

Submission from Derby Media Aboriginal Corporation in response to the Review of  
The Indigenous Broadcasting Program

**Funding model based on Indigenous population figures**

The funding model suggested, based on Indigenous population figures is basically flawed. It suggests that because an area has an Indigenous population of X, then all those Indigenous people listen to the local Indigenous Radio station, and they are the only people that listen to that station. This is not so. If the station has done its job properly in terms of local program content and interactivity with the local Indigenous people, it is true that the Indigenous community does feel a sense of proprietorship with that station and will largely become dedicated listeners. However, in an area where the Indigenous station is the only local station, that station has the opportunity to become the major service provider in that area, and the whole community listens to that station.

In the Derby area the cost of service provision is quoted at \$136 per head, based on an Indigenous population of 1486. However, we know that the entire population of Derby is closer to 5,000 people, and according to a survey that we conducted in 2004, 94% of the population listen to 6DBY at some stage of the week. Therefore the per capita cost drops dramatically to around \$43 per head.

It is quite possible for an Indigenous Radio Station to become a legitimate service-provider to the whole community, while still retaining the underlying principles of providing an Aboriginal voice, and focussing on elements that are not provided by commercial stations and the public broadcasters. The Indigenous Radio sector has developed and is still developing and needs to be acknowledged as being legitimate service providers who are an authentic alternative to main-stream broadcasters. It needs to be more appropriately funded, especially in relation to funding that is provided to the ABC and SBS. If there is an inequity, it is in the funding that these organisations receive relative to the amount that the Indigenous Broadcasting sector receives.

**Performance indicators**

The performance indicators that an Indigenous station must currently report on ignore the basic performance indicators that stations should be governed by, such as:

- Hours of live broadcasting in relation to staff levels and wages.
- Hours of live broadcasting in relation to overall funding levels.
- Skills of broadcasting staff and accreditation achieved
- Formal and informal training programs.
- Level of self-generated income.
- Methods of addressing local and national current affairs.
- Number of volunteer presenters.
- Interactivity with the community.

We are currently broadcasting live 13 hours per day, but we know that there are stations with similar or greater funding levels that are only broadcasting 3 to 4 hours per day.

All our staff achieved Certificate 3 in Broad-casting last year and are now working towards Certificate 4 in Multi-Media, but we know that similar stations have staff who have no formal qualifications. Our commitment to up-skilling has been validated by receiving 2 Community Broadcasting Assn. awards in the past two years for “*Best New Program Content*” with our *Stories of History and Country* series, and “*Best Contribution to Local Music Content*” with a 24 track cd of local artists, including 8 songs in Worrorra language.

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We place great emphasis on being interactive with the community and including the community in our program content through:

- Providing a free community billboard service to not-for-profit organisations.
- Providing 8 hours of requests per week. The Request Program is one of our most popular programs and is often over-subscribed.
- Presenting a daily one-hour current affairs magazine where local people and organisations have the opportunity to present their viewpoints and keep locals up-to-date with local issues. Regular participants include:
  - Derby District High School
  - Holy Rosary School
  - Derby Aboriginal Health Service
  - Derby Police
  - Shire of Derby/West Kimberley
  - Emama Gnuda Aboriginal Corporation
  - Nykina Association
  - Nunga Women's Assn

We can also produce Certificates of Appreciation from organisations such as:

- Derby Aboriginal Health Service.
- Derby District High School
- Bayulu Community for support of their Clean-up days
- Propel Arts for support of the Propel Arts program
- Derby Bush Poets Assn.
- Nykina Association for support of their programs for development of language and culture
- Croc Festival.

We contribute to our operational funding by committing to provide \$24,000 of self-generated income per annum, but know that there are other stations who either do not try to produce self-generated income or keep it for themselves.

We submit that outcomes of this nature are more valid than some of the performance indicators we are being asked to report on. Funding continuity needs to be based on valid outcomes.

### **Multi-year funding**

Multi-year funding would be much better than the current system of annual funding. Current business plans can be little more than wish-lists and cannot be truly effective without the security of knowing in advance what funding is going to be available. Single-year funding also does little to attract and retain good staff.

### **Capital equipment fund**

The current system does not provide for capital equipment replacement. Broadcasting equipment has a nominal life span of three years and most stations are operating with equipment that is much older than 3 years. I know of one station that still uses cart machines that they got from their local community radio station who had upgraded. Not having a capital equipment fund leads to an onerous situation where funding must be applied for when capital equipment needs to be replaced due to break-downs. We have just experienced exactly this type of situation and have had to borrow equipment from other stations to get us through in the short term.

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**Significance of CDEP**

If CDEP funding is phased out as per the current DEWR proposals, it will have dramatic effects on the Indigenous Broadcasting sector. Without CDEP subsidies we would be forced to reduce services and terminate staff unless DCITA replaced the CDEP subsidy.

The DEWR attitude (as per the speaker at the IBP Review in Canberra) was that if a broadcasting trainee was unable to be offered a position within the organisation after one year, they would have to find a position in another industry.

Three years is widely recognised as being a benchmark training period in broadcasting. So why then would we train somebody in radio for one year so that they can get a job at the local butcher (if the local butcher has a position available), This type of response indicates a worrying lack of real understanding of how CDEP works, at least within the Indigenous Broadcasting sector, and it appears that it is also an issue that DCITA has not properly considered, as there is no mention of replacing CDEP subsidies with DCITA funding. In the list of questions, questions C1.1.1. and C1.1.2 refer to encouraging more Indigenous employment and setting targets for Indigenous employment within funded organisations. Unless the phasing out of CDEP subsidies is addressed, the effect will be a reduction in Indigenous employment. Traineeships come under the same category, because traineeships last for 12 months, and unless an organisation has budget to be able to offer a position at the end of that 12 months, that trainee will be terminated.

**Multi-platform broadcast funding**

The global trend in broadcasting is for organisations to become involved in multi-media platforms, and the Indigenous Broadcasting sector needs to keep abreast of these latest technological trends.

The development of streaming and on-line archiving technology needs to be considered as a means of overcoming transmission difficulties, especially in areas such as ours where a huge licence area contains sparse populations and we do not have access to satellite uplinks. The use of mp3 archiving is a means of broadcasting Indigenous culture to the whole world. However, staff needs to be competent in areas such as video production, audio production and website design and maintenance to be able to take advantage of these opportunities.

With the roll-out of NITV, it is logical that the existing Indigenous Broadcasting sector would extend to include video production in its activities. The infrastructure is already in place and would only need to be extended rather than re-developed. At Derby Media we have already taken advantage of training opportunities with support from organisations such as PAKAM and The Film & Television Institute of WA. The only factor that is stopping us from contributing content to ICTV right now is a bit more training, some more equipment, and funding for somebody to take up a role as the video content provider. The other factor is that we need to be able to retransmit ICTV in the Derby area. We have secured agreement for Imparja and have applied for a retransmission licence.

We contend that NITV funding should be included in our overall operational funding rather than being treated as separate.

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**Training and accreditation**

Given that most Indigenous stations have a core of experienced broadcasters who work in radio on a daily basis, the need is more for assessment and accreditation rather than training.

Last year all six of our staff members achieved Certificate 3 in Broadcasting (Radio) by having a TAFE assessor come to the station for two weeks and put the staff through the accreditation process. This was more a process of Recognition of Prior Learning and very little actual delivery of training was involved because staff already possessed the necessary skills.

Training in video and multi-media needs to be approached differently as these areas involve the learning of new skills, not just recognition of prior learning of existing skills.

Signed:

Chairperson ..... *Bentley* .....

Vice Chairperson ..... *J. Torres* .....

Secretary ..... *Allen* .....

Manager ..... *Allen* .....

Committee Members:

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