



**A REVIEW OF THE INDIGENOUS BROADCASTING
PROGRAM
Talking with the Whole Mob**

SUBMISSION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS,
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND THE ARTS
SPECIAL BROADCASTING SERVICE CORPORATION JUNE 2006

The Special Broadcasting Service Corporation is established under the *Special Broadcasting Service Act 1991* (SBS Act). The principal function of SBS is to provide multilingual and multicultural radio and television services that inform, educate and entertain all Australians, and, in doing so, reflect Australia's multicultural society. SBS broadcasts one analogue and six digital television services nationally, two radio services to State and Territory capital cities and some regional centres and provides online services at www.sbs.com.au.

As part of its role as Australia's multicultural broadcaster, SBS is required to serve the communications needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (s6(2)(a) SBS Act). The issues raised in the Discussion Paper therefore may affect SBS. However, the major issue of whether or not there should be changes to existing funding structures under the Indigenous Broadcasting Program is primarily an issue for Government and Remote Indigenous Broadcasting Services and SBS does not directly comment on this.

SBS Radio broadcasts Aboriginal programs developed for the diverse Aboriginal communities of Australia. Two hour-long programs are broadcast per week on SBS Radio's national frequency which reaches all major cities and some regional areas, and an additional hour per week is broadcast in Melbourne. These programs are all available via audio streaming on the SBS website and on its digital service. In addition, SBS Radio's Aboriginal programs are re-broadcast on National Indigenous Radio Service (NIRS) networks across Australia, including Koori Radio, Mob FM (in Mt Isa) and Goolarri. SBS also provides, from time to time, training and equipment to organisations such as Bush TV. SBS is currently providing support to the National Indigenous Television network.

SBS currently provides television, radio and online services that include Indigenous news and current affairs, documentary, drama and special event programming. Providing Indigenous programs is central to SBS's Charter, but SBS recognises that it is only intended to be one part of that role. SBS has a difficult task in balancing the specific communications needs of the wide range of audiences its Charter requires it to serve. SBS attempts to meet audience demand for programs which reflect the range of Australia's diverse cultural and language communities within the practical concerns of scheduling, production and budgetary limitations. Currently SBS Radio's transmission limitations mean that its services do not reach remote communities directly, although this could be made possible with digital developments and an allocation of additional resources to SBS Radio services.

SBS is supportive of initiatives which address unmet demand for Indigenous broadcasting services. At the same time, SBS believe it is important to ensure the maintenance the nationally broadcast, high quality Indigenous programming content available to all Australians on SBS.