### **COMMUNITY BROADCASTING KEY TO LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE**

- The normalisation of Indigenous languages through daily broadcasting and communications services is seen as critical to language continuity.
- The remote indigenous media sector share programming within regions via 8 regional satellite-delivered radio networks (since 1997) and the Indigenous Community Television (ICTV) service.

### **INDIGENOUS TELEVISION**

- ICTV began broadcasting in 2002 on Imparja's second satellite channel 31 for the purpose of sharing remote language-based programming to remote communities. ICTV broadcasts video productions in 23 different languages from around Australia (see Appendix 2). Approximately 70% of ICTV programming is in language.
- ICTV operated without any funding until mid-2007, when use of the channel was reallocated to National indigenous TV (NITV). It re-started in 2009 as weekend service only on Westlink satellite channel 23) and now has minimal operational funding.
- Of the \$80million spent on NITV since 2006, the remote production sector has received virtually none of the production funding. Most NITV programming is in English and follows mainstream programming models.
- 25 years on from the introduction of BRACS (1987), community TV broadcasting is being abolished due to the introduction of digital television via a direct-to-home reception model. The closure of the Aurora satellite service at the end of 2013 will also mean the end of ICTV unless a channel is allocated on the VAST digital satellite to maintain remote Indigenous community TV.

### **ON-LINE MEDIA DELIVERY**

- IRCA and ICTV established an on-line media platform in 2008 ([www.indigiTUBE.com.au](http://www.indigiTUBE.com.au)) for sharing of remote Indigenous radio services and video content. IRCA manages the radio streaming side, with 8 regional Indigenous radio networks streaming live. ICTV manage the video streaming site, with over 400 videos available for view on demand. Most of this content is in Indigenous languages.
- The recent Review into the Indigenous Broadcasting and Media Sector (Stevens Review) proposed that remote Indigenous TV content should be delivered via "an online portal for sharing and accessing content made by and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, especially in remote Australia" and that ICTV "act as an aggregator for this content."

(Recommendation 19). This does not recognise the very low level of take-up of ICTs and internet access (estimated at less than 2%) in remote Indigenous households. It is still many years off before on-line delivery is appropriate for primary media services such as Indigenous language-based media.

- For remote Indigenous people, the best communications technologies enable audio-visual (face-to-face) communications where verbal language, sign and body language can all be conveyed. Text-based communications (email, letters, websites etc) is not appropriate for many remote indigenous people. The NBN model of satellite-delivered broadband (asymmetrical, high latency, shared contention) to remote Australia is likely to limit the types of broadband applications such as videoconferencing, tele-health & interactive teaching applications and IPTV. Further, it will not support the expansion of mobile coverage to remote Indigenous communities.
- Beyond the rollout of broadband infrastructure, there is a need for improved IT access facilities, post-school training, and development of appropriate internet services and relevant content.

### **ALL LANGUAGES NEED MAINTAINING, NOT JUST ENDANGERED ONES:**

- All languages are under threat. Even in areas where language is still spoken, there is loss of language diversity and complexity, and breakdown in inter-generational transfer. The Warlpiri refer to the old people who speak in 'old Warlpiri', in contrast to the 'light Warlpiri' spoken mostly today. Traditionally, more complex language were learnt throughout life, not just in childhood, with specialised language used for ceremonies, initiation, Jukurpa and songs.
- Language maintenance should be central to all Indigenous policy, not seen as a separate program.
- Funding programs should not just be to recover endangered or 'sleeping' languages but to sustain active languages- all languages are under threat. Currently the Maintenance of indigenous Languages and Recordings (MILR) program is very difficult for remote media organizations to access, being primarily aimed at funding of language centre programs.

### **SERVICE DELIVERY AND TRANSLATION SERVICES:**

- Currently English is normalised in most service delivery and operations in communities (education and training, employment, health, justice, governance etc) with the resultant degradation of languages as well as effective discrimination on the basis of English literacy levels in the areas of education/training, employment opportunities, governance and authority.
- Awareness campaigns, education and service delivery should be available in language, with translation services where required, as it is for many ethnic languages. This will improve community understanding and service delivery and assist in 'Closing the Gap' in these areas.
- Translation services & helpline services in language are needed for remote people

### EDUCATION/ LANGUAGE AWARENESS:

- Non-Indigenous staff working in remote areas (teachers, nurses, media org & community staff etc) should be required to undertake language training as part of their workplace preparation. A language certification or 'passport' could be required to work with Indigenous programs in Central Australia.
- To support this and improve community awareness of Indigenous languages, there needs to be more language courses available to the public. This will increase employment (as trainers) and support reconciliation through greater cross-cultural awareness.
- Learning of local Indigenous languages should be built into school curriculums. This will help to allocate resources to language preservation and build greater cultural awareness from a young age.
- Signage could include local Indigenous names or words (as in parts of NT and throughout NZ), such as identifying entry into language areas, as well as site and town names. This would help improve awareness of language areas.
- Training in translation/Interpreting skills are needed; Translation skills are used in the remote media sector for radio announcements, sub-titling of videos, language on websites and interpreting archival records.

### ARCHIVING/ REPATRIATION OF LANGUAGE RECORDINGS:

- There is strong demand in the sector for archiving of audio-visual recordings for language preservation and maintenance. Programs are needed to enable digitizing of community collections, repatriating collections, providing community access via various media delivery platforms.
- PAW Media have developed an extensive archive project to digitally preserve and catalogue their 30 year old collection of audio-visual recordings, with the help of philanthropic and royalty funding. PAW Media has also actively sought for earlier recordings to be repatriated from AIATSIS, NFSA, museums and other institutions. As a result, these recordings are now available back to the community to help maintain significant language and cultural recordings that would otherwise have been lost.
- There are no major funding programs available for these community-based archive collections. Due to lack of funding, other Remote Media organisations risk losing their vast collections of analog community-produced language recordings.
- Further, digital delivery platforms to enable community access to these recordings (eg- Ara Irititja Archival Project in APY Lands of SA) need to be supported with recurrent funding.

### LANGUAGE LEARNING VIA DIGITAL MEDIA:

- The ways in which young people learn language and culture has changed since the introduction of English-based schooling and removal of bi-lingual education. Digital media recording has become a powerful tool for inter-generational knowledge transfer, with young people recording old people telling Jukurrpa (Law stories) or oral histories and preserving these for others

to hear and learn. These recordings can be shared via various platforms (radio, TV, CD, DVD, on-line, iPod, mobile phone, Aṛa Irititja etc) to enable ongoing learning.

We look forward to the findings of the Senate inquiry.

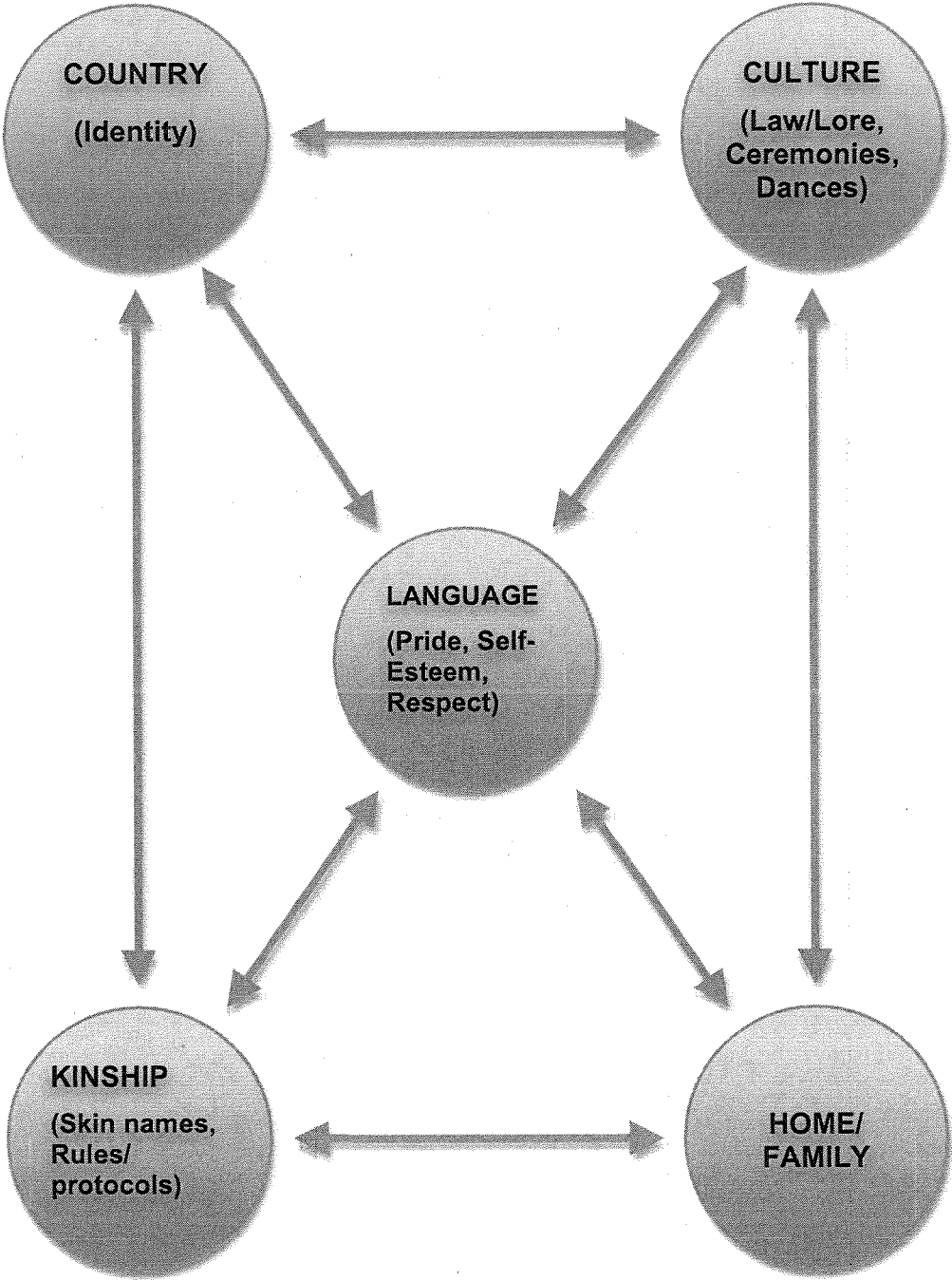
Yours Sincerely



Daniel Featherstone  
Interim Manager

On behalf of the Board of Indigenous Remote Communications Association

Appendix 1- Diagrammatic Interpretation of the Inter-connectedness of Language (Diagram by Lionel James)



Appendix 2- Languages broadcast on ICTV

ICTV broadcasts/delivers video content in 23 different languages from around Australia, as follows:

- Alyawarr
- Anmatyerr
- Arrarnte
- Bardi
- Djambarrpuynu
- Eastern Anmatyerr
- Gija
- Karajarri
- Kukatja
- Luritja
- Mangala
- Martu
- Nga\_gikurunggurr
- Ngaanyatjarra
- Ngarluma
- Pintubi
- Pitjantjatjara
- Tiwi
- Umpila
- Warlpiri
- Worla
- Yindjibarndi
- Yolngu Matha

