

# Aboriginal Resource & Development Services Submission to the IBP Review

## ARDS

Aboriginal Resource and Development Services Inc. (ARDS) is an Aboriginal Association incorporated under the NT Associations Act. Its management committee is drawn from the Yolŋu people of north-east Arnhem Land. ARDS has been operating in north-east Arnhem Land since its incorporation in 1974.

ARDS provides education and communication services to its clientele, the Yolŋu people of north-east Arnhem Land. Much of this has historically taken place in a face-to-face method although we now operate 'Yolŋu Radio' which broadcasts in Yolŋu Matha (the traditional language of the people). *Yolŋu Radio* broadcasts a wide range of educational programs against the background of a Yolŋu-friendly listening environment.



Since 2003 ARDS has produced many exciting educational programs in the language (*Yolŋu Matha*) of the Yolŋu people. These programs have proven very successful in educating Yolŋu people about things like diabetes, nutrition, drugs, and law and order issues; resulting in Yolŋu people attending health clinics for sugar level testing, changing their diet and exercising regularly. A number of young people have given up their drug habits because they now know how drugs such as marijuana affect their bodies. The result is that these quality, Yolŋu-friendly radio programs are changing the communities for good, because people now have information in their own language for the first time.

For examples of this material please visit: [www.ards.com.au/hear\\_programs.htm](http://www.ards.com.au/hear_programs.htm)

*Yolŋu Radio* first went to air in April 2003 as the first HF Domestic Broadcasting service. Since May 2004 ARDS has been a community broadcaster (under a Temporary Community Broadcast Licence – TCBL). Our current TCBL expires 26 July 2007.

Our TCBL is for AM services at Nhulunbuy, Darwin, Elcho Island, Gapuwiyak and Yathalamarra near Ramingining. These AM services have been incorporated in a new Licence Area Plan (Arnhem Land, NT) which was enacted in January 2006 and is for a new permanent community licence in the AM band specifically for an Indigenous language service. The ACMA have advised that applications for the new permanent Community Licence will be called in the next few months.

ARDS also holds twelve Low Power Open Narrowcast (LPON) licences in north-east Arnhem Land for the retransmission of *Yolŋu Radio*. Additionally ARDS has four MF Narrowband Area Service (NAS) licences for AM frequencies (which are just outside the Broadcast Service Band - BSB). These licences are for locations in north-east Arnhem Land.

In total ARDS holds 21 radio broadcast licences which allow us to broadcast to Nhulunbuy, Darwin and the six major Aboriginal communities in north-east Arnhem Land – Yirrkala, Gunyajarra, Galiwin'ku, Gapuwiyak, Ramingining and Milingimbi. As well as the four Homeland Centres that have an LPON transmitter, there are another 12 Homelands that are able to hear the transmissions from the major community transmitters.

To deliver the radio programming to our many transmission sites ARDS has also developed two different satellite systems. The first is an all weather C-Band system for the major sites so that they do not lose the program signal during bad weather in the Wet season. The second is on the Optus C1 (Aurora) platform and is readily available to anyone anywhere in Australia as it is a free to air signal. This has been used to feed our program to the LPON sites as well as those RIBS units who have chosen to play our material to air.

The population of the Yolŋu Aboriginal people is approximately 7,000 Yolŋu in north-east Arnhem Land and also another 1,000 who reside in Darwin. ARDS will therefore refer to its listening audience of 8,000 people although we know of many English first language Australians who also tune to our broadcasts.



# The Current Landscape of Indigenous Broadcasting

The present crises facing Indigenous communities have as their underlying cause an almost total failure by government systems to communicate with Indigenous Australians. This is due to the fact that English is almost a foreign language for many remote Indigenous people. These English second language Indigenous people are marginalised and powerless in a ‘culture of silence’; unable access information or to speak out if they want to. It makes them some of the most vulnerable and violated citizens in this country today. This condition will continue despite the many millions of dollars being spent on other programs. However good quality radio in language can play a very important role in overcoming this situation and give Indigenous people a voice as well as an opportunity to hear information and news to overcome the ‘culture of silence’ that they now live in.

Today across most of remote Australia the broadcasting activities of the Indigenous sector fall into two main categories. The first is the RIBS units on the individual communities and the second is the more regional organisations – some of whom broadcast where they are physically situated and some who do not. Most of the regional organisations transmit their material via satellite so that others, in particular the RIBS units, can take a feed and play that to air in lieu of their own locally produced material. Up to now this method has not worked well and has left many isolated Aboriginal people with almost no service at all. This was the case in north-east Arnhem Land when ARDS first looked at the media services and why they are still not working in 2006. It led to ARDS undertake a feasibility study on a regional radio service and this was explained in “*A Community Development Radio Service for the Yolŋu clan nations of north-east Arnhem Land*”. This dossier explains the current short falls and also creates a road map for ourselves and others to create a radio service that will truly fill the gap and deliver the information needs of the Yolŋu people of north-east Arnhem Land and other traditional Indigenous groups.

Unfortunately we do see any recommendations in the IBP proposal that will really make remote area Indigenous broadcasting work in a truly efficient and effective way.

The recommended model of the IBP to place broadcasters in a banded system where the allocation of funding from the IBP will be split according to audience population is OK. However population based formulae need to also take into account the need for truly isolated Aboriginal communities who have higher transmission costs to cover the vast and remote regions where they are. For it is in these remote and isolated communities where the people will more likely to speak English as a fifth or sixth language and therefore have no radio service at all in a language they can understand. Also because of the language issue, the Indigenous radio service these people have might be the only service they have to receive real information or news because in these cases it must be recognised that the national and regional services in English do not meet the needs of the most disadvantaged Indigenous people who still speak their traditional languages as their first language.

## When is a Broadcaster a Broadcaster?

What is not clear under the IBP is, What constitutes a broadcaster? A RIBS unit definitely is, although there are numerous reasons why many of them do not operate either effectively or continuously to the point of producing and broadcasting their own material. Most RIBS that are operating fall back to the ‘failsafe’ position of rebroadcasting material picked up off satellite. This was highlighted in north-east Arnhem Land by the (then) Miwatj Region ATSIC review (2003) of the (then) BRACS units. It stated that the BRACS units were ‘*predominately operating as retransmissions stations*’.

However there is evidence of the fact that the RIBS also often even fail as retransmission sites. Unless someone in the community takes on responsibility for the equipment then at times even the retransmission ceases or the satellite channel is changed so that what goes to air on the RIBS transmitter is the likes and wants of a select few in the community. One community known to ARDS in recent times played ABC Classic FM on its RIBS frequency for over 18 months because the English first language Non-Indigenous people wanted it! It stayed on this long also because the Yolŋu people did not miss anything because what was being played through their RIBS unit from the regional hub was not meeting their needs and so they didn’t listen to the radio and so it was not missed when the RIBS transmitter was switched to another program.

The result of this failure of the RIBS was revealed in the finding of the BRACS review that “*Community members found an (understandable) complete lack of interest in BRACS as it is presently. They have a strong interest in an alternative set up which allows for active content production on issues such as culture, health, local event and current affairs.*”

Furthermore, when the regional media hub is isolated from the location where the RIBS units are, not only geographically but also because of language, then they are not able to maintain a link with the units and so equipment failures and extended downtimes, as well as incidents like the ABC Classic FM highlighted above, become the norm.

What these scenarios mean is that the first tier regional organisations, sometimes referred to as ‘regional media hubs’, that put their content up for delivery on satellite have no way of knowing if any of the RIBS in their area are either receiving or retransmitting the material. In this case are they a broadcaster?

Furthermore, unless the regional media hubs are based on language regions then the material they offer only resonates with the audience a small percentage of the time. CAAMA is one example. It has under its satellite footprint many major language regions. It cannot produce material in all of them all of the time so English is the safe fallback - but does not truly meet the needs of any of the people. TEABBA has six major language groups under its footprint so if they produce material in one of these regional languages the other groups would not understand it. But the argument is actually more complex than that. Few regional hubs have the *language* and *education* experience in any of the language groups that they serve, so it would be impossible for them to do this language work even if they wanted to. To make this clear it is not that that these regional hubs do not have people in their organisation that speak these languages - they do – but it is because they do not have the community education expertise for this work and because they cover so many different language regions rather than just one.

## **Regrowing Indigenous Broadcasting**

The ATSIIC review of BRACS in the Miwatj Region clearly indicated that the people out on the ground, the listening audience, wanted broadcast material to include ‘*active content production on issues such as culture, health, local event and current affairs*’. These people also want it in a language that they can understand. For this to happen Indigenous Broadcasting needs to be regrown from the ground up, in a way that truly meets the needs of the listeners.

It was by listening to this voice and engaging in dialogue across our local language region that ARDS sought to establish *Yolŋu Radio* in response to direct requests from the Yolŋu leaders and clan elders in north-east Arnhem Land. In other words it was because the present system had failed to meet the needs of the Yolŋu people in any real way.

One of the foundational issues for the subsequent success of *Yolŋu Radio*, and similar regional success stories such as PY Media, are that they are first and foremost based on language regions and so they have a well defined audience. As such the production of material can be solely in language and does not have to be supplemented by large amounts of English which really only meets the needs of the regional media hub that provides it.

The failure of the present BRACS/RIBS system is really not the fault of the RIBS operators. It was due in the main because many involved in government did not understand how difficult it was for traditional Yolŋu people to produce radio content from scratch. BRACS operators were set up to fail because they had no back up language workers and resources. It has never been appreciated within government that it takes the ABC or any other radio producer many man hours to produce one hour of programming. Some how Indigenous people were expected to just do it by themselves with no resources in language and all on 0.5 of a persons salary, because that is all that the BRACS/RIBS funding has provided.

The reality is that even in the dominant, mainstream English language that it takes many more resources than this. For Yolŋu, and other traditional Indigenous people like them, this is a new experience, an experience that is not backed by good linguistic resources. So for the local RIBS

operator to get information from the local doctor about what is causing diabetes was almost impossible because the RIBS operator cannot understand most of what the doctor says to him. But that same RIBS operator, teamed together with an English first language person that also speaks the traditional language, they can get the information from the doctor, put it to air and not only teach the people about what is causing diabetes but also teach the people hearing the program some new English words - because the information is translated and dialogued back and forwards between the doctor, the RIBS operator and the English first language radio producer. For this to happen all the RIBS units need to be tied together with a regional radio producer/station. This is what ARDS has done with *Yolŋu Radio* and it is working very well.

However from ARDS's experience, the production costs of radio for traditional Indigenous people, where their traditional languages are used, has been totally and completely overlooked. The difference in cost between English content or bringing in an English DJ and either spinning discs, reading out an information sheet from government or some other news source; and a radio service that has to translate all this information in to one of the traditional languages has been completely overlooked since the BRACS were introduced.

Because these issues and associated cost have consistently been overlooked, Indigenous Australians are locked out of the dominant culture world because they receive no information in a language that they can understand. Before *Yolŋu Radio* only a small number of Yolŋu people in north-east Arnhem Land listened to any radio service. Almost none of the elders listened to radio as they found the English-only content provided by the mainstream media and also the media hubs was impossible to listen to. Now these elders, along with the other members of the communities, are being empowered as they learn about a whole range of issues. Yolŋu traditional music and contemporary music now have a regular broadcast platform where most of the Yolŋu people are listening to it and more will do so once broadcasts of *Yolŋu Radio* become available to them. As one Yolŋu woman said to an ARDS employee on a community recently, "When I come home from work I switch on *Yolŋu Radio* because it is the only form of adult education available to me".

The document, *A Community Development Radio Service for the Yolŋu clan nations of north-east Arnhem Land*, sets out clearly what is achievable for Indigenous people with a dynamic, people-based radio service. It is four years since the release of the report about a regional broadcasting service operating in language, and the growth in the Yolŋu communities that have had access to *Yolŋu Radio* is marked. This is because:

1. the service is a regional one, based on language, i.e. a language region;
2. it provides music and education programs that the people of the region have continually asked to hear;
3. ARDS has placed its own transmission infrastructure and maintained it so the Yolŋu people can access the regional service on cheap, easily accessible equipment, across most of the region;
4. it is also available on the Internet, as an archived service, so that people can go to the ARDS website, like health workers do, and listen to or listen again to a program as they want to – on any subject like diabetes or whatever. This service means that it is always online and is 'long life', available indefinitely which value adds to the dollars spent by the government or whoever sponsors the production of that particular material (see [www.ards.com.au/hear\\_programs.htm](http://www.ards.com.au/hear_programs.htm))

If this model is expanded into other language regions much of the material that ARDS have developed in Yolŋu Matha can be used in other language regions by quickly editing in the language from these other regions. ARDS does not want to lock down this information and so has already made it available on the Internet in Yolŋu Matha and as time and funds allow will also make the English translation of our radio material available as well, enabling other language regions to access the material for the benefit of Indigenous people right across Australia. ARDS has already planed for this to happen and has saved all our audio material in a format that will make this a short process for other language regions possible.

This means that people working in other language regions do not have to take the years needed to do the analysis of what the Indigenous people in their region are having difficulties with in the contemporary world, but can use the work and material done by ARDS as the basis for the community education in their region.

Also in the near future ARDS will be making *Yolŋu Radio* available through a live web stream allowing Yolŋu people anywhere in Australia to receive the same radio programming that people back home are listening to. For Yolŋu children away at boarding school, colleges and university, this will be a wonderful opportunity for them to stay in touch and to use as a resource for information and knowledge.

## **Regional Media Service**

It is for these reasons mentioned above that we believe that the proposed model for Remote Indigenous Media Organisations (RIMO's) is not wide enough. A Regional Media Services (RMS) should not be seen as just radio transmission services, but also include other technologies such as web based services. It should also include content production. The RMS must also be based on a language region.

Then the focus of all types of media content production can be done efficiently and effectively rather than trying to take the 'one size fits all' method which fails for people who are not English first language or when the material is shared directly across a number of language regions as currently occurs in some places in the Northern Territory. We need a more dynamic approach to media if we are going to really meet the needs of isolated Indigenous citizens, especially where English is a second language.

Additional to this is that these language region-based RMS will be able to provide tailored training in language for RIBS operators and producers. Initially this can be in radio but later can be expanded to the use of video and then to other web and internet based mediums.

The DCITA proposed model for the RIMO's goes some of the way to fit with what ARDS is suggesting for a Regional Media Service, but only if it was based on one language region. The DCITA proposal for the RIMO's is also of a more technical nature than that of being a proactive content (radio and other) producer. ARDS believes that the RMS needs to be predominantly content focussed. Without good content you do not have good radio. These RMS would also need to provide the technical services needed for the language region. This view comes from the north-east Arnhem Land experience of the last ten years where long distances have meant that the coordination and provision of technical services has been limited and hence any possible content production had all but ceased.

By basing the coordinating body within the local language region will also work toward improving the involvement of local people and facilitate the better use of CDEP workers than exists at present. This has already been proved with the ARDS model.

It should be noted that in 2002 in *A Community Development Radio Service for the Yolŋu clan nations of north-east Arnhem Land*, ARDS highlighted that one reason that RIBS could not attract sponsorships was due to each having a small listening audience. The other advantage of a RMS is that sponsorship generation becomes easier. Sponsoring educational material around health issues, law and order, drug abuse and many other issues becomes very attractive to sponsors and other partners in education and training when the RMS can deliver through radio to a regional audience and then also place the material on the web for access into the future by many different groups of people. For example nursing sisters, primary health educators and teachers are now using ARDS programming off the Internet to discuss current issues with their clients and students. This 'value adding' to government dollars must be seen as a real plus and in fact will pay back the government ten fold on any investment they put into a truly functionate RMS, operating effectively over a single language region. ARDS welcomes the final dot point of what RIMO's could do because a regional service *will* be able to attract government funding for sponsorships in the same way that *Yolŋu Radio* has been able to do as a regional service operating in language.

Finally, one thing that has not been considered in the RIMO proposal is that currently all local councils hold the broadcast licence for the RIBS radio function. The fact that RIMO's will be undertaking many of the functions that the councils now have for their RIBS, consideration needs to be given to how or if these licences are transferred to the RIMO or RMS. ARDS position is with a need for local 'ownership' and acceptance of the RIBS then the licences and RIBS staff should stay with local community councils.

## Summary

To truly regrow Indigenous broadcasting in remote areas then a modified model of the RIMO proposal, similar to the successful PY Media and Yolŋu Radio, needs to be implemented.

The 'culture of silence' now being experienced by Indigenous people who are English second language is massive. This can be seen in the current crises on Indigenous communities who suffer high levels of violence, drug abuse, unemployment and suicide.

Good radio can make a real difference. But good radio must be in the language of the people so the people will want to switch on and listen. Good radio is where the people can get answers to the problems that make them want to just go and get drunk. Good radio delivers culturally-friendly programming. Good radio is the best front line educational tool used all over the world. Good radio uses material that the people themselves have produced to that makes them feel good about themselves and their culture. Good radio should be seen as a financial investment by government not a financial burden. Good radio is information and news not just entertainment. Good radio is a right not a privilege for all citizens in a democratic country like Australia. And for the most marginalised citizens in Australia today it is an essential service. Unfortunately good radio is not what most people get in isolated Indigenous communities at the moment.

ARDS believe that it is the role of government to invest wisely to overcome this "culture of silence".

# ARDS Response to Questions

## **B.1 Proposed new funding model for broadcasting services**

*B.1.2.1 Does the proposed funding model provide for a more equitable distribution of funds?*

ARDS is a relatively new community broadcaster and has not yet received any recurrent funding toward operational costs of Yolŋu Radio. Should ARDS receive recurrent operational funding then we are more than happy to have any IBP funding equalised across the cities and regions as this is a fair and equitable way of providing a level playing field to all participants. However this equalisation must also have within it a review process so that the effectiveness and efficiency of the various broadcasters that receive funding is regularly scrutinised so that all broadcasters funded by the IBP are performing to a required standard and monies are not being wasted.

There needs to be built in to the formula though, the cost in providing this vital media service to isolated regions. There are currently two different models in north-east Arnhem Land. One where the current 'media hub' is mainly only transmitting material produced by someone else, delivered to them down a phone line and sent by them via satellite. Those receiving the material off the satellite may or may not be receiving it.

The other is where the media organisation has produced almost all of the content so that is in the language of the people (i.e. a language region) and then delivered via satellite to many transmission sites often in sparsely populated areas. It is these sparsely populated remote areas that always miss out on these vital services.

Put simply the cost of providing English only radio to a large population in a large town or city, bares no similarity what so ever to the high cost of providing radio content in language to a wide spread language group. This does not even take into account the higher costs of transport, accommodation and technical services that remote areas face daily.

*B.1.2.2 Are there any strong arguments to justify funding for broadcasting under the IBP on a multi-year basis?*

While ARDS understand the reasons for not providing multi-year funding, it would be beneficial to new broadcasters to have an initial period of say three years where such funding would be guaranteed so that the goal of establishing the station and getting it running smoothly could be the main focus rather than to have to constantly search for funds and take the focus of the real aim of broadcasting. In ARDS case the many responses of 'Yes that's a great service you will be broadcasting' did not translate into dollars of funding as people wanted us to get the service running before committing to providing funding. In the Indigenous Broadcasting sector it would be good to have the IBP able to assist with initial set-term funding to allow a station to establish itself first.

The necessary checks and balances would need to be put in place so that the multi-year funding is not just a 'blank cheque'. Also agreed performance measures would need to be met for the recurrence of the funding throughout the initial period.

*B.1.2.3 Comment is requested on the proposal for a capital equipment fund.*

ARDS view this as a fair and open system. However what is not specified in the discussion paper is whether the pool will be national, within the states/territories or purely on a regional basis. This would influence the effectiveness of such a fund to a degree as if there was a distribution of funds on a regional level then in one region there may be a broadcaster who receives funds when there is another broadcaster possibly in greater need of the capital yet misses out due the way the funding is allocated in that region. Whether a state or national funding pool would be of better value is unclear at this stage. However the principal of a capital fund for one off grants is viewed by ARDS as a good idea.

#### *B.1.2.4 Should activities such as training and recording festivals, stories, customs and traditions receive funding from a competitive funding pool set up under the IBP?*

Again ARDS would welcome such a scheme with a competitive funding pool. This may well need to be a national pool although if an allocation were made to the states/territories for distribution in a competitive manner then this may well be a good model.

ARDS has from time to time had reason to seek such funding, particularly in regard to the recording and archiving of sensitive cultural material that our members have asked us to assist them with. However the lack of such a fund/pool has meant that we have not been able to easily, in many cases not at all, accommodate these requests. Yes such a competitive fund would be of immense help with recording and archiving cultural material.

#### *B.1.2.5 If so, what activities should be eligible for funding from the pool?*

The recording of cultural material, that is the traditional song lines and public stories that have a wealth of academic knowledge in them, must be given the very highest priority over all other material. The elderly people that still have this knowledge are few and are the last of their generation. Put this together with the very high death rate being experienced by many of these traditional communities' means again that the material must have the highest priority for recording.

However this must take place in a sensitive and professional manner and this could well be included as a pre-requisite for the funding process to make sure that only those suitable organisations, especially regional media groups who operate in the people's language, be funded.

## **B.2 Remote Indigenous Media Organisation (RIMOs)**

#### *B.2.1.1 Will the proposed model for RIMOs enable RIBS to operate more effectively?*

ARDS has worked in north-east Arnhem Land since 1974. During this time the BRACS system was introduced and so ARDS has had first hand opportunity to view its operation. Almost all the RIBS in north-east Arnhem Land have failed to meet expectations for a number of reasons. These include:

1. not enough funding;
2. that because they only broadcast to a very small population they find it very hard to attract sponsorship; and
3. that the hardest issue of all for RIBS operators was, and is, to communicate with the English speaking world to allow them to produce the type of material people want (see ATSIC Miwatj Region BRACS Review 2002).
4. the regional media hubs did not understand the needs of their clients – the RIBS units and the communities in which they operate.

Where the proposed RIMO's will cover a number of language regions, then the new model will not work - in fact it will compound the current problems faced by RIBS and the RIBS operators. This is because of the previously stated language difficulties, the lack of engagement in the local communities by remotely located RIMO's and the fact that a RIMO operating across several language groups will not have the human or financial resources to cope with what needs to be done, both technically and socially, to bring the RIBS up to standard. Lack of coordination with the local councils who own the RIBS is another factor of concern for the new model given the poor track record to date.

The model deployed by ARDS and PY Media, where a central broadcaster of content becomes the 'RIMO' then the structure has a chance of working with the limited dollars available – because in these cases the 'RIMO' works in the language the people speak. This will meet the media needs in an effective way and using the most appropriate technology for the local region.

The proposed model that is outlined will only work for the RIMO's themselves, it will not change the massive under use of RIBS on communities. It will only work if the RIMO itself is efficient and effective. An ineffective, inefficient and detached RIMO will mean not one, but many RIBS will be inconvenienced. From the north-east Arnhem Land experience, this will be the case when the RIMO is based hundreds of kilometres away in Darwin and so finds it difficult to respond quickly to the local needs of a number of RIBS.

#### *B.2.3.1 Would indirect funding of RIBS through RIMOs be a better way of supporting RIBS?*

The current funding in north-east Arnhem Land to community councils is a reasonable way to provide for the operation of the RIBS units. The problem then raises itself as due to the RIBS units remoteness from a service centre (Darwin) and economies of scale, mean that the practicalities of maintaining old and superseded equipment become difficult.

The options for servicing and maintaining the RIBS equipment are then limited. The councils concerned have a few options. Firstly they can contact a local media association to have them undertake the work on their behalf, often waiting months and having to make the request numerous times and in the end often not having the work done or their needs met. Secondly, they can contact service agent in Darwin to have them do the work under direct contract which means commercial rates (including airfares) must be paid to service the aging equipment or thirdly they do nothing and try to get additional funding to replace or repair the equipment.

At least one council in this region has engaged its own service agent on a permanent basis to make sure it can maintain its equipment in serviceable condition. Keeping the current situation in mind, giving the dollars directly to RIMOs under the proposed scheme could take the little money that councils have to keep their service on from them to be never seen again.

#### *B.2.3.2 Should the operation and maintenance of radio/television transmitters in communities be supported by the local communities themselves, rather than funded from the IBP?*

Where else in Australia is the provision of mainstream radio and TV services born by that particular community? Remote communities already are burdened with the highest cost of staple foods like bread, milk and fresh vegetables. Media services in remote areas are essential services that should be born by government - and at a greater funding rate than they now are.

It is the English first language Australian 'ex-pats' on communities that benefit from the English language radio and television services that exist within the RIBS units in north-east Arnhem Land. If these services are no longer available the communities will only find it harder to get nurses, teachers and other essential resource staff. ARDS does not believe that the operation and maintenance of these facilities should cause a financial burden on the councils and communities that operate them. The provision of news and information on disasters such as cyclones etc. is sufficient for government to underwrite their cost in the national interest. It needs to be noted that at the moment the present radio and TV services do not stay operating during bad weather and cyclones. As they are an essential service this needs to be corrected and not from council budgets.

#### *B.2.3.3 Should a specific allocation of funds be made available within the IBP for local content production in RIBS?*

ARDS strongly supports the facilitation and support of the production of local content. To do this with a special allocation within the IBP is worthwhile.

ARDS Yolŋu Radio has always aimed at the support of RIBS local content production and the subsequent broadcast of that material not only on the local RIBS equipment but also across the whole region and also in Darwin via the Yolŋu Radio network. It then becomes a sort of economy

of scale, in that the operator on one community is not just recording material that can be broadcast on their community and heard by a relatively small number of people but can be broadcast regionally as well so that 8,000 people will have access to it.

However ARDS does not currently have access to the funding to support the RIBS operators in this and so a dedicated portion of the IBP set aside to do this, would enhance the local content coming from the grass roots.

### **B.3 Community Broadcasting Foundation (CBF) and the IBP**

*B.3.1 Will the proposed changes to the funding arrangements between the IBP and the CBF assist in clarifying roles and eliminating overlap and the possibility of double-dipping of funds?*

The changes to the funding arrangements between the CBF and the IBP will mean that there will be a one-stop-shop for the various funds and should work well, with possible double dipping being eliminated.

### **B.4 Proposed governing principles for the administration of the IBP**

*B.4.1 Are these appropriate principles for administering the program?*

DCITA are to be commended for the proposed governing principles for the administration of the IBP.

Since the introduction of the RIBS units in their original form, much has happened in the Indigenous broadcasting sector and a review of how the funding of it takes place has been needed for some time. The advent of new broadcasters, and the failure of the RIBS units to deliver the type of service that was originally planned, has meant that the manner in which Indigenous broadcasting takes place, particularly in remote parts of north-east Arnhem Land, has changed markedly over even the past decade.

Remote, isolated communities still have nowhere near the media service as other indigenous communities in large towns and cities do. As already pointed out they do not speak English as a first language and so they find it almost impossible to access any information that come to them through the mainstream media. And as previously stated that they do not even have media services that can stay on line during emergencies like cyclones. Then the costs involved to produce material in language, which can not just be taken off the shelf, means that serious consideration needs to be given to not just funding technical issues but also funding be directed to the need for good quality content in language that meets the needs of the listening audience.

In response to the 7 specific principles:

- a. ARDS believes that a national focus for funding will allow an equality to exist across the states and regions so that a fair and equitable funding regime, with a nationally implemented criteria, will exist for all broadcasters no matter of size or location.
- b. This fair and equitable regime also needs to include a system where the financial expertise and record of the broadcaster needs to be assessed. This makes sense in a public funded program.
- c. The need to make services available to all Indigenous people within a service area is agreed with. But where some of the present services cover such large areas with many languages, it will be impossible to meet all the language needs so what will happen is what happens now where English is used and many if not all English second language people switch off. As previously stated, the cost of production of broadcast material in language is vastly underestimated at present.

- d. The IBP is indeed just that – a broadcasting program. As such the funding of organisations should be just for their broadcasting activities, including content production, and should not extend to other things they may be involved in.
- e. Whilst most organisations hope to have all applications funded, there is not a ‘bottomless’ bucket of money for the IBP. Therefore it is only commonsense and to be expected that not all applications will be funded.
- f. The transition to reduced funding is necessary in the Indigenous broadcasting sector as funding options and opportunities are limited and unlike the commercial sector and increase in fees to raise revenue is not an option.
- g. As a broadcaster who has recently come into Indigenous broadcasting, it would have been helpful to have some operational funding available to assist with running costs as we established everything from scratch. Having been on air for over 3 years now we still lack a dedicated studio(s) and this would be achievable earlier if our own funds were not all soaked up in operating costs. ARDS supports this with the addition of a scope to provide an initial three year funding period should the necessary criteria be met.

Monies need to be spent where need is greatest the positive results are delivered.

## **C.1 Staffing Indigenous broadcasting services**

### *C.1.1.1 How could the IBP encourage more Indigenous employment?*

The most obvious method would be to add a training component within IBP funding so that each broadcaster funded by the IBP would be asked to take on trainees. The next step would be to assist in providing ways for these trainees to be integrated into the full time or part time workforce over the following years. This may take some effort to coordinate but with the introduction of the ICC this should eventually be possible. With the 12 month lead time to the implementation of the revised IBP then 2007/8 would be an aiming point for the introduction of the training pool and then in subsequent years a move to transitional funding to allow permanent employment of the trainees. ARDS would welcome funding to employ trainees with a view to further assistance for their integration into the permanent workforce.

### *C.1.1.2 Should the IBP set targets for Indigenous employment within funded organisations?*

Targets can only be set if the IBP directly funds positions. Otherwise there can be suggestions made regarding the numbers of Indigenous employees but targets are only applicable to the IBP if they are funding the positions. Again the marked differences in costs between regional and city based operations needs to be taken into account.

### *C.1.2.1 Should the IBP provide for two hours paid work per day for operators at qualifying RIBS sites?*

This has merit but it should be done through the local RIBS licence holder (usually the local council) where there is some control and oversight. The RIMO may well be physically isolated from the various RIBS units and so is unable to monitor the amount of work actually being undertaken. Also the local council and community will know whether the RIBS operator is actually doing anything for what he/she is being paid.

In short, yes the IBP should provide funds wherever possible to RIBS operators.

#### *C.1.2.2 How should arrangements for paid work be monitored?*

As mentioned it is the local organisation (which is often the CDEP agency as well) to monitor and pay for work that is undertaken. RIMOs will be too remote for this to be one of their functions.

#### *C.1.2.3 How significant is CDEP to the smooth function of Indigenous broadcasting, particularly in remote areas?*

Most of the Indigenous broadcasting in remote areas is undertaken through local RIBS units. As most of these communities operate a CDEP program then the operation of the RIBS has traditionally been on function that CDEP has covered. ARDS view this as a function that is worthwhile yet at the same time limiting as many RIBS operators are well trained and should have the opportunity to conduct their activities full time rather than being solely reliant on CDEP – usually for only 4 hours a day, a few days a week. However the provision of CDEP positions within the RIBS units is a good foundation for them to operate efficiently.

For ARDS the opportunity to tap into the CDEP workforce of surrounding communities would be greatly welcomed as it would provide an opportunity to engage those operators who for whatever reason are not functioning in their local RIBS and give them the chance for their abilities to be shared across the region with a regional broadcaster. This would be done with independent agreement between ARDS and the particular CDEP organisation.

In simple terms, for north-east Arnhem Land the availability of CDEP does assist the provision of broadcasts to the region and also on the individual communities.

#### *C.1.2.4 Have any IBP funded organisations completed, or are they currently negotiating, an SRA with DEWR that includes broadcasting?*

ARDS do not know of any such agreements. ARDS however is in discussion with the local ICC, but because our organisation is regionally based it makes it very hard to fit into an SRA agreement. Ways are being investigated to see how it could happen.

#### *C.1.3.1 What is the best way of meeting the training needs of Indigenous broadcasting services?*

The training needs should be met in the same way as ARDS are providing radio services as described above. ARDS intends to, when we have the infrastructure and staffing available, start training more people within our region. As a community education organisation we have a long history in training and with the added advantage of working in language this means that the training can be provided quickly and efficiently. At the moment we are training a number of Yolŋu people in radio content development. We intend to increase this training into the future. With Regional Media Services based on language regions the specific training needs can be identified and met to the advantage of all concerned.

#### *C.1.4.1 Comments are sought on opportunities for traineeships.*

A traineeship scheme, operating over a 2 year period rather than the traditional 12 month model, would certainly be a benefit to ARDS and also the Yolŋu people of north-east Arnhem Land. This would allow the basics of the broadcasting industry to be covered without the limiting time and other constraints inherent within the traditional training model. It would allow the training to be modelled on traditional Aboriginal learning methodologies and so would provide more beneficial outcomes to both training organisation/employer and also the trainee.

## **C.2 Other initiatives**

*C.2.1.1 How can IBP funding be most effectively used through AICA and IRCA to best serve the interests of members under the proposed new funding model?*

ARDS is an Indigenous broadcaster but we have not had any contact with either AICA or IRCA. Due to our lack of understanding of their areas of operation ARDS is not able to comment further.

*C.2.2.1 Is NIRS adequately representative of the Indigenous communities that it serves?*

NIRS has little or no relevance in north-east Arnhem Land where English language services, either Indigenous or mainstream, are not accessed by the Yolŋu people due to the language difficulties that English causes. In fact we do not know of any instances where NIRS programs are broadcast within our region unless they are used by TEABBA from time to time as their programming.

Having national programs is a good idea, but the current crisis being experienced in Indigenous communities (domestic violence, sexual abuse, Law and order and the like) are not being addressed by English only programming. Yolŋu Radio has shown when radio is delivered in the people's language around questions that the people want answers to then they will switch on and learn.

*C.2.2.2 Should NIRS provide a wider range of content than it currently does under the new arrangements? If so, what additional content should be provided?*

As stated above, NIRS programs are not broadcast in our region and that may also be the case in other isolated regions where traditional languages are still spoken. We have no doubt that NIRS meets the needs of Indigenous English first language communities. ARDS does not wish to make comment on what these communities wish to receive from such a service.

*C.2.3.1 What benefits and outcomes do you see emerging from SRAs for IBP funded organisations?*

ARDS consider that it seems strange to connect essential media services that could do so much to overcome the current social conditions that many Indigenous communities are experiencing to SRA agreements. If the government want to see people educated and participating fully as Australian citizens then deploying good radio in the language is an absolutely essential.

As indicated in our response to the proposed governing principles for the administration of the IBP, in a public funded program there needs to be checks and balances to make sure there is good use of public funds and that the things funded need to represent value for money. This is a standard for the allocation of government funds and given that the organisations funded under the IBP are providing a media service then, linking them to an SRA does not seem a good idea and so would not provide any benefits.

## **Appendix 1**

Final Report BRACS REVIEW, May-June 2003, ATSIC Nhulunbuy (Miwatj Region)

## **Appendix 2**

*A Community Development Radio Service for the Yolŋu clan nations of north-east Arnhem Land. The Report of the Radio Broadcasting Feasibility Study, ARDS 2002*