Submission to the Indigenous Broadcasting and Media Sector Review

On behalf of the Kimberley and Pilbara Indigenous media sector

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Executive Summary

The Kimberley and Pilbara region is ready to commence a new approach to Indigenous media. Our aim is to ensure that communities with a population of 30 receive the same level of service as those with 3 million, without compromising Indigenous ownership or local control over programming. The solution that we propose is a ‘hub and spoke’ model, whereby a coordinating body will work with local media groups, eliminating duplication when it comes to administrative and technical tasks, and increasing capacity for content production. The model will ensure that stations are less vulnerable when staff changes occur and that existing experience in training and production management is extended across the region. A new governance structure will guarantee that all cultural and language groups are represented, guiding content creation for cultural heritage and information needs.

This review can go one of two ways: It can attempt to negotiate through the disparate and irreconcilable factions of Australia’s Indigenous media system – or it can provide a robust scaffold for change. Our model is not some leftfield alternative but a real opportunity that has emerged out of decades of experience. The Kimberley and Pilbara region will undertake to strengthen our media via the steps outlined in this submission regardless of the outcome of this review. Ideally, we would like to see funding and policy changes that are supportive of such reform so that it may be replicated across the nation.

The Regional Media Model

The regional model applies to the community-controlled Indigenous media sector. It recognises the role that not-for-profit, social enterprise media plays in terms of industry development, as well as meeting the cultural and informational needs of Indigenous Australians. The model consists of the following elements:

- A board made up of representatives from across the Kimberley and Pilbara, including Indigenous leaders and the organisations that provide essential services. The board will define programming policies and ensure that funding allocations are administered for the benefit of the two regions.
- A coordinating body to provide training, technical assistance, production management and business development, working in collaboration with local media organisations, under the direction of the board.

We believe the following policy reforms are necessary to make this work effectively: Independent status in the Broadcasting Services Act; an Indigenous broadcasting licence; and an independent agency that is charged with administering funding to the regions. Indigenous media should be returned to the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy.
**Television:** The backbone of the new model is a satellite service for the Kimberley and Pilbara region. The model acknowledges that the NITV ‘trial’ has not succeeded in growing existing Indigenous media organisations or the creative output of the region. The new channel will provide content that is created by and for the region, with programming managed at the regional (rather than national) level. Existing Indigenous TV providers should be reconfigured as content-sharing networks, allowing broadcasters to cherry-pick content. A Kimberley and Pilbara service would achieve the following outcomes:

- Content that is relevant to the region, with supplementary national and remote programming. Content funding should be distributed to regions in the first instance, then to local media organisations.
- A business-model based on economic sustainability, allowing the region to seek advertising and programming income, such as social marketing media or tourist information.

**Switchover:** The Government plans to switch-off analogue television transmitters in WA by the end of 2013. The new VAST satellite services (16 free channels) will be provided satellite-direct-to-home in remote areas – requiring individual households to purchase domestic satellite dishes. Our primary concern is that Indigenous television be accommodated on the VAST platform and that an appropriate access regime is put in place.

Secondly, although a subsidy will cover some initial costs, the satellite direct to home (SDTH) arrangement is problematic; issues such as maintenance and replacement of dishes (for new houses after the switchover period) will likely be born by the consumer or the Community Council/Shire. Therefore, larger communities should have the option to run full digital terrestrial television in place of SDTH – particularly where transmitter costs are less than the combined household subsidies for that community. Smaller communities should have the option of maintaining one terrestrial transmitter to enable them to insert local programming into the regional television schedule where desired and provide emergency services when dishes fail.

Thirdly, the VAST service will ensure that those living in outstations and small communities are still provided with access to adequate television services. However, the larger towns that are undergoing digital terrestrial conversion will be left without an Indigenous TV service under current plans. Terrestrial transmission of Indigenous television is essential for these towns, including Derby, Kununurra, Roebourne and Tom Price (GTV in Broome has already received the go-ahead from ACMA to convert to digital).

**A Digitising Culture and Community (DCC) Fund:** For the oral and visual traditions of Indigenous Australia to survive, they will need to fit into 21st century methods and platforms. A content fund that supports content-creation, for distribution across any platform, would enable Indigenous culture to stand beside and contribute to modern Australian society. A DCC fund would entail regional-level funding to leading Indigenous media enterprises. The purpose of the Fund would be to:
• Preserve and maintain culture;
• Place sensitive cultural information in our own hands
• Move oral and visual traditions into 21st Century digital platforms;
• Provide culturally appropriate access to history and cultural traditions through media; and
• Produce positive programming and educational tools for Indigenous and broader-community use.

A Closing the Gap allocation for social marketing: Many Indigenous Australians do not know what Closing the Gap entails or how it will affect them and their families. Culturally appropriate information is therefore key to the success of the Closing the Gap strategy. We recommend that a defined portion of the COAG Closing the Gap funding is put aside for social marketing via Indigenous social enterprise media, to be coordinated at the regional level.

A way forward: For too long the Indigenous media sector has been marginal in Australia's media landscape. The National Broadband Network and the likely prospect of a new communications Act provide a real opportunity to raise the status and outputs of Indigenous media. The 2010 election was decided on the issue of broadband; meeting the communication needs of the regions is now a priority for the Gillard government. The recommendations outlined in this submission will assist in meeting this challenge.

List of Recommendations

Policy and government administration

1. That Indigenous media be recognised as a sector in its own right within the Broadcasting Services Act or any communications legislation that supersedes this Act.

2. That a new broadcasting licence category be established for Indigenous media.

3. That a new funding agency be established to administer Indigenous media funding.

4. That Indigenous media be returned to the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy.

Regional coordination

5. That a regional model of Indigenous media be put into action, whereby funding is distributed to the region, with a coordinating unit to manage training, content, technical maintenance and business development, in collaboration with local media organisations.

Funding
6. That a Digitising Culture and Community content fund be established for community-controlled Indigenous media organisations, administered at the regional level.

7. A percentage of the Closing the Gap funding should be allocated to social marketing media, to be managed at the regional level.

8. That additional funding be provided to meet the operational and capital costs of digital transition.

**Digital switchover and broadband**

9. That a regional Indigenous television channel for the Kimberley and Pilbara be accommodated on the new VAST platform and an appropriate access regime be put in place.

10. That communities retain the right to provide digital terrestrial transmission where desired.

11. Providers that bid for spectrum for mobile broadband and telephony should be required to address cost and billing obstacles for Indigenous consumers.
Introduction

There is a saying in the Kimberley that ten sticks are harder to break than one.

The following submission presents the case for a regional model that will strengthen the existing Indigenous media sector. The model provides a straightforward means of increasing cultural outputs in the Kimberley and Pilbara, as well as direct communication channels between service providers and communities to assist in Closing the Gap.

The Kimberley and Pilbara media achievements are often left out of the discussions occurring at the peak body level; we have overcome issues that plague other parts of the sector and we refuse to engage in sectoral politics. We have therefore compiled a comprehensive and research-based submission to ensure that we don’t ‘fall through the cracks’ or be penalised simply because we do not conform to the national portrait. We are unique, in that we have a successful and sustainable Indigenous media industry, an enviable track record in providing essential information to audiences, as well as a registered training organisation that is used by groups throughout the region. The social enterprise model of media that underpins the Kimberley and Pilbara Indigenous broadcasting sector also provides talent and technical expertise to independent film and TV producers, from small Indigenous-owned companies to large production houses (for instance, SBS’s The Circuit, Baz Lurhman’s Australia).

We have achieved all this on a shoestring budget and within a policy setting that does not recognise the real contribution of Indigenous media. However, we acknowledge that the sector is inherently inconsistent in terms of the capacity of local organisations to meet the needs of the audiences and service providers – an unavoidable consequence of disparate populations, disadvantage and distance. The logical step is to foster a ‘hub and spoke’ model that will remove the barriers to production and skills, yet maintain the independence and profile of cultural groups and stations. We have the knowledge and structures in place to achieve this and, with the right support, can trial a more cohesive and comprehensive way of doing media. Ultimately, the model presented here could be replicated across the nation.

The Indigenous media organisations of the Kimberley and Pilbara region have a long history of collaboration and innovation. The ideas captured in this submission were developed at a forum held on June 16-17 2010 in Broome, attended by over 30 representatives from media organisations across the Kimberley and Pilbara. The submission has been endorsed by the following media organisations: PAKAM, Goolarri, BAMA, PRK, Wangki, Waringarri, Juluwarlu and Gumula.

The aims of the regional model are:
- Content creation that meets cultural needs at the regional and local level
- Distribution systems that are accessible to media organisations in the region and which directly serve Kimberley and Pilbara audiences
- Video sharing with other Indigenous media networks to achieve full TV schedules without compromising control over programming
- A communications framework for Closing the Gap
- An economically sustainable media system that can grow the creative industries of the region, including: expanding the creative labour force, providing adequate work conditions and growing capital infrastructure base
- Connecting media to the various reforms and planning processes occurring across the Kimberley and Pilbara (such as Kimberley Futures) and strengthening the media’s own governance structures.

Restructuring current government programs and digital switchover planning will assist us to meet our vision. This includes key changes in the areas of content funding, access regime for satellite channels and agency responsibilities. The first part of the submission outlines the achievements of the sector to date. The second part presents a new direction for Indigenous media, taking into account the challenges of the digital media environment.
PART I – Indigenous Media in the Kimberley and Pilbara: An Overview

1.1. The purpose of Indigenous media sector

“Consider the specific policy and cultural outcomes for Indigenous Australians to be realised through the Australian Government’s investment in Indigenous broadcasting and media” (ToR)

1.1.1. Cultural maintenance and social enterprise media

The goals of Indigenous media have been articulated in numerous reports and reviews since the 1980s, including: cultural maintenance, addressing bias in the mainstream media’s representation of Indigenous issues, information for health and wellbeing, employment opportunities and bringing Indigenous culture and stories into the public arena. The Indigenous media sector was initially driven by a concern that the mainstream media would have a detrimental impact on traditional culture and community – a consequence of the introduction of satellite television to remote areas. The rationale of cultural protection that existed in the mass media era makes less sense now when Indigenous audiences and producers seek participation in digital media platforms. However, the principles of cultural maintenance and Indigenous control of the media are as important as ever.

At the heart of it, Indigenous media is a vehicle for Indigenous people to talk to our people, our way. It is impossible to overestimate the power of seeing our own images on television, and hearing Indigenous voices on the radio. When our communities are represented at the local and regional level, we feel as though we are living at the core, rather than on the periphery, of society. This should not be taken away simply because governments are struggling to cope with the policy challenge of media convergence or digital switchover.

There are two fundamental reasons why Indigenous media matters:

i) Culture and Community: The social problems faced by Indigenous communities are partly attributable to loss of identity and feelings of powerlessness. Indigenous media ensures that our voices are not lost in a sea of mainstream non-Indigenous culture. It enables the sharing of stories, thereby revealing the importance of our culture both historically and within the nation’s broader identity. Other Australians travel to our region in order to learn about
our cultural heritage, to get a glimpse of our ancient and contemporary art and see the landscape with new eyes, beyond its obvious physical beauty. Indigenous media provides another layer to that experience and for some it is the most in-depth insight of Indigenous culture they will come across. For the Indigenous people of the region, Indigenous media is about respecting the knowledge and history of our people, as well as persevering and creating a rich shared creative bank that will keep culture and language alive for future generations.

**ii) Information and services:** The changes sweeping the region are occurring without the necessary information to enable local people to benefit from, or understand the ramifications of, that change. New communication technologies will leave people further behind unless we begin to address access to information across broadcast and broadband platforms. As Patrick Dodson, Yawuru leader and Chairman of the Kimberley Institute, writes:

“As we deal with complicated issues such as climate change, water and land management, native title, tourism and infrastructure requirements, our communications platforms will become increasingly important. The media allows us to see what’s coming and to cope with change” (Letter to Senator Conroy, January 2010).

The role of Indigenous media needs to be expanded to include the effective means of getting vital information to communities via community service announcements and edutainment content creation.

1.1.2. Priorities for this Review

Goolarri Media in Broome is widely recognised as one of the success stories of Indigenous media. Goolarri has the advantage of being located in a large town (15,000 permanent residents) with access to decent services and a large Indigenous population (20%). Reproducing Goolarri’s range of activity in all indigenous communities is not a realistic option, but using this existing institutional infrastructure to take the burden off other stations and increase their capacity is both achievable and desirable. Our model therefore starts by accepting that not every community can run its own independent multi-platform facility, and that important stories and cultural leadership are being compromised under the expectation that they can.

Remote media developed in isolation, through the hard work of key community members, with the support of anthropologists and a few dedicated filmmakers and in response to the cultural imperative of traditional knowledge recording. As such, remote media is very different from the mainstream and community media sectors. There are significant limitations to remote media, which need to be acknowledged rather than glossed over, stemming from the capacity within small communities and cultural priorities influencing what and how media is produced. However, the cultural importance of this sector should not be underestimated, particularly for teaching young people the ways of the past and keeping traditions alive for future generations.
The network model that has developed in the remote media sector has been a significant achievement. The next step is to bring cultural leaders and community services into the picture, provide real wages and production support for those who choose to work in the media, develop digital literacy engagement for the broader remote population, and ensure adequate digital distribution and archiving arrangements. Most importantly, we need a robust media system that produces content of lasting appeal.

The current policy framework separates Indigenous media into city producers and mainstream genres on the one hand and community produced content with remote stories on the other (for instance NITV versus ICTV). The Indigenous media system has become divided and overly political by setting organisations into competition with each other. The current policy framework does not inspire the pooling of resources or management systems, which is the key to future success.

Therefore, the primary issue for this review is whether current policies and funding schemes are adequate for achieving these outcomes. More broadly, the review needs to assess the media’s role in addressing the significant challenges faced by Indigenous people in the 21st Century. Over the past 25 years, a unique media system has evolved in the Kimberley and Pilbara regions, including a successful regional radio network (that serves RIBS and town stations alike), a registered training organisation and a stand-alone television service in Broome. Our aim is to improve on this by extending our TV across the region, working closely with organisations that provide vital health and education information to Indigenous families, improving digital literacy, and by developing a strong, enduring cultural archive for current and future generations. However, we cannot meet the demands of the digital media environment or do more to help Close the Gap under current policy and funding regimes. We have therefore devised a clear pathway to strengthen and grow Indigenous media for the benefit of audiences and producers. There is no need to dismantle our hard-won gains, including robust media organisations, or deny the autonomy of individual stations. The experience and knowledge to carry out this model already exists, but we require a fundamentally different approach at the policy level to make it work. The regional model is described in detail in Part II.

How can this be “realised through the Australian Government’s investment in Indigenous broadcasting and media” (ToR)? Government policy needs to be proactive in ensuring that the divisions inherent in this sector are overcome. While NITV and ICTV asking for more money to do more of the same, we are proposing an achievable way forward that overcomes inefficiencies and builds on strengths.

The steps outlined in this submission include:

- Establishing a separate funding agency (like the CBF) for Indigenous media
- A content fund for digitising culture and community
- A Closing the Gap allocation for social marketing media via social enterprise media organisations
• A regional TV service for the Kimberley and Pilbara
• The creation of an Indigenous broadcasting licence
• Accredited training, together with non-accredited digital media engagement

1.2. History and current status of Indigenous media in the region

The Kimberley and Pilbara regions are located on the northwest corner of Australia. Together they span almost a million square kilometres extending from the Indian Ocean to the Northern Territory border. The population density is comparatively sparse, with a combined population of around 90,000 people (12 people per square kilometre as opposed to 35 people per square kilometre nationwide).

1.2.1. Radio

The Kimberley: Aboriginal broadcasting commenced in the Kimberley in 1987 when ABC radio provided a window for Aboriginal broadcasters in Kununurra, followed by similar arrangements in Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek and Broome. The Corporation’s decision to provide access to the airwaves flowed from the 1981 Dix report, *The ABC in Review*, which recognised cultural diversity as a responsibility of the national broadcaster. Although the ABC encouraged the Aboriginal media groups to apply for one UHF radio station to cover the whole region, the groups opted for separate licences to cater for specific cultural and language groups. The Kimberley stations nonetheless developed a lasting collaborative, regional approach, beginning with the Kimberley Aboriginal Broadcasting Network (KABN), an informal committee made up of workers from the four broadcasting associations. KABN enabled information sharing on policies, licensing and funding applications and established skills-sharing forums. The network also provided support to the emerging remote BRACS system during its first decade, including training for radio and video production.

Another key organisation, the Broome Aboriginal Media Association (BAMA) was formed in 1989, initially to provide support to Indigenous musicians. In 1991 BAMA established a media organisation, starting with Radio Goolarri, which opened its doors in December of that year. The business arm of BAMA, Goolarri Media Enterprises (GME), was established in 1996.

Although KABN never officially incorporated, BAMA continues to protect government investment in Indigenous media through its strong board and by auspicing grant funding for a separate, defined arm for remote media (PAKAM, see below).

**The Pilbara:** Gumala Radio commenced broadcasting in 2002 as a fully-licensed community radio station transmitting to remote Indigenous communities in the north west of Western Australia. It broadcasts locally about five hours per day, networks programs by tieline from Ngarda Radio in Roebourne and sources other programs from Aboriginal satellite radio networks, primarily from the PAKAM (Pilbara and Kimberley Aboriginal Media) network. Gumala Radio’s studio is situated in Tom Price and the station currently broadcasts to the following towns and communities: Tom Price, Paraburdoo, Onslow, Roebourne, Wakathuni Community, Bellary Springs Community and Youngaleena Community.

**Current status of town stations**

In terms of income, town stations receive an average of $250,000 a year from the Indigenous Broadcasting Program. For the majority of stations, government funding is their main income source, although some bring in a reasonable level of sponsorship. For instance, Derby’s 6DBY attracted around $50,000 in local business sponsorship in the 2009-2010 financial year. In the case of Goolarri, advertising funding makes up only a small proportion of the station’s total income (5-10%).

The town stations employ between 4 and 10 staff, supplemented by volunteer workers (8-50 hours a week). The stations broadcast approximately 10 hours of news and current affairs a week each. All stations have a high amount of Indigenous music content, estimated to be around 40-50 hours a week. A range of local organisations utilise the town station in their area to reach Indigenous audiences (anywhere between 3 and 20 organisations, depending on the week), including health organisations, women’s groups, men’s outreach, arts groups, vets and snake catchers, schools and Shires. Wangki, Goolarri, 6DBY and PRK each contribute 6 hours each to the PAKAM network and up to 3 hours a week to NIRS.

The town stations have experienced varying degrees of stability throughout their history. For instance, Waringarri is going through tough times with 3 staff positions currently advertised. Although the previous station manager had implemented good accounting and legal processes, the station is finding it difficult to recruit a new manager from Kununurra who has the required skills and local knowledge. The board is wary of the station turning into a ‘holiday camp’ and is trying to develop committed workers. Waringarri supports regional collaboration, particularly at the technical level, whereby all stations would be fitted out with uniform equipment, maintained by a team of technicians. As broadcaster George Hanna says, “we would get there quicker as a team”. PRK also expressed their support for regional technical coordination and would like
to see an Indigenous television service in Halls Creek that the town can feel ownership over without the pressure of having to fully manage it on their own.

**Remote Radio (PAKAM)**

The Broadcasting for Remote Aboriginal Communities Scheme (BRACS) was introduced in order to provide communities with the technological means to control content delivered by satellite for the purposes of cultural maintenance. Importantly, BRACS gave communities the ability to produce and broadcast local radio and video productions. BRACS equipment was rolled out into 103 remote communities between 1987 and 1996. From 1993, eight Remote Indigenous Media Organisations (RIMOs) were established and funded under the BRACS Revitalisation Scheme. RIMOs provide support at the regional level, assisting communities with capital upgrades, production support, maintenance, payment of workers and other administrative tasks (PAKAM staff also provide accredited training through Goolarri’s RTO). BRACS stations are now known as Remote Indigenous Broadcasting Services (RIBS).

Of the current RIBS stations in the Kimberley and Pilbara, 11 of them started as BRACS units, issued with community broadcasting licences (although not necessarily producing local content from the start). When the Federal Government first allocated funds for regional coordination units and training (mid-1990s) it was assumed that KABN would take on the role. However, KABN’s rotating secretariat was based in Kununurra at the time and the local ATSIC office refused to receive the funds (ATSIC was charged with administering Indigenous broadcasting funding). Instead, the Broome Aboriginal Media Association offered to take on the regional coordination of BRACS. The BRACS coordination developed into Pilbara and Kimberley Aboriginal Media (PAKAM) and became an incorporated Association in 1998. PAKAM remains auspiced by BAMA and is co-located with Goolarri at BAMA’s Blackman Street Precinct. The town stations continued to network programs throughout this period, as they had done since the early ABC broadcasts.

**PAKAM Radio Network:** The PAKAM radio network commenced in 2000 – initially networking content from the town stations even before the BRACS stations were fitted out with the necessary Tielines (phonelines that enable them to broadcast live on the network via a 3Khz connection). PAKAM held over funds from the BRACS Revitalisation Scheme in order to commission the Tieline technology, which is also used to send PAKAM radio to Imparja television for satellite distribution (channel 39). Imparja provides the satellite channel through its own government subsidy (1.8 million in current budget) via the Indigenous Broadcasting Program. In 2010 33 sites are receiving PAKAM radio programming by satellite and retransmitting the signal via terrestrial radio transmitters, including RIBS stations, town stations and narrowcasters.

PAKAM currently provides support in 10 community licensed RIBS communities, with plans to expand to at least another 3 community licensed stations in the 2010/2011 financial year. The 10 currently ‘active’ RIBS stations are: Billiluna, Yungngora, Warmun, Kalumburu, Bidyadanga, Beagle Bay, Djarindjin, Balgo, Looma and Ardyaloon (One Arm Point).
PAKAM also delivers technical maintenance services to 23 radio RIBS and retransmission sites. Of the ten RIBS services with paid workers, half were contributing 5 or more hours a week of content to the PAKAM network in the 2009-2010 year. Two were not currently contributing because they were unable to link into the network (in both cases, phonelines used as tielines were disconnected). In addition, 5 of the RIBS stations were also contributing content to the National Indigenous Radio Service (NIRS). The Kimberley and Pilbara RIBS contribute a total of 8 hours of programming a week to the NIRS network.

RIBS stations are often housed in poor buildings, usually dongas or an office attached to the local council building or recreation centre. New or upgraded built infrastructure should be a priority outcome of this review.

Programming: The PAKAM network broadcasts a full schedule of Kimberley and Pilbara programming during weekdays and takes from CAAMA or NIRS networks for a couple of hours at night and on weekends. The National Indigenous Radio Services takes 10 hours a week of programming from the PAKAM network. The vast majority of music played locally by the RIBS stations is Australian (over 95%). Of this, over 80% is produced by Indigenous musicians and bands.

RIBS stations are producing, on average, 4.9 hours of radio a week. Some stations, such as Warmun and Balgo, are producing significantly more (10 and 7 hours respectively). When they are not broadcasting local content the RIBS stations broadcast the PAKAM radio network feed. The RIBS stations broadcast around 30 minutes a week of community information, such as announcements concerning the local community office, health clinic or school. There is an opportunity to increase this output through pre-produced documentary programs or community service announcements that are relevant to the region.

Licensing: The licence status of each RIBS does not necessarily reflect their on-the-ground broadcasting activities. Changing policies and regulatory trends have complicated RIBS licensing. As funding and reporting is tied to licences, RIBS stations continue to be thwarted by anomalous licensing regimes. The remote sector has expanded in all regions since the original BRACS community broadcasting licences were allocated. However, ACMA (and formerly the ABA) has been advising aspirant communities to apply for apparatus licences for transmitters and to operate as open narrowcasters. For instance, only stations with a community broadcasting licence were eligible to apply for the Indigenous Remote Radio Replacement Fund (IRRR, administered by the CBF). This has meant that active stations like Ardyaloon and Billiluna missed out on the first round of upgrades, whilst less active stations received the new equipment. In the case of Ardyaloon and Billiluna, PAKAM applied for temporary community broadcasting licenses (TCBLs) and these RIBS received the upgrade in the second round.

Employment and training: PAKAM currently has fourteen Community Media Workers employed via the National Jobs Package through BAMA, two CDEP workers and one volunteer on a disability pension. Most PAKAM Community Media Workers also receive an hourly top-up for programmes broadcast on the Network via CBF programming money. Almost half are under the age of 26. With
only one or two part-time workers at each RIBS station, these are small operations with no directly funded operational budgets, other than what is administered through PAKAM for wages, maintenance and training.

1.2.2. Television

**Goolarri Television**

In 1997, the Australian Broadcasting Authority called for tenders for open narrowcasting television licences. Goolarri Media Enterprises successfully bid for the Broome licence in the open marketplace and commenced their first broadcast in 1998, covering a 10km radius from a 60 metre mast at Blackman Street. GTV35 pioneered the use of the UHF spectrum in Broome, predating SBS, which did not arrive until 2000.

**Sustainability:** Aside from providing the Broome community with a valuable and unique service, television has been the key to Goolarri’s sustainability. Productions and advertising bring in the majority of GME’s total income. GTV’s business model is substantially different from other narrowcasters:

1. The majority of GTV’s fee for service programming is government-commissioned programming. Recent examples include promotions for the Health Department and Landcorp (WA).

2. In addition, between 2005—2009, a third of GTV’s TV income came from government sources via grants and other competitive funding rounds. The resulting programs are often intended for cultural maintenance and heritage purposes. Grant funding, however, is piecemeal, unreliable and time-intensive to secure. In the absence of a cultural content fund, GTV is forced to apply for small pools of money to meet cultural and heritage needs.

3. Advertising income made up 20% of GTV’s total revenue over a four year period. In the last financial year, approximately 90% of GTV’s advertising income was derived from government departments and agencies. However, in previous years there has been a greater proportion of local business advertising (when the organisation employed marketing staff).

4. Any surpluses are transferred over to the new financial year to produce additional community and cultural content and working capital.

**Programming:** GTV’s programming philosophy and policy is to, (i) broadcast content from the region and, (ii) where it is not local it is Australian. Currently, 75-80% of the programming broadcast on GTV is local content produced in the Kimberley, including social marketing programming and advertising (with repeats). The remaining 20-25% is Australian content, consisting of Indigenous films, music clips and student films. GTV screens 1-2 Australian music videos in
the hour, at least half of which promote Indigenous musicians. A synopsis of GTV’s programming is available on request.

GTV 35 is watched by a high proportion of Broome Indigenous residents and visitors. Indigenous people make up 20% of Broome’s population, although this fluctuates according to the number of remote Indigenous people that are in town for services or to visit friends and family. For this group, GTV is the third most watched television channel, after GWN and WIN and before ABC and SBS. The preference for GTV over the national broadcasters indicates a desire for local Indigenous content over the national Indigenous content screened on these stations. According to their last audience survey (Murdoch University, 2003, Appendix 6):

- 81% of the Indigenous Broome audience watch GTV35 at least once per week
- 38% of the Indigenous Broome audience watch GTV35 at least 5 times per week

The success of Goolarri TV presents the opportunity for a regional footprint. GTV is an essential pillar and important revenue stream for Goolarri Media Enterprises. In the same way, a regional television service would provide sustainability and coherence to a regional media model.

**Ngarda TV**

Ngarda TV, owned by the Juluwarlu Group Aboriginal Corporation, was issued with a community broadcasting licence in 2005. The station serves the people of Roebourne, Wickham and Point Samson. Juluwarlu’s mission involves the preserving, collecting, recording, cataloguing, archiving, broadcasting and exhibiting of the language, culture and history of the Pilbara’s Indigenous peoples.

The operation of Ngarda TV34, is also part of a wider strategy to encourage and promote positive policy initiatives into the Pilbara community that effectively deal with issues including child abuse, family violence, alcoholism, health and deaths in custody. Ngarda TV currently retransmits the NITV service as a bed programme with insertion of their own local content (currently 5 hours a week). Juluwarlu has expressed their interest in collaborating with Goolarri in building a television channel that serves the Kimberley and Pilbara regions. Michael Woodley of Juluwarlu believes that “we should work together, which means recognising others’ skills and the hard journey that got them there”.

**Other video production and television broadcasting**

Remote communities in the PAKAM network receive an Indigenous television channel as part of their RIBS terrestrial service and have capacity to insert local community programmes. In 2005-6 the Howard Government committed $2 million to provide RIBS stations with dedicated analogue television transmitters for local broadcast insertion over retransmission of ICTV (replaced
on Imparja by NITV in 2007 and now only available by switching to Westlink on weekends). PAKAM installed these transmitters, not only in the original eleven BRACS communities of the region, but also in an additional fourteen smaller communities, who were granted open narrowcast licences for the purpose.

Broome and Roebourne have established their own local television services. However, residents of other large towns, such as Fitzroy Crossing and Halls Creek, which are not RIBS communities, do not receive an Indigenous television service. This is a major gap in Indigenous broadcasting policy that has been overlooked during the impasse between NITV and ICTV; the places with some of the biggest remote Indigenous populations are not being served by current arrangements. Fitzroy Crossing has recently begun partnering with Goolarri in order to develop skills and commence video production in the town. The Wangki board have endorsed a regional Indigenous television service to ensure content from their town reaches local viewers.

In preparation for this review we undertook interviews in Fitzroy Crossing as well as three communities that receive NITV/ICTV through their RIBS terrestrial station: Bidyadanga, Ardyaloon and Djarindjin. The purpose of the interviews was to find out what Indigenous people living in remote communities are watching on television and what would like to see on an Indigenous television channel. Television was overwhelmingly the most popular media source and only one of the 40 interviewees had a laptop that was connected to the internet (some had previously had internet connection). Mobile phone ownership was high and Bigpond chat (via the mobile) was extremely popular amongst younger people. Whilst Indigenous people in the Kimberley responded that they mostly watch mainstream television a very high proportion also watch Indigenous television regularly. Of those surveyed, three quarters said they watch GTV when they visit Broome and would like to see it in their own town. GTV was valued for providing more Kimberley content than NITV, although some commented that there are too many repeats (the same criticism was made of NITV). Interestingly, many respondents said that they would like to see more from the Kimberley but would prefer some content from other places, suggesting that a regional channel would be most successful if it played a portion of content that was ‘cherry picked’ from NITV and ICTV. GTV’s edutainment programming was popular and one woman specifically stated she would like to see ‘health advertising’ in Ardyaloon. The Fitzroy Crossing interviewees expressed feeling left out, as they do not receive an Indigenous TV service at all.

**PAKAM video and TV**

PAKAM provides TV maintenance and assistance to 25 RIBS and TV retransmission sites. PAKAM was a key participant, along with PY Media, Pintubi Anmatjere Warlpiri Media and Communications and Ngaanyatjarra Media, in the establishment and operation of the Indigenous Community Television (ICTV) satellite television service on Imparja’s second channel. ICTV was retransmitted via remote community BRACS stations for five years prior to the establishment

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1 The research was carried out by university-based researcher, Ellie Rennie (with local assistance) for the purposes of objectivity.
of NITV. As outlined in the IRCA submission to this review, the NITV service replaced ICTV on Imparja’s second channel in 2007. ICTV returned on the weekends using the Westlink satellite transponder in 2010. PAKAM commissioned the ICTV switcher that allows communities to automatically switch between NITV and ICTV for weekends, as well as local PAKAM content at any time during the week.

In August 2010, 4 RIBS communities were using their local transmitters for local video broadcasts. Balgo had the most airtime devoted to local video broadcast at 6 hours a week. Some RIBS have been experiencing problems with their computer generated playout system for video, which PAKAM is currently working to resolve. Despite this setback, PAKAM hard drives now have 108 programs that can be played off the same software as is used for radio. Local video insertion is discussed in greater detail in section 2.3.6.

As a result of the Indigenous Broadcasting Program review (2006), video funding for Remote Indigenous Broadcasting Organisations (estimated at $390,000 a year by DCITA) was redirected to radio. The decision to terminate video funding was based on the assumption that RIMOs would be able to access production funds through NITV, which did not eventuate. Remote video production has been severely handicapped as a result. However, in the 2009-2010 year, PAKAM RIBS produced a total of 33 short videos, or 468 minutes combined (7.8 hours) which were distributed on hard drives to other RIBS stations in the region and nationally via ICTV. PAKAM’s video production has occurred without any dedicated video funding through on-the-job training in storytelling, camera and non-linear editing.

1.2.3. Creative Industries Development and Digital Media

**Kimberley Girl**

The Kimberley Girl program is an initiative developed by Goolarri Media in 2004. This program supports and enables young Indigenous women from around the Kimberley region to realise their potential and develop proactive leadership capabilities.

From small beginnings, where the program was a 3 week program based in Broome, with 16 participants, the program has developed to the point that in 2010, the program is now a 15 week program which includes 13 weeks of accredited Certificate I level training, and is being piloted across four sites regionally – Broome, Kununurra, Fitzroy Crossing and Roebourne, and involves 60 participants.

This program provides a spin off to regional media organisations in that Goolarri partners with local Indigenous media and community organisations to stage the showcase Event, provide artistic opportunities within the Event program, filming of the Event, provision of multimedia training to participants and in marketing.
Music Development

Goolarri Media Enterprises supports emerging Indigenous musicians, creating and managing the platforms on which they can perform and nurturing business skills in music management and repertoire. Successful artists that have come through Goolarri include: Mervyn Mulardy, Fitzroy Express, Naomi Pigram and Emma Sibosado. The music development program is funded by State and Federal grants.

The strategy includes providing performance opportunities (events), offering support acts and providing business skills for bands (dealing with APRA, submission writing, marketing etc). Event performances are filmed and cut into live music clips for marketing and distribution via GTV, ICTV and NITV (GME’s sole funding from NITV consisted of $20,500 for clips produced as part of the music development program). Music is played on Goolarri Radio and sent to other radio stations. As music development funds are limited, GME has not yet been able to run or market the strategy outside of Broome, which means that people need to travel to Broome if they want assistance. Private sponsorship from Rio Tinto in 2009 provided support for workshops in Roebourne.

Training

Goolarri received RTO status in 2003. GME is scoped to do Certificate I to Advanced Diploma level of Screen and Media (broadcast) training as well as Cert IV in Interactive Digital Media & Cert IV in Live Production, Theatre and Events. In 2009 twenty students undertook Certificate III training and seven went on to do Certificate IV. Many students come from remote areas of the Kimberley. In addition to the main cohort, two students were employed as industry trainees. GME also provides media training at schools in Broome and to young people in Fitzroy Crossing.

Standard training courseware is not necessarily suitable for RIBS operators as training is based on radio station teams, when in fact RIBS are usually single person operations. GME will trial a new system next year, which will allow the training department to select units from a variety of AQF levels and create courses that are relevant to RIBS stations. The organisation is also looking at conducting units outside of Broome, although this is dependent on funding.

Of the fifty-four graduates that GME is still in contact with, twenty-five have gone on to work in the media industries and fifteen of those have stayed on to work at BAMA. As fifteen of the fifty-four undertook training in administration and finance, this cohort has successfully secured jobs in other industries. In 2003 BAMA won the WA State Training Award for Excellence and were a finalist in the 2004 Prime Minister’s National Training Awards. GME’s long-term vision is to become the premier training provider in the northwest, providing Indigenous students with the skills to be full participants in the knowledge economy.

The CMTO: On 27 August 2010, the Community Broadcasting Foundation wrote to Goolarri, along with other registered training organizations, to inform them of
their intention to establish an independent Community Media Training Organisation. We strongly oppose this move. We are alarmed that the CMTO has been announced when there is a government review into the Indigenous media sector underway – a review that has the scope to impact substantially on training initiatives overall, as well as the role of the CBF. The planned CMTO is premature and presumptuous.

The Indigenous sector is already far ahead of the mainstream community media sector in terms of the development of appropriate accredited and non-accredited training for Indigenous broadcasters. The CBF, via the National Training Package, has identified remote training delivery as a priority area. Although we welcome any investment in Indigenous media training, we believe that this initiative might undercut the existing training providers (particularly as it offers to apply for grants on stations’ behalf). The proposed CMTO is essentially radio-focused, whereas we deliver training across radio, video and multimedia. Moreover, only community broadcast licensees are eligible to apply; many Indigenous stations (including GTV) currently operate under open narrowcasting licences.

The CMTO reinforces our belief that the Indigenous sector needs to be separated from the generalist/mainstream community broadcasting sector in terms of funding body, training and licensing. We discuss this issue in greater detail in Part II.

**Online media**

In 2009 Goolarri opened the Balyarr Open Learning Centre with support from the Telstra Foundation and an anonymous donor. The centre is equipped with 20 computers, broadband access, and a range of learning applications including animation, gaming, video and social networking. To date, 1800 kids have participated in informal training and recreation activities. The knowledge centre is a way to ensure the future of Indigenous media and will soon commence workshops towards the production of cultural stories. All content produced in the Balyarr Open Learning Centre can be publicly showcased, building confidence and self-respect in participants.

**PART II: Proposal for a Regional Model**

“Consider and make recommendations on the most efficient, effective appropriate forms of the Australian Government’s investment” (ToR)

The model outlined here applies to “social enterprise media” – the community-controlled Indigenous media sector, as opposed to private and independent
production companies. Social enterprise media organisations provide training and ensure the information needs of the region are met. They also indirectly provide a support base for the independent sector by nurturing talent and giving individual media-makers their “wings to fly”. We support government investment in Indigenous high-end production, accessible to both independent and social enterprise media alike, through institutions such as the ABC, SBS, Screen Australia and the state film agencies. However, there is a need for dedicated funding for the community-controlled sector to enable them to provide grassroots industry development and to deliver essential cultural content and information to communities.

We stress that the model outlined below can be achieved via existing organisations with only some changes to existing governance structures. We do not propose to duplicate current activities, but to lever the resources, institutions and experience that currently reside in the region and to encourage collaboration between media organisations.

2.1. Current Inefficiencies

The purpose of this review is to consider whether current policies and funding structures are providing efficient and effective Indigenous media services. There are significant flaws in the current Indigenous media sector:

i) many organisations do not have the governance structures or capacity to meet cultural needs (resulting in an imbalance of cultural outputs across a region);
ii) we have a successful TV service in Broome, but not for the entire region;
iii) media work is treated as media ‘play’ in remote areas within the current framework (including inadequate reward for labour);
iv) NITV content funding has not flowed into the region;
v) there is a duplication of peak bodies;
vi) the licensing regime for Indigenous media is inadequate;

The first 6 issues are outlined below. Two further issues, of equal importance to those listed above, are raised here and discussed in further detail in sections 2.5 and 2.6:

vii) Indigenous media is administered through the generalist/mainstream community broadcasting sector and the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts. This is not appropriate or adequate.
viii) Providing a low level of funding to a growing base of disparate media organisations renders the sector unmanageable and leaves stations hamstrung;

i) **Representation, boards and local capacity:** It is essential that Indigenous media serve a broad range of Indigenous groups, regardless of the capacity of each community to be a production house in its own right. One pathway is to look at how boards can be restructured to provide greater input into
programming. For instance, the role of board members should be as cultural advisors who can provide input into the content needs of their community, as opposed to boards made up of media workers. Such cultural leadership would guide programming across an entire region and help ensure the perseverance of languages and Indigenous ways of knowing and being. The board that oversees the regional coordination unit would design a strategic plan to guide content development.

The current system creates too much of a burden on individual stations. As a result, staff changes can be disastrous for individual media organisations. It is therefore essential that the industry be restructured in a way that makes it ‘weatherproof’ against an itinerant worker staff base. This could be achieved via a coordination unit for the region, which manages content production, technical upgrades and business development. For instance, if a town campaigns to implement alcohol restrictions the media group would be based there to cover the issue for the duration of the campaign, working with the local media organisation.

**ii) Sustainable television services**: Audiences would like to see more content that is made in the region. Establishing a regional television service would also provide a business case for media sustainability. Content created for this service would be free for other regional Indigenous television services to use, as occurs with Indigenous radio networks.

**iii) Reward for labour**: Media workers in remote areas have seen improvements as a result of the National Jobs Package funding. However, wages do not represent the skill levels or qualifications of the workers. A content fund that employs people as per industry standards will give media-makers incentives to undertake further training and will help professionalise the workforce overall.

**iv) The NITV ‘trial’ has not succeeded in growing existing Indigenous media organisations or the creative content output of the Kimberley and Pilbara.**

As outlined above, PAKAM has received no income from NITV since it commenced, and GME has received only $20,500 for 2 x 30 minute music programs, created as part of their music development strategy. Goolarri was offered $500 for acquisition of all of its programming (which it turned down). It is worth noting that only 3 of the production houses that NITV use existed before the service commenced, which demonstrates the money has not gone to support the existing industry but to independent, hand-picked production houses.

NITV was set up as a ‘content aggregator’ rather than a national broadcaster. There was no statutory basis for NITV, no national free-to-air television spectrum or transmission facilities and insufficient funding to produce and acquire a full schedule of television content (the entire NITV funding for four years amounted to only half of SBS’s annual television budget). As a result, NITV was expected to push out and pay for content, keeping their operations lean.

As mentioned in section 1.2, IBP money formerly dedicated to remote video production was redirected into radio following the IBP review. Organisations were told that video production funding would be provided principally through
NITV. However, no measures were put in place to ensure money would be redirected to the RIMOs, aside from NITV’s program commissioning process. NITV pursued nationally-oriented program acquisition, as defined in their Charter. The RIMOs were forced to fit-in with NITV’s standards and processes, which, for a number of reasons, did not eventuate in RIMO-produced programming (aside from CAAMA Productions and a co-production with TEABBA and ABC). Ultimately, the different processes and roles of NITV and the RIMOS proved to be incompatible.

The well-known impasse between NITV and the RIMOs, however, is only part of the story. The aggregator model resulted in a range of issues:

- NITV has been unable to meet industry standard pre-sale arrangements, thereby cutting producers off from screen agency co-production funds. Typically, achieving presale with a broadcaster provides screen agencies with the confidence to invest in productions. The fact that NITV presales remain far below those of ABC and SBS only serves to marginalise the Indigenous screen industry, positioning it as a ‘poor cousin’ to non-Indigenous production. Producers who were able to secure presale deals with ABC and SBS are likely to choose that option, leaving NITV with the leftovers. Moreover, low (or no) presale money puts enormous pressure on the budgets of independent producers. Together with NITV’s contracting delays, the program commissioning process has been known, in some instances, to cause more problems than benefits for producers, damaging rather than building the Indigenous screen industry.

- In terms of output, NITV’s low-cost programming policy has resulted in an over-emphasis on sports productions. By not meeting demand in other genres, NITV presents a public image that Indigenous people are “only good for sport”. NITV’s programming has fallen short on culture and language programming, particularly for audiences in regions where both remain strong components of everyday life.

- GME has retained its autonomy from NITV by continuing with its existing service. GTV originally hoped to share content with NITV, however this was not possible due to contracting and rights clearance obstacles. GTV has been retransmitting the NITV News, which was only possible because the News is an in-house NITV production.

  GTV was prevented from screening other productions as the original contracts with producers did not allow for retransmission by another Indigenous broadcaster.

We would like to see NITV function according to the NIRS model, whereby regional/local Indigenous broadcasters can cherry-pick content and that all content is free to use. Although ICTV has the benefit of being accessible to program-makers, the service has not been able to pay for content and does not provide a business model for growth in the region.

It is our understanding from discussions with the ABC’s Indigenous Unit that the ABC is presenting a number of options to this review for how to take NITV
forward. One of these is that the ABC will manage the service, to be delivered via free-to-air digital terrestrial television using Channel A in the capital cities. We support this option, as long as content produced for this channel can be shared with regional stations. As Channel A is only allocated in metro areas, this service would be a city-based Indigenous channel and would therefore not infringe on our own business model for a regional service. The ABC-managed channel could also be provided on the VAST services through the ABC’s satellite transponder capacity. This would free up space on the VAST platform for a Kimberley and Pilbara television service. The larger towns in the Kimberley and Pilbara undergoing digital terrestrial transmission would take only the regional service (but with some programming selected from the ABC managed NITV).

v) Duplication of peak bodies: The Indigenous media sector does not need 2 peak bodies – it needs one effective peak body staffed with workers who are skilled at representing the various subsegments of the sector. One peak body, the Australian Indigenous Communications Association, should coordinate policy officers in each region. A major problem with the current arrangement is that the officers of the peak bodies are mostly geographically distant from the organisations they are attempting to represent. It would make more sense to have policy officers in each region or state, who would work closely with media organisations, provide ongoing reports and advice on new developments (broadcast, telecommunications and broadband) to media organisations and develop contacts with local politicians, service providers and funding agencies. The current IRCA office, although valuable, should be reorganised as a RIMO working party (note: this is certainly not a criticism of IRCA staff or board, as this entity has been very active of late). The central AICA office should be relocated to Alice Springs as this is a fair compromise between the Western and Eastern states, as well as remote and metropolitan media.

vi) Licensing: The issue of a separate licence for Indigenous broadcasting was detailed by Michael Meadows in the Productivity Commission’s Report on Broadcasting in 2000 and the arguments of that report remain valid. We consider an Indigenous licence to be an essential component of a full restructure of the government administration of Indigenous media. This includes a separate funding body for Indigenous media, established under the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy.

Essentially, Indigenous media is mainstream media for Indigenous people rather than being an ‘alternative’ to other services. Indigenous media outlets do not rely on volunteers in the same way as community broadcasters as the media is a vital employment opportunity. A raft of regulatory problems was caused by trying to fit the Indigenous media sector between community broadcasting and narrowcasting categories. For instance, as outlined in section 1.2, some RIBS licences missed out on the first IRRR rollout because of an historical licensing anomaly. Most importantly, by not providing a separate licence category for Indigenous broadcasting, the Act denies the discrete importance of this sector in Australia’s media landscape. Indeed, the only mention that the Act makes to Indigenous broadcasting is in the Objects of the Act – an amendment that was added with the support of Greens and Democrats Senators during the passage of the 2001 digital television amendments.
In October 2009, ACMA released a discussion paper proposing a simplified open narrowcast licensing regime for remote Indigenous media. Although we appreciate that this was an attempt to overcome administrative licensing hurdles, the current review provides an opportunity to give the Indigenous media sector the independent status it deserves. An Indigenous licence should include the following:

- Retain the not-for-profit, social enterprise criteria.
- For RIBS stations, the licence is currently awarded to the community as the licence holder, as opposed to a media organisation. This should be retained to enable the community to continue inserting local TV programming over another channel (as currently happens with the NITV channel). A remote Indigenous licence category needs to accommodate this unique arrangement, which also gives the community ownership over the service. Any existing issues in the Copyright Act or BSA that prevent such control should be addressed.
- Indigenous licensees would have special rights in terms of access to satellite channels. This could be stated as a ‘must carry’ obligation on satellite services in the relevant part of the Act.

2.2. The regional model explained
2.2.1 Administration and funding

A new independent agency would be formed, called the Australian Indigenous Media Foundation (AIMF) – similar to the CBF and working under the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy. Indigenous media funding would no longer be provided as a program within the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts.

The AIMF would administer 4 separate funding schemes:

- Core funding for stations
- Funding for the technical aspects of the distribution network (radio and television)
- A content fund for digitising culture and community
- A Closing the Gap fund, which would entail social marketing money coming out of government reforms related to COAG Closing the Gap.

The AIMF would ensure that content funding is distributed equally across all regions. The AIMF would also provide core funding to stations, separate from this fund (although stations may opt to have technical maintenance provided through the coordinating body in order to reduce burden on station managers). A third pool of money, a Closing the Gap fund, would be administered to the regions by the AIMF. The Closing the Gap funding, which would be used to support the production of content for government agencies and services, needs to be separate from the content funding for reasons of transparency. Both funds support radio, video and online media projects. The content fund would also allow for archiving projects.

2.2.2. Management

The coordination body would manage the following: administration, training and production coordination and social marketing campaigns, technical maintenance and general running of the RIBS units, the management of the radio network (PAKAM) and business development. A board, consisting of representatives from communities, agencies and cultural organisations across the region, would oversee this entity, as outlined in section 2.1(i).

The broadcasters would retain their current status as independent Associations. However, they would also be members of the coordination body and be eligible to receive content funding. The stations would also work with their local communities to propose projects.
2.2.3. A regional television channel

Indigenous people living in remote areas of the Kimberley and Pilbara would like to see more local and regional television content (section 1.2.2). The success of Goolarri’s television service makes this viable – we have the required management systems in place and a method for full-time programming. Indeed, viewers outside of Broome don’t understand why GTV is not currently available to people across the region.

i) Programming: As GTV is currently programmed for Broome audiences, a regional television service would provide more content from across the Kimberley and Pilbara, developed through the Digitising Culture and Community fund. Ultimately, we believe that Indigenous television content should be pooled into a content sharing network (similar to NIRS) so that regional channels can cherry-pick content yet retain control over revenue and programming. In the short-term, regions without a fully developed service would rely on a full programming feed from an aggregated service (for instance, a service that combines existing NITV, ICTV and GTV content, but where that content is not exclusively owned by one channel).

ii) Transmission: There are two options for a Kimberley and Pilbara television service, depending on the Government’s plans for digital switchover in remote areas:

**Option 1: A single satellite channel that would serve the Kimberley and Pilbara region.**

The new satellite VAST service will deliver free satellite television to households that will not have access to terrestrial digital TV. The government will provide additional subsidies for remote households to help them to make the transition to satellite digital television.

We have serious concerns about the satellite-direct-to-home policy (see section 2.3). However, if the government persists with the current policy for satellite-direct-to-home in areas outside of the Kimberley and Pilbara then it is essential that there is a dedicated satellite channel for a regional service. Essentially, the service currently available in Broome would be regionalised and distributed direct-to-home via the VAST system. For towns that are making the transition to digital terrestrial broadcasting (including Broome, Derby, Kununurra, Roebourne and Tom Price), the service could be taken off the satellite and retransmitted via local terrestrial transmission.

As a ‘regional footprint’ is only possible through smartcard technology, it may make technical and economic sense to have the station nationally accessible.

**Cost:** At the IRCA technical consultation in July 2010, Imparja’s chief technical engineer (John Wilkinson) informed the group that the new VAST platform will possess better compression technology and will therefore require half the
capacity per television channel as the Aurora platform. Therefore, the current subsidy provided to Imparja for NITV could provide two satellite channels on the new platform. On this basis, we estimate the cost of a satellite channel to be approximately $300,000 per year, plus an additional cost of the playout system ($20,000 - $50,000).

Considering the level of public money that the government has committed to providing commercial channels on VAST, this is a comparatively small investment and one that will see far greater social returns.

Option 2: A programming network to be delivered via broadband for local terrestrial transmission in current RIBS retransmission sites and towns.

This option does not require a satellite channel, but will mean that the Kimberley and Pilbara television service is only available in communities and towns with digital terrestrial transmitters. As long as local television licences for digital terrestrial permission are permitted, this model is achievable now. We support allowing digital terrestrial transmission in RIBS communities, as it will enable the continuation of local programming and control of broadcasting. In addition, we would like to see terrestrial television transmission in larger towns, such as Fitzroy Crossing and Halls Creek, which do not currently receive an Indigenous television service. Where our model differs from that of IRCA is that we will provide a full-time programming feed via satellite broadband to each RIBS community, as opposed to a local channel that is only operating for a few hours a week at most. Each community across the region will be provided with uniform playout systems, a satellite broadband connection and a terrestrial transmitter. The content will be sent via satellite broadband and can be mixed for local relevance by a local media worker (note: the ability to deliver content to communities via broadband will depend on the outcome of the NBN as larger download speeds than are currently available may be required. In the short term, content may have to be transported on hard drives as is done presently). The media worker will therefore be able to curate programming for their audience as well as insert as much local content into that schedule as desired.

Cost: A single terrestrial transmitter will cost less than $7500 per RIBS community (costings paper available on request). An additional cost of up to $500 a month for satellite broadband will be required across approximately 30 locations (60 GB downloads). The broadband download costs would be up to $180,000 a year for all sites (this may also provide broadband to telecentres and for other uses), plus the initial outlay for playout software and hard drives ($5000 per site). The initial capital costs for all sites would therefore be approximately $375,000, with a yearly expense of up to $200,000 for broadband connections and maintenance.

Note: Such a system could also be provided via wimax networks, but we do not yet have costings or technical information to provide a full comparison.
2.3. Convergence and digital media platforms (broadcast and broadband)

“Consider the impact of media convergence on the Indigenous broadcasting and media sector and the carriage of Indigenous broadcasting and media on new digital platforms, including terrestrial services, broadband enabled platforms and the new Government-funded satellite service” (ToR)

2.3.1. Media convergence

The Indigenous media sector has been convergent for some time, as outlined in Part I. However, this is not acknowledged in current funding and policy regimes. Indigenous people in the Kimberley and Pilbara are about half as likely to have access to broadband in the home. Although there is a significant role for the Indigenous media sector to play in terms of digital literacy and engagement, audiences are still predominantly reliant on broadcasting services. Out of the 40 qualitative audience interviews that we conducted for this submission, only one person had a computer that was connected to the internet at home, whereas 95% had a television. It is critical that we do not dismantle existing broadcast platforms or the institutional structures that underpin social enterprise media based on an assumption that broadband will fulfil content distribution needs.

2.3.3. Digital switchover

The Labor Government committed $375.4 million over twelve years for a new satellite platform (VAST, a joint venture between Imparja and Southern Cross), in order to deliver free satellite television to households that will not have access to terrestrial digital TV. The funding includes subsidies for domestic satellite dishes and a channel to carry local commercial news services. The VAST service signifies a major development in Australian media policy by establishing what will become the primary television service for remote areas and determining what services must be made available by the satellite licensee. However, no arrangements were made to ensure that the commercial satellite licensee carry Indigenous television services.

Under current switchover policy, when terrestrial analogue television is switched off, remote communities will lose their analogue television transmitters and licences, effectively terminating community control of television. It is therefore essential that the new platform accommodate Indigenous television services, including the regional channel outlined above.
We urge the Government to consider the full implications of satellite-direct-to-home (SDTH) television in remote areas. Firstly, residents will be required to purchase satellite dishes in order to receive television services. Secondly, ongoing maintenance issues need to be planned for. Thirdly, local television licences will be redundant and Indigenous communities will lose the ability to insert local content into their programming schedule.

Due to the high costs of providing satellite dishes to homes in remote areas, it will cost less to provide digital transmitters in larger towns than to provide subsidies for satellite dishes. As a conservative estimate, it would be more cost effective to provide towns with over 250 houses with the full suite of digital terrestrial channels than to provide $1000 subsidies. We have costed a cheaper option that does not require an EPG, which would enable smaller communities to maintain one digital multiplex for $7500. The IRCA technical forum fleshed out all these options and we refer you to IRCA’s submission to this review for full digital transmission options and costings.

The Switchover Taskforce has not produced documentation to show the economic rationale for satellite-direct-to-home in remote Indigenous communities. Without evidence that SDTH is the only viable option, the Government may be acting against the Objectives of the BSA and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

2.3.4. Access Regime

Our first priority for switchover is a Kimberley and Pilbara television channel.

The new requirement that local news services be rebroadcast on the satellite platform demonstrates the Government’s commitment to content that meets local needs. And yet the vastly different informational and language needs of the remote Indigenous population have not been taken into account. Indigenous people make up 24 per cent of Australians living in remote or very remote areas (compared to 1 per cent of those living in major cities). Almost half of the people living in the Kimberley identify themselves as Indigenous Australians (47.7%), as well as a significant proportion of the Pilbara population (13.5%). As these figures reveal, Indigenous people make up a substantial portion of the audience that the new platform is designed to serve.

The 2010 digital television amendments exclude narrowcasters from the suite of channels that the VAST satellite licensee is obliged to carry. Indigenous broadcasters are forced to negotiate commercial arrangements with the licensee, with no transparent process or guarantee that the communication needs of Indigenous Australians will be served. The Senate Legislation Committee (Environment, Communications and the Arts) stated in its report that it “is of the view that it is appropriate for narrowcasters to negotiate commercial access arrangements with the satellite licence owner”. We strongly oppose this view.
Imparja won the original RCTS licence through a competitive process (determined by the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal) in 1986. Imparja was established by the non-profit Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA) in order to ensure that the communication needs of Indigenous peoples are met. However, market constraints have severely limited Imparja’s ability to provide Indigenous content. We now have a system whereby the government provides Imparja with a subsidy via the Indigenous Broadcasting Program and requires, through contractual arrangements, that Imparja carry other Indigenous radio and television services.

This system places the Indigenous broadcasting sector in a precarious and impermanent position. The BSA currently sets out a variety of other public interest requirements for commercial licensees (and the bill reinforces at least one of these public interest objectives: local content). It is unacceptable that Australia’s Indigenous media exists as a shaky deal while the retransmission of regional news is mandated. The sudden replacement of ICTV with NITV in 2007 is a case in point: The service had no legislative protection or independent access (or contractual) arrangement. There is a significant risk that, even if commercial arrangements are agreed to, the satellite licensee will be obliged to take new commercial multichannel services, thereby ‘bumping’ Indigenous television if capacity becomes an issue.

2.3.5. SDTH: Maintenance and cost

RIBS TV transmission is currently maintained by RIMOs and is the responsibility of the council/shires. The SDTH regime places the cost of television access back on the household. Although subsidy will be provided during the initial transition period to assist houses to purchase dishes, the ongoing costs are likely to be prohibitive for remote Indigenous households. For instance, if a family moves out of a house (which can occur when someone dies), the household will have to carry the cost of replacing or reinstalling a satellite dish on another house.

We are unclear whether the Shires will be responsible for the maintenance of domestic dishes, as houses are mostly publicly provided. Technicians have advised that maintenance costs will be high, particularly in northern Australia. Many areas of the Kimberley are subject to cyclones and are inaccessible by road during the wet, cutting communities off for months at a time. The technical consultation, held by IRCA in July 2010, revealed that some areas may require expensive stainless steel or fibreglass dishes as regular dishes would need to be replaced every 2 years.

2.3.6. Local television in remote communities

PAKAM has been installing computers with local/regional video playlists into RIBS communities in the Pilbara and Kimberley since October 2009. The content
is transmitted to the community via their RIBS transmitter for block periods during the week (inserted over NITV). PAKAM is thus providing audiences with access to videos not intended for national broadcast, including ceremony and community events. PAKAM’s local video broadcast system would not be possible in a SDTH regime.

Digital terrestrial transmitters should be permitted in communities that wish to maintain a local service, as well as those in coastal areas that are likely to be cut-off in the wet. A suite of four terrestrial channels could provide back-up ABC and SBS services alongside local programming.

RIBS stations utilise frequencies in the 520—820 MHz range (including channels 57, 60, 63, 66 and 69). In the divvying up of the digital dividend, this band has been pegged for future mobile telecommunications uses. ACMA may need to revise channel plans to allow RIBS stations to operate digital terrestrial transmitters, preferably within the same Band IV, if these frequencies are in fact not in high demand in remote areas, thereby saving substantial cost of new antennae, combiners and mast riggers, and without requirement for expensive EPG (Electronic Program Guide) generation.

2.3.7. Radio

It is our understanding that capacity has been reserved for Indigenous radio on Imparja’s allocation of the new Optus platform.

Radio is an essential and popular communications platform for Indigenous people. The introduction of digital radio to regional Australia, in particular Digital Radio Mondiale (DRM) technology, could extend the reach and reliability of Indigenous radio services to highways and outstations. We endorse the introduction of DRM in regional and remote areas and support AICA’s position that spectrum be reserved for Indigenous channels.

2.3.8. Broadband

Data gathered from the 2006 Census of Population and Housing reveals that 25 per cent of Indigenous households in the combined Kimberley and Pilbara statistical divisions have access to the internet at home. Only 16 per cent of Indigenous households in the Kimberley and Pilbara have broadband access. In comparison, 44 per cent of all households have an internet connection at home in the region; 27 per cent have broadband access.

Broadband was the deciding issue of the 2010 election. Next generation broadband and mobile telephony is a positive step, particularly for underserved regional and remote areas. However, it is important that the social, geographical and economic circumstances of Indigenous people be taken into account during the rollout of regional and remote broadband services. Preliminary results of a
project being funded through ACCAN suggest that cost is a significant factor in low take-up, as well as digital literacy and concerns over maintenance and security of equipment.

Under Labor’s plans, the National Broadband Network promises 100mbps for 93% of the population. The remainder of the population will have access to next generation mobile and satellite access of at least 12mbps. The COAG agreement on remote internet access is currently focused on public internet access facilities as a means to access government services. Our priority is getting content (stories, culture and information) to Indigenous audiences. Broadband in the home (including IPTV services) will become increasingly important as a delivery platform, particularly given the potential loss of local RIBS TV transmitters. With the loss of local television licences, adequate broadband speeds and reasonably priced services are essential.

Mobile telephony currently reaches 99% of the Australian population. Of the 1% not served, most are living in remote Indigenous communities. Furthermore, many remote Indigenous homes do not currently have a fixed telephone line because of geographical obstacles, the dynamics of shared use and household economics. Therefore, even if coverage is extended through new/upgraded mobile services, billing and subscription charges are likely to remain a major issue for Indigenous households. We consider spectrum to be a resource held in the public trust. If spectrum is auctioned off for mobile telephony and mobile broadband, it is important that regulatory measures be put in place to ensure that Indigenous people living in regional and remote areas have affordable access to these services or that alternative arrangements be made. We see this as an issue of compensation if local television is to be taken away.

2.4. Closing the Gap

“Identify the contribution of Indigenous broadcasting to Closing the Gap” (ToR)

The long-term, lasting changes identified in Closing the Gap will require the full participation of local Indigenous industry, working alongside Government agencies.

Many Indigenous Australians do not know what Closing the Gap entails or how it will affect them and their families. Culturally appropriate information is therefore key to the success of the Closing the Gap strategy (see examples in section 1.5.3). GTV takes a ground-up approach, using local talent, culture and live events to make information relevant and entertaining. A substantial proportion of Broome’s non-Indigenous population and visitors also watch GTV, suggesting that the station is building cultural exchange and respect.

There are two significant obstacles to growing social marketing media under the current system.
i) Media organisations currently rely on grant funding to make this content. Grant funding is piecemeal and inconsistent.

ii) As social marketing media is created according to specific grants and commissions, output is limited to the concerns of those programs/agencies that seek it out.

There is a strong argument for investing in social marketing media as part of the Closing the Gap strategy. We propose:

- A dedicated budget, sourced across all departments involved in Closing the Gap. Departments/Programs already undertaking social marketing activities could justify their expenditure, whilst those that are not would be given a framework for participation via the COAG process.

- Funding would be granted on the basis of set outcomes (in terms of number of advertisements, programming hours etc).

- A portion of the total budget should be set aside for community activities/programs that encourage self-development. For instance, Kimberley Girl was initiated by Goolarri, using CDEP funds (no longer available). The event provides valuable leadership skills and encourages participants to become role models and spokespeople for Indigenous women of the Kimberley region and is broadcast on GTV (see section 1.2.3).

It is important that funding for social marketing be kept separate from content and genre programming for reasons of transparency. We would not expect this funding to come through the Indigenous Broadcasting Program. As social marketing is essentially paid programming to promote government initiatives it should be clearly demarcated. Moreover, content funding is intended for cultural and industry development purposes and implicitly assumes creative independence.

In the lead up to this review we surveyed half a dozen of the major Kimberley service providers to gauge their current media and social marketing activities. These organisations are not currently using media in an effective way to reach constituents and their combined budget for social marketing in 2009-2010 was under $100,000. No doubt they are already stretched and marketing is a low priority. However, all supported the idea of a fund for social marketing media to develop content with Indigenous media organisations in the region. Nindilingarri Cultural Health Service commented that: "With the high burden of disease around Chronic illness (i.e. Diabetes), it is becoming important to use radio and television to educate the Aboriginal Communities".

Of the organisations surveyed all of them stated they would prefer to work with Kimberley media organisations over other regional or city-based media services. All of them agreed that Indigenous media provides a more appropriate and effective means of reaching Indigenous people. Some also believed that delivering content in Indigenous languages helps.
2.5. Funding and Sustainability

"Assess future options for funding the delivery of Indigenous broadcasting and media in light of future challenges and opportunities and uncertainty about the sustainability of existing funding models and taking into account regional and cultural language requirements" (ToR)

“Develop a robust performance framework for the Indigenous broadcasting and media sector” (ToR)

2.5.1. A business case for the regional media model

The model that we are proposing requires a detailed business plan. We will work with government to identify sustainable revenue streams and potential cost savings, following the outcomes of this review.

The proposed business case will also consider the scope and role of the Digitising Culture and Community Fund as well as the Closing the Gap social marketing fund outlined in this submission.

2.5.2. Operational and capital funding

The Indigenous media sector has been stretched to breaking point. Over the past fifteen years the number of Indigenous broadcasting licensees has more than doubled while the IBP funding has remained the same (adjusted only slightly in the 2009 Budget). For instance, the PAKAM RIMO Co-ordination Unit received an allocation of only $317,690 in the last funding round, cut by $10,000 from the previous year. Capital funding for RIBS and town station buildings is a priority.

Moreover, there are significant and inexplicable funding disparities across the sector. Shires in the Northern Territory and Queensland receive approximately $15,000 a year for each RIBS community (around $370,000 per year total) out of the Indigenous Broadcasting Program. RIBS communities in Western Australia do not receive this funding. Aside from the inequity of this situation, those (NT and Qld) Shires use IBP money to fund transmission of commercial and national broadcasters in remote communities. The maintenance of these non-Indigenous television services should not be funded through the already stretched Indigenous Broadcasting Program.

In terms of performance measures, RIBS communities should be funded according to the activities of each broadcaster/RIBS, rather than the number of licences.

Towns and communities that are undergoing digital terrestrial transition will require funding to meet capital infrastructure costs. In 2000, the Howard
Government committed $260 million over 13 years to the Regional Equalisation Plan (REP), which represented 50 per cent of the estimated costs of digital conversion for regional commercial broadcasters. As a rationale for providing this support, the Government acknowledged that ‘regional broadcasters do not earn as much money as metropolitan broadcasters, so paying for digital television is harder’. The Indigenous sector also requires funding to meet the costs of digital television. GTV estimated the capital costs to be $219,000. So far the government has not provided GTV with funding to meet digital conversion due to their status as a narrowcaster.

2.6. Government administration

"Assess the options for the most efficient, effective and appropriate arrangements within the Australian Government for the administration of Indigenous broadcasting and media" (ToR)

We are pleased that this review was called across three Ministerial portfolios as it has enabled us to address the full suite of issues currently affecting our sector. However, the fact that there is no single agency or department responsible for Indigenous media demonstrates how overly complex and confusing the administration of the sector has become.

The Indigenous media sector deserves to be recognised as a distinct tier of broadcasting in the Broadcasting Services Act. If this Act is overhauled (as seems likely, given broadband developments), any future legislation relating to communications should treat Indigenous media as independent from community broadcasting. As outlined in section 2.1, an Indigenous broadcasting licence is paramount.

Indigenous broadcasting is currently treated as a subsector of the community broadcasting sector through the licensing regime, yet we have our funding administered through a separate government department (DEWHA) to mainstream and ethnic broadcasters (DBCDE). How come ethnic broadcasters are considered part of the responsibilities of broadband and communications, while we are badged as arts and heritage? This nonsensical arrangement has not served the sector well. We are forced to deal with two separate departments on issues such as digital transition and we must go cap-in-hand to two different funding programs. Many issues have fallen through the cracks, as outlined throughout this submission, including: difficulties in fulfilling programs for technical upgrades, the opaque arrangements relating to satellite channels and the inaccessibility of content programming due to NITV’s peculiar status and cryptic processes.

As AICA argued in their submission to the Digital Dividend Green Paper, Indigenous media is currently treated as a ‘program’ rather than a sector. The full value and role of the sector is thus ignored: “It is not acceptable that our sought after involvement is seen only as “program management” within the Arts portfolio and not situated in the communications arena with other broadcasters – including “community, Christians and ethnic” broadcasters".
A further issue, which flows from the required legislative recognition of Indigenous media, is the establishment of a new agency that would be responsible for administering funding to the Indigenous media sector (as discussed in section 2.2). The proposed Australian Indigenous Media Foundation would distribute funds to community-controlled Indigenous media organisations (broadcast and new media), including providing regional allocations out of a Digitising Culture and Community Fund and a Closing the Gap fund for social marketing media.

Further information:

The following documents were used in the development of this submission and are available on request:

- Digital costings for RIBS communities (by Neil Turner)
- RIBS and town station survey data
- Descriptions/background of stations
- Audience interview summary table
- GTV programming synopses
- Kimberley forum attendance list
- ABS stats on household internet for the Kimberley and Pilbara regions

Please contact us should you require any of this information.