Indigenous skills, engagement and employment program

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Response to NIAA Discussion Paper from First Nations Media Australia

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Contact Details

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CEO
Level 2/70 Elder Street, Alice Springs NT 0870
PO Box 2731. Alice Springs NT 0871
Ph: 08 8952 6465
E: ceo@firstnationsmedia.org.au
W: www.firstnationsmedia.org.au

This submission is made by First Nations Media Australia. Some members may make individual submissions in which case the First Nations Media Australia submission should not be taken to displace those submissions.

First Nations Media Australia (FNMA) is the peak body for the First Nations media and communications industry. Our purpose is empowering Australia's First Nations people through our culturally connected media industry. As at August 2021, FNMA's membership includes 62 organisations and 167 individuals who work in or alongside the community-controlled media industry as broadcasters, freelance journalists, photographers, filmmakers and allies.

First Nations Media Australia supports and amplifies the First Nations media sector and its objectives. Our activities include resource and policy development, skills development, networking events and meetings, content-sharing, promotion, regular communications, annual awards, research activities and representation. As part of its industry leadership role, FNMA seeks to ensure First Nations communities have access to information required to make informed decisions, including access to public resources such as broadcast spectrum necessary to provide timely and relevant information to First Nations communities.

The scope of the First Nations media sector includes:

- **Television**: National free-to-air (NITV); satellite delivered narrowcast (ICTV) TV services; local narrowcast TV services (Goolarri TV at Broome, ICTV in Alice Springs and Broome and Larrakia TV at Darwin). The ICTV satellite TV service reaches 371,846 smartcards nation-wide as at April 2021, not including terrestrial services in Alice Springs and Broome.
- **Video & film production**: Production of culture and language-based content for broadcast & online distribution.
- **Print** and **Online:** A national newspaper (Koori Mail) alongside a strong web presence of journalistic sites such as IndigenousX, National Indigenous Times.
- First Nations media organisations have a strong **social media** following and publish content online daily.
- **Radio**: Over 230 radio broadcast sites coordinated by 35 licensed, community-owned, not-for-profit organisations. These radio services able to reach around 320,000 First Nations people, including around 100,000 very hard to reach people in remote Indigenous communities, or approximately 48% of the First Nations population. Radio services are prevented from providing a primary radio service to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples due to a lack of funding and spectrum availability. Established stations broadcast live shows, plus interviews, radio documentaries, news, emergency information, community events, government and other messaging within community broadcasting guidelines through these platforms:
  - o 157 stations broadcasting on FM
  - o 4 stations broadcasting on AM
  - o 13 broadcasting via VAST satellite, in addition to FM services.
  - o 5 metropolitan services broadcasting via DAB+, in addition to FM services in Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Brisbane and Darwin.
  - o Almost all offer online streaming via a dedicated station website.

- o Many offer on-demand content either through the station's own website, or Soundcloud or podcast sites.
- o 26 stations can be streamed via the indigiTUBE website and app. Some stations also have their own application or use the TuneIn or iHeartRadio apps to reach audiences.
- These channels offer a wide range of programming, including news and current affairs reporting from a First Nations perspective, in over 25 Indigenous languages nationally, including the first language of many people in remote communities.

The sector reaches significant audience share with 91% of people in remote Indigenous communities being regular listeners to radio services and watching ICTV at least once per month.[1] In the remote context, First Nations media is the most reliable and ubiquitous radio and media service available to audiences. In 82 regions across the country, First Nations radio is the only radio service available (29 community licensees, 50 TCBLs and 3 retransmission sites). At a further 16 locations, First Nations radio is the only local service available, alongside retransmitted national services from other locations.[2]

First Nations broadcasters are not-for-profit community organisations providing a primary and essential service to their communities. First Nations media organisations are based in local communities and employ local people as broadcasters and media producers. They are local and trusted voices, attracting listeners who want to hear about their own communities, in their own language, sharing positive Indigenous stories.[3] Social Ventures Australia found that strengthening First Nations broadcasting strengthens community through communication, culture and employment. For this reason, First Nations broadcasting returns an average $2.87 in social outcomes for every $1 invested, with many organisations returning a rate much higher than this nearly 3:1 average ratio.[4] The communications sector provides enabling services to support opportunities and outcomes in service sectors, such as health and education, and promotes inclusiveness and participation.[5]

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[1] McNair yellowSquares, *Indigenous Communications and Media Survey,* 2016,

[2] ACMA, Radio and Television Broadcasting Stations, April 2019 and ACMA Temporary Community Radio Broadcasting Licenses list, 1st May 2019

[3] ibid.

[4] Social Ventures Australia, *More Than Radio – a community asset: Social Return on Investment Analyses of Indigenous Broadcasting Services*, 2017

[5] Department of Communications and the Arts, *The Communications Sector: recent trends and developments,* Bureau of Communications Research, Commonwealth Government, Canberra, October 2016

Executive Summary

This response highlights some of the ways in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can contribute to the First Nations media sector and share their culture and knowledge with all Australians with support from Indigenous specific employment programs. Current programs are not meeting the needs of communities, for either employment outcomes or service provision. The First Nations media sector is well-placed to provide culturally safe working environments and to foster career development from the earliest engagement stages through to managerial roles. However, the sector is under-resourced and requires support beyond the first 6-12 weeks of employment to turn roles into sustainable positions. PM&C commissioned research shows the industry has capacity to generate revenue to support meaningful jobs but needs investment in employment programs to fulfil its potential. A community-led Workforce Development Plan has been developed to support locally focused employment, particularly for young people in remote and regional areas. IAS investment could facilitate the implementation of that plan, strengthening the community-controlled sector and aligning the ISEP with closing the gap employment objectives.

Introduction

First Nations Media Australia welcomes the opportunity to highlight some of the opportunities and barriers relevant to Indigenous-specific employment from a media perspective in response to the NIAA's Discussion Paper on Indigenous skills, engagement and employment program (ISEP). FNMA is encouraged by the focus on co-design expressed in the discussion paper and recognition of the need to adapt employment programs for cultural appropriateness and career advancement practices. As a member of the Coalition of Peaks, FNMA is pleased to see acknowledgement of alignment with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap informing this work. That said, we are unclear on how the outcomes of this consultation process will be discussed with the Coalition of Peaks as the next steps of a co-design process, or if there is any direct consultation planned beyond the public submission process.

First Nations media, referred to within government policy as Indigenous broadcasting, maintains and strengthens Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, significantly contributes to the maintenance and revitalisation of Indigenous languages, contributes a First Nations perspective to Australia's national dialogue and educates both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander audiences and the broader community on matters relevant to First Nations communities. First Nations radio is an essential component of truth-telling processes and the expression of First Nations voices.

The First Nations media and communications industry provides a range of employment opportunities to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in remote, regional and urban locations to undertake meaningful work in a culturally safe environment. Beyond employment and economic development outcomes for First Nations communities, this work is nationally significant to the fabric of Australian society. First Nations broadcasters provide a primary service to First Nations communities and people. They are the preferred channel for First Nations audiences due to their cultural appropriateness, local relevance and positive representation of First Nations issues as compared

with negative stereotyping prevalent in mainstream media. This contributes significantly to the emotional and social wellbeing of First Nations audiences and the visibility of positive, identifiable role-models who are carrying out a range of employment activities in their communities.

The First Nations media industry currently resources 43 organisations and over 120 licensed services with between 500-600 staff around 79% of whom are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This includes part-time and casual employees, working in organisations in urban, regional and remote locations.[6] Approximately 28 per cent of those positions are full time, with 72 per cent are part-time or casual.[7] While primarily a function of budget restrictions, this workforce structure allows flexibility to meet the discrete needs of workers in different settings. Social Ventures Australia noted, "Broadcasters offer flexible working arrangements in culturally safe environments. They create work opportunities that are aligned with the interests of individuals, and there is pride associated with working for these organisations."[8]

The communications sector has been identified as a critical enabler of economic and social activity.[9] There is industry desire to increase activities to a scale that would require twice the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff that are currently employed across the sector (another 500-600 jobs). However, budget constraints currently prevent the training of new staff and the capacity to provide career opportunities to people who do undertake training.

FNMA agrees that a new approach is needed to drive locally informed investment in employment and provide the flexibility required to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in managing both employment and cultural commitments. This is a key component of retention and career success for the employment and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

FNMA's comments during the Inquiry into Pathways and Participation for Indigenous Australians in Employment and Business were noted by the Committee in relation to mentoring, acknowledging that the First Nations media sector is well placed to support young workers in a manner that builds confidence and ability to pursue a broad range of goals. We were pleased to see the Report on Indigenous Participation in Employment and Business recommending support for mentoring activities as a component of Indigenous employment activities and note that intention is carried through in the approach the NIAA is taking to the ISEP.

In broad terms, FNMA supports the principles for the new model expressed in the Discussion Paper. This response suggests to opportunities for IAS investment to address genuine gaps in employment opportunities, complementing other Government objectives in the process.

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[6] Clague, P, Employment and Skills Development Strategy Report, Jumbunna Institute of Indigenous Education and Research, December 2018
[7] Survey Matters, Financial Health of Community Radio Survey, Community Broadcasting Association of Australia, October 2017
[8] Social Ventures Australia, November 2017
[9] Department of Communications and the Arts, *The Communications Sector: recent trends and developments,* Bureau of Communications Research, Commonwealth Government, Canberra, October 2016

Responses to discussion questions

1. How should the Indigenous skills, engagement and employment program (ISEP) work alongside the new employment services model and the remote engagement program to build work-ready skills and connect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to rewarding, sustainable jobs?

The needs of jobseekers and employees should be central to the ISEP. Therefore, rather than applying zones to employment services models and remote engagement programs, it would be more useful to consider the radius of an employment location and/or the support structures required for an individual to be successful in their employment journey and design the program to reflect those objectives. Variances between employment programs have caused considerable confusion and barriers to both potential employers and employees entering the First Nations media industry, some of which are explained below.

The First Nations media and communications industry is a community-controlled sector with significant potential to increase its contribution to Closing the Gap. First Nations media organisations across the country act as training and skills development hubs, empowering people to move into a range of roles within other sectors, such as tourism and resources. The communications sector provides enabling services to support opportunities and outcomes in service sectors, such as health and education, and promotes inclusiveness and participation.[10]

First Nations media organisations provide a fertile training ground for career development such as:
- participation in school programming contributing to job-ready skills development;
- support for career development with the sector drawing on industry-led pathways and accredited training;
- supporting the early careers of media workers who transition to roles in mainstream media across all platforms including the ABC, SBS, newspaper and online reporters and television reporters; and
- screen industry career development.

To achieve these objectives, the First Nations media industry engages with a number of existing Government programs to provide employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. These include the Department of Employment's JobActive program, the Community Development Program, the Community Broadcasting Program and supplementing government health and education initiatives. Suggestions for how the ISEP could work alongside and address some of the barriers posed by existing employment initiatives are outlined in the section below.

a) Department of Employment – JobActive

The JobActive program provides support for the establishment of new roles and the recruitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander personnel. It does not provide a solution to many First Nations media organisations struggling to support ongoing roles. It is also only available to organisations in certain regions with limited public information available to determine the boundaries between Department of Employment jurisdictions and Community Development Program (CDP) regions. For

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[10] Department of Communications and the Arts, *The Communications Sector: recent trends and developments,* Bureau of Communications Research, Commonwealth Government, Canberra, October 2016

example, in Alice Springs the JobActive program can support internships for job seekers residing in some parts of Alice Springs, but not all. It does not extend to the town camps (less than 5 minute drive from the city center in many cases) or the surrounding areas, making it unavailable to many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who could potentially find work within Alice Springs. FNMA members have reported conflicting information between Department of Employment and NIAA staff overseeing the CDP program, pointing to the complexity of determining the boundaries of each program even within government agencies. An ISEP designed on the location of the employee and/or employer is needed to bureaucratic discrepancies between programs.

The ISEP may be a viable pathway for transitioning volunteers to paid employment. While First Nations media organisations are funded to provide employment opportunities, employees are supported by volunteer staff at around 70% of them, a common feature of the community broadcasting sector. [11] Some First Nations Media Australia members in regional and urban areas have drawn on the Department of Employments JobActive program to progress job seekers through an internship and into part-time administrative roles. However, the industry needs additional support to establish positions over a longer-term period than the available $10,000 salary subsidy through the JobActive program. The ISEP presents an opportunity to address this issue through providing extended support for not-for-profit, community-controlled organisations to sustain positions within culturally appropriate workplaces over a longer period of time, significantly increasing the opportunity for each of those roles to become self-sustainable.

b) Community Development Program (CDP)

While the CDP program does provide support for some remote media workers, the implementation of the program has been problematic. Participation in media was identified as an approved CDP activity by Minister Scullion at a Commonwealth level, yet our members have reported a number of Regional Officers would not recognize media work as an approved activity, while others would. This inconsistency in the implementation of the CDP has been a barrier to providing employment in specific regions. The CDP program does not create the type of jobs required within the media sector due to restrictive and inflexible requirements. FNMA encourages the NIAA to include an entry program similar to the former National Jobs Package in the ISEP design, enabling a direct employment model to increase youth engagement and employment throughout the remote, regional and urban sector.

Further, FNMA urges the Government to support rewarding and sustainable jobs through a reasonable living wage. In 2018 the Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee recommended that "participation in community development program work activities should be compensated at an hourly rate commensurate with the national minimum wage." In its response, the Australian Government did not support this recommendation, citing income support is not a wage.[12] As CDP is currently the only available support for remote media organisations to employ broadcasters in communities, in effect this means broadcasters are working for below minimum wage rates. This creates a barrier to both the recruitment and retention of personnel. FNMA cautions against repeating this retention issue through the ISEP.

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[11] Social Ventures Australia, November 2017

[12] Australian Government response to the Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee inquiry report, Australian Government, Canberra, 8th November 2018

c) Support for Economic Development

Effective communication is essential to the ongoing viability of First Nations communities. Beyond direct employment outcomes and building on government initiatives, the First Nations media sector provides significant support for the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses. First Nations media organisations offer promotion for arts, tourism, retail, design and many other areas of business, supporting business growth for other sectors. In addition, First Nations media organisations make a significant contribution to Closing the Gap through the amplification of government services and messaging, particularly in relation to health and education.

Government agencies have at times introduced various short term and ad hoc schemes aimed at creating job opportunities within the First Nations media sector, such as Indigenous employment programs managed by Screen Australia and internships initiatives. However, these ad hoc programs often require people to move away from their communities to take up available employment. These activities do not provide sustainable jobs within the sector and often come with strict rules and guidelines for compliance, which means that only large media organisations within the sector can qualify. The ISEP could support First Nations community-controlled organisations directly with employment funding to provide more appropriate employment solutions and support career pathways, rather than working around the constraints of the various employment programs designed for short-term outcomes.

d) Training and mentoring support

There are two First Nations RTOs operated by First Nations media organisations, Goolarri Training and 4AAA Training (run by Brisbane Indigenous Media Association). They are supplemented by strong partnerships with the Community Media Training Organisation (CMTO), Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Education and the Australian Film, Television and Radio School (AFTRS). The ISEP could complement community-lead training activities with support for jobseeker participation in pathways and accredited training, reducing financial barriers and incentivizing participation.

This type of entry-level support contributes to the establishment of sustainable career pathways but could also be strengthened through the ISEP. Many of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people contributing to mainstream media outlets as both employees and spokespeople, were trained within not-for-profit First Nations media organisations. Companies such as Fairfax, Foxtel, BBC Australia, Channel 9, as well as public broadcasters have created internships or Indigenous identified positions as part of Media RING and Reconciliation Action Plans. The limitation of these ad-hoc initiatives is that they are often short term, and dependent on individual personnel connections. The ISEP could be used to develop a career progression program that supports both employers and employees to undertake internship and cross-industry mentoring programs to facilitate career longevity and success.

In a content-driven media environment, First Nations media organisations have had to prioritise broadcast personnel while making some tough decisions in relation to support personnel. The result is a hollowing of administrative resources across the industry, which leaves gaps in career pathways into management positions and lack of human resources for business development, fundraising, promotion, financial management and programming oversight. In many cases, a Station Manager is expected to carry out all of these roles. Similarly, individual broadcasters in the First Nations media sector are delivering the same amount of content that would a team of 4 or 5 people would be working on at an equivalent mainstream service.

A lack of operational funding has limited opportunities for mentoring and job-shadowing to develop management and senior-level expertise. In the media industry, this represents the difference between the current 79% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment level across the sector and the 90% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment target set by the Government for all IAS funded programs in 2017. There are currently about 46 First Nations media organisations which are funded through NIAA for the delivery of broadcasting activities, of which 22 have a non-Indigenous manager. Nineteen of those organisations have more than 90% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment levels.[13] This is an area of focus within our industry to upskills and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into management positions.

The development of management mentorship and shadowing programs would build capacity and skills in specific areas such as management, production and coordination. Many of these roles are currently filled by non-Indigenous staff, particularly in remote and regional areas, as the experience needed to fulfil these roles takes a long period of time to build. These types of jobs cannot be easily taught through courses and would be more suited to shadowing, where specific skills can be learnt on the job.

Similarly, a lack of operational funding has constrained the sector's capacity for business development and increased dependence on government funding, rather than increased financial sustainability. Indigenous Broadcasting Services receive approximately 75% of their funding through NIAA and an additional 8% from other government sources at the state and federal level.[14] Social Ventures Australia found that, "Indigenous Broadcasting Services have demonstrated their capacity to generate their own revenue but there is a minimum resourcing threshold that must be maintained to enable Indigenous Broadcasting Services and their staff to diversity their activities and funding."

Further, the report found there is a minimum resourcing threshold required for First Nations media organisations to explore new projects that may attract more funding, employ more community members and better suit the needs of their community, if they have capacity to hire and train staff to do so.[15] An increase in operational funding would go some way to addressing this issue, allowing media organisations to employ more staff, but also to generate new projects that have economic and employment outcomes within their communities.

To meet emerging employment opportunities and address career pathway barriers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working in the media industry, FNMA suggests the following levels of resourcing requirements are addressed through ISEP:
- $1.5million per annum toward employment support for new mid-level positions to establish career pathways between broadcaster and executive levels (approx. 20 positions nationally);
- $1.4million for job shadowing and mentor programs to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander personnel into management and leadership roles; and
- $1.5million per annum toward production enterprise and business development roles within the industry (approx. 20 positions nationally).

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[13] Clague, P, 2018
[14] Social Ventures Australia, 2017
[15] Ibid.

2. How could IAS investment be designed to be more flexible and responsive at the regional level, and better meet the needs of the community for Indigenous job seekers and employers?

The IAS presents an opportunity to partner with both industry and other funders to build on existing activities for better employment outcomes, particularly in regional and remote communities. Two examples within the media sector are supporting the implementation of a sector-led Workforce Development Strategy and creating opportunities to establish sustainable roles in various regions.

Support for industry development at a regional level would significantly increase opportunity to engage with and grow sustainable employment outcomes for people living in remote and regional locations. Digital technologies are integrated in a range of business settings from agriculture to virtual reality. These developments open opportunities for media workers to build capacity and training in areas of journalism, multimedia and online production, marketing, social media communications, drone cinematography, animation, digital graphics and desktop publishing, web development, photography, technical and IT roles and app development. In the First Nations media industry context, the ISEP could be designed to support the expansion of skills and opportunities so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are not required to relocate for employment purposes.

First Nations Media Australia identifies opportunities for future employment expansion in the following areas:
   a) Content production
   b) Public interest journalism
   c) Digital archiving
   d) Digital inclusion – provision of IT, technical and training expertise
   e) Communications growth industries – production and translation services
   f) Digital technologies

Media content production offers a valuable opportunity for flexible and responsive employment at a regional level which the ISEP could support. Establishing ongoing opportunities for hands-on media production and broadcasting addresses perceptions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within the wider community, and build skills and create jobs, while creating a repository of significant multi-media content. Increased funding for content production in the areas of radio documentaries/podcasts, news and current affairs, language and cultural content, dramas, music and so on will build capacity of First Nations media organisations to employ and training local media practitioners to produce, broadcast and archive locally significant stories for the community and where relevant to national and international audiences.

First Nations media organisations in all locations apply for project-based support to produce documentaries, animations, special series, outside broadcasts, language revitalization initiatives, podcasts and multimedia productions across radio and screen content, predominantly through the Community Broadcasting Program. This is a highly competitive grant process which provides around $1.1m annually in content production support nationally. In effect, this fund supports around 40 projects in varying lengths across the country, providing intermittent casual employment for skilled

media personnel. It is a highly over-subscribed with demand significantly overwhelming the available funds. Alternative sources of funding for First Nations media content, beyond NITV for video content, are limited. Local producers are unlikely to have the level of broadcast credits required for funding through screen agencies and need support to develop their own skills and provide on-the-job training and mentoring for others. Similarly, existing levels of funding rarely allow for producing the cross-platform content, podcasts and online content modern audiences seek. Increased funding support for content production exponentially increases the capacity of First Nations broadcasters to increase social value through engagement with stakeholders, musicians, artists and the Australian Government.[16]

The production of radio and television content projects varies between about $5,000-$60,000 depending on the scope and production requirements of the series or documentary.[17] A co-investment of $2million per annum through the IAS would likely fund around 50-60 radio and video projects per annum to produce one-off documentaries, interviews, series and increase audience engagement through increased outside broadcast activity and multiplatform content delivery. This would support for the development of freelance careers in media and filmmaking. There is significant scope to increase the training and employment opportunities created by project-based production work. FNMA suggests the IAS could co-fund content projects or provide matched funding to the Department of Communications investment, potentially distributed through the Community Broadcasting Foundation to mitigate any risk of duplication.

3. How should results of the new ISEP program be measured, monitored and evaluated to ensure investment contributes to closing the gap in employment outcomes?

There are a number of data development measures within the National Agreement on Closing the Gap which act as indicators of contribution to closing the gap in employment outcomes, including:
- Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employed in media (disaggregated by income levels) – target 17
- Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working in mainstream media across all levels of media operations (eg. managers, media practitioners and technical) – target 17
- Diversity of media content broadcast (including health, education, community service information) – target 17
- Measures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages used in media - target 16

Additionally:
- measuring how many young people are employed within the First Nations media sector (currently less than 12% of media practitioners are under 26 years old), could contributed to indicators of youth engaged in employment;
- Defining First Nations media as an industry/category of engagement with employment/occupation, education or training would measure it as an indicator toward Outcome 7 and contextual information toward Outcome 8 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

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[16] Social Ventures Australia, *More Than Radio – a community asset: Social Return on Investment Analyses of Indigenous Broadcasting Services*, 2017
[17] Community Broadcasting Foundation, funded projects: https://cbf.org.au/grants/successful/

FNMA suggests these considerations form part of the Data Development Plan in the implementation of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and that the outcomes be shared throughout the NIAA and publicly as a measure of the ISEP program success.

3. How can we embed shared decision-making in community-based workforce planning?

The Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research developed an *Employment and Skills Development Strategy* in consultation with the First Nations media sector which outlines a career development action plan, policy recommendations and assistance to meet the IAS Indigenous employment target. The resulting *Strong Voices, Stronger Communities* report recommends investment in training and targeted employment programs such as traineeships and pathways roles in areas such as management, training, project management, production, technical and IT services.[18] First Nations Media Australia has since developed the recommendations of this report into a comprehensive First Nations Media Workforce Development Action Plan. The ISEP could resource the implementation of the First Nations-led Workforce Development Action Plan through the IAS.

First Nations media organisations are typically community-controlled, not-for-profit organisations governed by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Board and accountable to the communities they serve. They are licensed as community media services, meaning their license conditions require them to demonstrate a strong level of community engagement and opportunities to respond to community feedback on programming and service delivery to ensure they *are* meeting community needs. In this way, First Nations media organisations operate under a community-based decision-making model.

With resourcing, the sector can further develop these industry training partnerships to address the gaps in training support through shadowing and mentoring programs, cadetships and tailored pathway courses which would support community members to undertake more of these roles. This would also be a community-led solution to retention barriers.

The ISEP presents an opportunity to address some of these issues through resourcing to strengthen these community-led workforce planning activities. Minimum levels of resourcing would be:
- $500k per annum toward formalized training activities for sector-wide skills development;
- $600k per annum toward mentorship, job shadowing and non-accredited training support; and
- $200k per annum toward the implementation of the sector's Workforce Development Action Plan.

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[18] Clague, P, *Employment and Skills Development Strategy Report,* Jumbunna Institute of Indigenous Education and Research, December 2018

4. How can the ISEP encourage potential employers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to provide safe and culturally appropriate work environments? How can employers better value the skills and perspectives of Indigenous employees?

First Nations media organisations are proficient in engaging and recruiting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, providing employment opportunities in local communities and support for achieving the goals of individual people. The First Nations media industry provides a range of mechanisms for media workers to receive training, mentoring and continued professional development throughout their career such as: pathways training with local First Nations trainers, accredited training delivered by First Nations RTOs and community media partners, upskilling at industry events like the Remote Indigenous Media Festival and professional mentoring. First Nations media organisations provide an open door for community involvement.

The First Nations media sector produces an effective opportunity to:
- engage youth in meaningful careers;
- address high unemployment rates in First Nations communities;
- develop job-ready skills in a range of communication industry roles;
- respond to emerging roles in a rapidly changing convergent media;
- build on the culture and language skills already held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; and
- increase efficiency for Government and non-Government funded projects through support for coordination roles to oversee project-based activities.

The First Nations media industry offers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people a culturally safe environment in which to develop 'work ready' skills and to continually upgrade those skills to define their own career paths. Employees in the communications sector are highly skilled, with a higher proportion of the workforce with postgraduate and Bachelor level degrees, graduate diplomas and certificates, and advanced diplomas and diplomas compared with other industries.[19] For this reason, we see many media workers move into communication roles in other industries, such as the mining and resources industry, politics and the public service and information technology. We also see employees develop skills within our industry and then transition to other roles in media, including becoming freelance agents or starting small businesses themselves. While the impact of this role is largely positive for communities, the media organisations receive no recognition or compensation for acting as a work-ready training hub and lose efficiencies in the continual cycle of training and replacing new staff.

Communications is a growth industry and FNMA identifies significant opportunity to expand employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our sector. Feedback from the sector shows frustration with training opportunities that are not matched with employment opportunities, leading to high turnover of staff and inefficiencies through continual overseeing of trainees and entry level staff. People can access entry level training to get involved in the sector, but then often can't build and maintain sustainable careers based on insecure contract work, low pay rates and a lack of pathways into ongoing positions.

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[19] Bureau of Communications research analysis and Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011), Census of Population and Housing.

5. How should the ISEP consider a local focus?

In delivering locally produced and culturally appropriate media services, First Nations media organisations create employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in remote, regional and urban locations. This is particularly important for people who do not want to move away from community to pursue career pathways in capital cities. Finding meaningful work in close proximity to home mitigates access barriers such as travel costs and language barriers and means that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander can respond to cultural obligations with less disruption to both employers and employees. Many of the providers are located in rural and remote areas where there are limited opportunities for work, particularly for work that is culturally aligned.

First Nations Media Australia identifies a range of opportunities for the ISEP to support local employment in the media and communications sector, including:

a) Resourcing new media services

Expanding the provision of services for the 52% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations currently not receiving an appropriate First Nations radio service will provide new employment opportunities for a range of media professionals and administrative personnel. Adelaide, Canberra, Hobart, Dubbo, Newcastle, Wagga Wagga, Wollongong, Sunshine Coast and Toowoomba are all examples of areas with high First Nations populations but no dedicated First Nations media service. Adelaide, Newcastle, Sunshine Coast in particular have higher than average unemployment levels which the establishment of new media services could contribute to addressing.

FNMA recommends the hub and spoke model currently used by Remote Indigenous Media Organisations (RIMOs) as a cost-efficient way of establishing these services, requiring resourcing of a radio studio enabling local broadcasting and regional network contributions. This model works effectively in remote locations, allows for the possibility of co-location with other community organisations and provides opportunities for local employment through the First Nations radio network footprint.

b) Community journalism

The reduction of localized news services in regional and remote Australia has been identified as a concern to Government. The First Nations media sector has needed to fill the gap in news and weather services for many remote and regional communities, as the ABC has scaled back its local news and weather coverage for these less populous areas over the past five years. Some steps are underway to address this issue through the Small and Regional Publishers Innovation Fund administered through the ACMA. FNMA seeks support through the ISEP to increase the news and current affairs capacity of First Nations broadcasters both to address this geographic deficit in local news production and to increase the diversity of news reported.

Recent research undertaken by the ACMA shows a tendency for news consumers more generally to avoid news due to perceptions of news sources being depressing, over-dramatised, untrustworthy, irrelevant and/or repetitive.[20] These are troubling findings from a community engagement

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[20] ACMA, *News in Australia: Diversity and Localism,* Australian Government, December 2020

perspective and highlights a need to counter this trend with the availability of more balanced and independent news sources.

First Nations media services counter the lack of balance in mainstream media outlets when reporting on matters relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. While they do report challenges and negative stories, they also take pride in reporting successes and in doing so showcase examples of good news within First Nations communities. Seventy-seven per cent of surveyed listeners indicating their primary reason for listening to First Nations radio was to hear positive stories on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.[21] The result is high levels of audience engagement.

The closure of over 157 newsrooms in the past 2 years[22] has made creating opportunities for regional journalism all the more important. While social media platforms can share information to known and adjacent networks, they do not attract the same audience consistency as radio and television media. First Nations journalists are increasingly well placed to fill this market gap and provide information of relevance to local communities alongside national headlines.

To achieve these aims, the First Nations media sector has established a program to:
- Build regional journalism capacity and increase employment opportunities where other media outlets are withdrawing from regional areas;
- Address a market gap for regional and remote participation in our national news paradigm;
- Increase efficiencies in existing news services through collaboration;
- Provide opportunity for organisations to tailor news content as relevant to the region;
- Provide opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reporters to access and share professionally produced content, including sovereign messages and issues at a national level;
- Provide accessible information for all audiences to engage with news, as told from a First Nations perspective; and
- Develop partnerships for the delivery of multi-platform news content (radio, television, print and online) to provide real careers for community journalists remaining in regional areas, adding value to the Government's existing investment with NITV.

The program to strengthen news services aligns with many of the submissions made to the 2017 Senate Enquiry into Public Interest Journalism. It also aligns with similar policy considerations globally. For example, the Canadian House of Commons' Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage enquiry resulted in recommendations for the Canadian Government to establish an Indigenous journalism initiative with the purpose of training Indigenous journalists to cover Indigenous government institutions and other relevant issues across Canada as part of their Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls for action implementation.[23] In northern Europe, Pietikäinen identified a "Sámi Way" of doing journalism. This, she argued, was deeply entrenched in local cultural values and worldviews, in particular as Indigenous news media made it "possible to practice culturally typical ways of communication, to recognize experiences, perspectives and topics often

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[21] McNair yellowSquares, *Indigenous Communications and Media Survey,* 2016

[22] Birch, Laura, *Australian media closures spark fears important local stories will not be told,* ABC, 21 May 2020 https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-05-21/australian-community-media-closures-esperance-express-newspaper/12259734

[23] Fry, H, *Disruption: Change and Churning in Canada's Media Landscape,* Report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, House of Commons, 42nd Parliament, First Session, June 2017

disregarded by other media."[24] Her research prompted significant increases in Indigenous journalism in Norway and Sweden with funding provided through the Samediggi Parliament. Universities in Norway are currently advertising courses to meet the rising demand for Indigenous journalism among the Sami community in Scandanavia, recognising it as a 'growing field'.[25] Our news sharing program aligns directly with international policy to support minority journalism and a diversity of voices in news reporting, however it requires further journalism development within the sector to truly meet its potential.

The ISEP could strengthen the First Nations community-controlled media sector to:
- train and mentor emerging First Nations journalists
- expand access to existing news sharing software for multiplatform content
- support a network of regional journalists and manage content distribution
- develop customised resources and reference materials
- employ First Nations journalists to provide regular news reports

c) Digital Archiving

Over approximately 40 years the First Nations media industry has amassed archives of nationally significant content which is largely stored on magnetic tape (eg. VCR formats). This tape is now degrading, meaning all collections not digitized by 2025 will be rendered unplayable – an issue requiring urgent action. Stretching from the early 1980s through to the present, the collections provide an unbroken record of language usage, cultural knowledge, traditional skills, community events, family histories and oral histories. The collections have a high value for education, cultural identity, language teaching, cultural and linguistic heritage, and for researchers into First Nations media history. The cultural sensitivities relating to these recordings makes sending them to centralized Government agency inappropriate. First Nations communities must retain control of community collections with oversight from Traditional Custodians. Localised archiving work is cost-effective, enables local decision-making about access and media handling and identifying cultural metadata for cataloguing, and provides meaningful employment opportunities in remote and regional locations.

This presents an opportunity for the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in culturally meaningful roles to as Community Archive Workers, needed to coordinate the extensive and time-consuming work of digitising, cataloguing and managing community access and sharing protocols. A National Plan for Preserving First Nations Audiovisual Collections has been developed by First Nations Media Australia in partnership with the National Film & Sound Archive, AIATSIS and Traditional Custodians.

Governments worldwide are faced with this same issue. The New Zealand Government is resolving it by supporting Te Mangai Paho to fund a digital archiving projects for $575,000 annually to travel to different regions and archive magnetic tape materials.[26] Our solution to digitisation requirements is similar to the activities currently being carried out to preserve Maori media archives, in that is has an overarching national strategy combined with mobile equipment that can move around communities

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[24] Pietikainen, S, *Broadcasting Indigenous Voices: Sami Minorit Media Production,* European Journal of Communications, Sage Publications, 2008 http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.869.1919&rep=rep1&type=pdf
[25] http://samas.no/en/studier/juo-master-sami-journalism-indigenous-perspective
[26] Te Mangai Paho, *Annual Report 2016-17* & *Annual Report 2017-18*

and digitise content on location, provide training to individuals to maintain and grow collections moving forward and leave collections to be managed by custodians for appropriate community access using open source software management tools. But we need to cover a much larger geographic region that our New Zealand equivalents. We propose identifying 6 collection sites and 3 mobile digitisation suites to digitise sensitive materials on country, moving location on a weekly basis. Each of these locations/mobile suites would provide employment opportunities for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people, as would the ongoing management of community collections.

To save the back-catalogue of recordings collected over the past 40+ years, many of which include endangered languages from permanent loss, Community Archive workers are needed to collect and maintain community collections. Essentially, these workers are digital librarians working in a remote or regional context to ensure appropriate care and access to community collections. The ISEP could support this emerging localized role in a similar model to the Indigenous Rangers program – both activities producing culturally meaningful and engaging work which greatly benefits all Australians.

d) Digital Inclusion

There is some shared infrastructure between telecommunications and broadcasting that can be used to build on existing government investment in broadcast infrastructure and to generate maximum public value from new infrastructure rollouts. First Nations media organisations may be called upon for technical skills, capacity building activities and infrastructure requirements as part of the Government's proposed Indigenous Digital Inclusion Plan announced in March 2019.[27] If this results in a funded program, it would present a potential opportunity to grow communications jobs through the provision of IT, technical and training expertise which could align with the ISEP.

First Nations Media Australia is responding to digital literacy through its inDigiMOB program, a four-year Telstra-funded digital inclusion initiative for remote communities in the Northern Territory. To date, inDigiMOB has delivered digital inclusion and cyber safety awareness training to 9,240 workshop participants across 21 communities in the Northern Territory, employing 112 Indigenous Digital Mentors in the process using a peer support model to tailor skills programs to local needs and levels of digital access, engagement and skills. There is significant demand to expand these activities to other States. Again, the ISEP could have a local focus for the development of digital skills within communities through the employment of Digital Mentors as an emerging skillset, particularly for the employment of young people.

The development of new media services, support for emerging journalists, the establishment of a network of Community Archive Workers and Digital Mentors can each provide locally focused employment programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in remote, regional or urban locations with ISEP support.

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[27] See Recommendation 8 of the Government's response to the 2018 Regional Telecommunications Review.

Other considerations

In its *Australia's Tech Future* report, the Australian Government identified, "while it is hard to predict the skills in demand in the future, we know employers are looking for workers who have a combination of transferrable digital skills and collaborative, creative, communication and entrepreneurial and problem-solving skills."[28] The First Nations media industry is well-placed to expand on existing activities to generate new employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in these roles, as well as prepare workers with the skills to meet these emerging business demands.

The majority of employees in the First Nations media sector are employed as broadcasters and administrators. However, the sector also provides opportunities for employment as technicians, IT specialists and a broad range of audio and screen production roles. The First Nations media industry has responded to an evolving media landscape by expanding operations beyond traditional radio and television broadcasting to include newer communication formats such as podcasting, online formats such as websites, streaming and social media publication. Audiences demand multimedia content delivery, which has resulted in the expansion of media worker skills to a broad range of screen, online and audio formats which in turn generates employment and economic development opportunities.

Where available, First Nations media organisations offer studio space and professional film and video equipment, and programs to develop the skills of artists.[29] This provides opportunity for musicians to distribute professional recordings of their work. Some media organisations have started formalised record labels to support the economic development of music in their regions. Others amplify live performances to a broader audience through outside broadcasts. Examples of these recordings can be viewed on the indigiTUBE content platform. This work provides technical training and employment opportunities and contributes to the development of the Indigenous music and film industry, now recognised on the world stage. [30]

The First Nations media industry has strong links with a broad range of creative industries, providing a platform for the promotion and career development of First Nations musicians, entertainers and artists. First Sounds is one example of a partnership between First Nations Media Australia's indigiTUBE platform and the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia's Amrap project to increase airplay for First Nations musicians, resulting in economic benefits to both the musicians and the broader music industry. Indigenous musicians and film producers benefit from mentorship and the facilities available to them through First Nations media organisations. Social Ventures Australia found that, "other stakeholders experiencing significant value from Indigenous Broadcasting Services include employees, volunteers, Indigenous musicians, artists and the Australian Government. Value was split relatively evenly across outcomes themes, which reinforces the interrelationship of outcomes."[31]

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[28] Department of Industry, Science and Technology, *Australia's Tech Future,* Australian Government, Canberra, December 2018 https://www.industry.gov.au/data-and-publications/australias-tech-future
[29] Social Ventures Australia, November 2017
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.

Summary of Recommendations

FNMA recommends that:

1. The needs of jobseekers and employees should be central to the ISEP, designed on basis of the location of the employee and/or employer.

2. The ISEP extends support for not-for-profit, community-controlled organisations to sustain positions within culturally appropriate workplaces over a longer period of time that the current JobActive program offers, significantly increasing the opportunity for each of those roles to become self-sustainable.

3. The ISEP includes an entry program similar to the former National Jobs Package in its design, enabling a direct employment model to increase youth engagement and employment throughout the remote, regional and urban sector.

4. Government support rewarding and sustainable jobs through a reasonable living wage.

5. The ISEP support First Nations community-controlled organisations directly with employment funding to provide more appropriate employment solutions and support career pathways, rather than working around the constraints of the various employment programs designed for short-term outcomes.

6. The ISEP complement community-lead training activities with support for jobseeker participation in pathways and accredited training, reducing financial barriers and incentivizing participation.

7. The ISEP be used to develop a career progression program that supports both employers and employees to undertake internship and cross-industry mentoring programs to facilitate career longevity and success.

8. The following levels of resourcing requirements are addressed through ISEP:
   - $1.5million per annum toward employment support for new mid-level positions to establish career pathways between broadcaster and executive levels (approx. 20 positions nationally);
   - $1.4million for job shadowing and mentor programs to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander personnel into management and leadership roles; and
   - $1.5million per annum toward production enterprise and business development roles within the industry (approx. 20 positions nationally).

9. The IAS co-fund content projects or provide matched funding to the Department of Communications investment to facilitate employment outcomes.

10. The ISEP resource the implementation of the First Nations-led Workforce Development Action Plan through the IAS, strengthening community-led workforce planning activities.

11. The ISEP support the development of new media services, support for emerging journalists, the establishment of a network of Community Archive Workers and Digital Mentors to provide locally focused employment programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in remote, regional or urban locations.