

## Community Broadcasting Foundation response to Renewing a Vital Indigenous Voice and Community Asset – The Indigenous Broadcasting and Media Sector

The Community Broadcasting Foundation (CBF) welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) report: [Renewing a Vital Indigenous Voice and Community Asset – The Indigenous Broadcasting and Media Sector](#) and its recommendations to Government.

We support [First Nations Media Australia's response](#) to the report's recommendations, especially given their insights and deep knowledge of the subject matter. However, there is one recommendation we would particularly like to address that specifically relates to our work.

Recommendation 13 states that "NIAA initiate discussions with DITRDC regarding transfer of the Indigenous grants element of the CBF to the NIAA for use on sector-wide projects".

We strongly caution against accepting this recommendation.

As NIAA is aware, our First Nations fund is made available via the Commonwealth's Community Broadcasting Program, which is allocated to the CBF by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications (DITRDC), and disbursed to support First Nations community broadcasting via our grants programs. We recently executed a four-year funding agreement with DITRDC which confirms the provision of these funds through to 30 June 2025.

Indigenous community broadcasting is a community asset with cultural, social and economic impact. It amplifies Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices within and between communities and supports the expression of culture and preservation of 120 Indigenous languages spoken across Australia.

Our First Nations fund provides critical funding support to the Indigenous community broadcasting sector through our Content and Development & Operations grant programs.

Our Content grants support radio programming produced by First Nations peoples including:

- Indigenous programs that are broadcast on Indigenous licensed stations with a high level of Indigenous language content
- Indigenous programs that are produced and distributed within a remote Indigenous community
- Indigenous programs broadcast on non-Indigenous licensed community radio stations.

In 2020/21, for example the First Nations fund supported First Nations radio programs broadcast on 17 generalist community radio stations, across six Remote Indigenous Media Organisation (RIMO) networks to 52 Remote Indigenous Broadcasting Services (RIBS) communities and six Indigenous community radio stations.

Of the total funds disbursed from our First Nations fund in 2020/21 (\$1,244,534), 59% (\$740,464) were allocated to support the production of 15,080 hours of Indigenous programming through

Content grants. Of this, 3,432 hours of programming was broadcast on non-Indigenous stations and 11,648 hours of programming was aired through RIBS communities.

In the same period, we allocated \$273,309 of our First Nations fund through Development & Operations grants, including:

- \$108,500 allocated to First Nations Media Australia for Indigenous media sector coordination and development activities to run key networking events and content coordination on [indigiTUBE](#) and collaborative purchase and installation of remote monitoring systems for FM/AM broadcast facilities and video monitoring of remote studio sites
- \$164,809 in funding to seven other First Nations organisations to support First Nations journalism development, strategic planning, policy development, governance training, new video equipment, outside broadcasting, new studio equipment and equipment upgrades, network upgrades and transmission costs and salary support.

And through the CBF's Covid Crisis response grants, \$232,136 of First Nations funds were allocated to 28 First Nations organisations (\$195,497) and nine generalist organisations (\$36,639) supporting First Nations programming at the onset of the pandemic. This funding enabled these stations to stay on air providing vital information to their communities during that time.

The impact of this funding is significant to local communities who rely on these radio programs for cultural maintenance, connection and belonging, and for relevant local news and information that assists audiences to participate in community life.

Our organisation is also very connected to the First Nations community media sector through close consultation. For example, First Nations Media Australia participates in our Nominations Advisory Group that provides input into the CBF's Board and volunteer appointment process, and we sit on and contribute to the Community Broadcasting Sector Roundtable – a forum of community broadcasting sector peak bodies, including First Nations Media Australia.

The expressed purpose of the CBF is to fund a thriving and resilient future for community broadcasting. Over many decades we have developed and refined our protocols and processes to manage our grant programs so they best meet the needs of the community broadcasting sector. Our governance oversight and peer-review grant assessment processes ensure that the funding decisions are culturally appropriate and relevant, informed by a range of industry and community broadcasting-specific expertise. This includes the knowledge and skill of Indigenous broadcasters working on the ground in stations and community media organisations around the country.

We understand there are a range of strategic projects that require Commonwealth funding to further support and develop First Nations broadcasting and media. However, we cannot support the recommendation that these projects are funded by redirecting funds provided to the CBF to support grassroots First Nations broadcasting and program production.

**While we disagree with recommendation 13 in the NIAA report, we would welcome a discussion with NIAA about how we can assist their work supporting good outcomes for First Nations community media and explore how we might strengthen opportunities for community-controlled and industry-informed decision-making regarding funding for First Nations community media.**