

# REVIEW OF THE INDIGENOUS BROADCASTING PROGRAM

## Discussion Paper

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1987, the Broadcasting for Remote Aboriginal Communities Scheme was developed and funded by the then Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), established in 1990, took over the provision of government funding for Indigenous broadcasting and communications.

ATSIC and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services (ATSIS) agency were the principal bodies funding Indigenous broadcasting until the Australian Government changed the arrangements for the administration of Indigenous affairs in July 2004.

Since then, the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA) has had the responsibility for managing the Indigenous Broadcasting Program (IBP).

The level of funding for Indigenous broadcasting has remained relatively unchanged since the late 1990s.

The Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) has also supported broadcasting activities, especially in remote communities. In addition, DCITA continues to provide funds for Indigenous broadcasting to the Community Broadcasting Foundation (CBF). This funding supports program grants, development grants and special projects grants.

Demand for support under the IBP usually outstrips funding available. In the 2005–06 funding round, the IBP received funding requests for projects valued at \$27.2 million compared to a total allocation of \$13.3 million.

The purpose of this discussion paper is to canvass, from a national perspective, issues relevant to the IBP. This review is separate from the Indigenous Television Review of August 2005.

The IBP will, in the main, continue to support radio broadcasting. The Government has made available separate funding under the *Backing Indigenous Ability* initiative for an Indigenous television service.

The broad objective of the IBP is to increase the availability of Indigenous-specific radio and television broadcasts to Indigenous audiences.

To achieve this objective, a new approach to funding Indigenous broadcasters is proposed in order to:

- address historical funding disparities;
- establish a more equitable distribution of funding across capital cities and regional and remote areas;
- increase the availability of new Indigenous broadcasting services; and
- provide further transparency to the funding process.

Under the proposed model, broadcasting services of a similar kind operating within defined population band sizes would be grouped together.

Over time, the IBP would provide a common funding level to each of these groups.

Key changes resulting from the adoption of the proposed model would include:

- equalisation of funding for organisations with similar population band sizes;
- cessation of direct funding to Remote Indigenous Broadcasting Services (RIBS), to be replaced by indirect funding through Remote Indigenous Media Organisations;
- removal of overlapping funding between the IBP and the CBF; and
- a focus on the funding of radio broadcasting, but not audio-visual material.