



East Kimberley Media and Radio Services

For Aboriginal people across the East Kimberley, local Aboriginal media and radio is essential. They are innovative ways of supporting cultural revival and maintenance, as well as a critical information sharing platforms, tools for self-determination and key enhancers to community life.

This evidence brief will guide and shape discussion about strengthening and supporting media and radio services in the East Kimberley. The East Kimberley has many distinct cultural groups with distinct cultures and languages, covering a 260,000 km² of remote Australia.

This evidence brief aims to highlight the importance of Aboriginal radio and media services, and the impact these mediums have on remote living.

“We're going to keep our language strong in radio so we can teach the new generations today. If I passed away, who's goin' to teach our children?”

- N. Preston, Elder and broadcaster,
Kimberley Region 1996

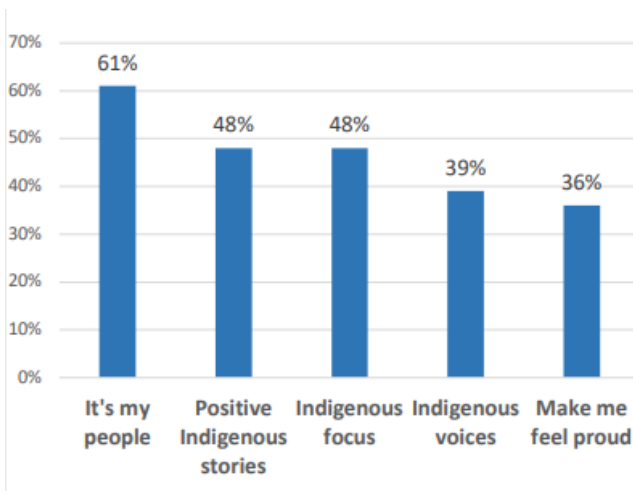
Key Messages:

- Radios are important in the promotion of cross-cultural awareness and revitalization/ incorporation of cultural practices in everyday life.
- Indigenous run radio and media outlets need procedures and rules for prevention of exploitation and erosion of Aboriginal culture by non-Aboriginal experts- this includes agreed community protocols on use of language and culture in radio and media.
- For every dollar invested in Aboriginal broadcasting and media, \$2.87 of cultural, social and economic value is returned.
- Media stations play a significant role in the local digital archiving of language and cultural artefacts.
- Community and Indigenous radios are increasingly being recognised as leaders in recording Indigenous music and promoting Indigenous musicians.
- Video and radio may be the only way important information can be conveyed to Aboriginal audience with low literacy skills, particularly for news that affects them and their families.

East Kimberley: Snapshot



50% of radio and **media staff** in the East Kimberley identified as Aboriginal



Why First Nations people listen to their local Indigenous radio

Across WA, rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community radio listeners are quite low (under 10%), but this could be due to how the listener surveys are conducted.



More **local research** is needed.

The first Aboriginal radio station went to air in 1972. Since then, the Aboriginal radio industry has over **35 major stations** nationally, 2 of those are in the East Kimberley.



Most stations have swapped to FM spectrums, and are now heading digital.

Across WA...



30% of people listen to community radio



A majority of community radio listeners (55%) tune in to hear local **information and news**



A majority of community radio listeners are:
 -Male
 -Aged over 55
 -Are retired or out of the labour force



Younger listeners (aged 15-39) are more likely to listen to radio occasionally rather than regularly



Younger listeners (aged 15-39) are more likely to listen to podcasts or streaming services



90-94% of occasional and regular listeners agree that community **radio is valuable**

Sources: [17] [18] [4] [3] [19]. For more info on please contact Binarrri binyja yarrowoo Aboriginal Corporation

Local voices: What's needed

A review of Halls Creek local reports and consultation notes (KALACC, 2010 [15]; Enzyme, 2015 [14], RSRU, 2017 [16] Boab Consulting 2014 [13];) evidence the call by Aboriginal people for stronger **recognition and protection of Aboriginal culture and languages**.

Language and cultural activities (such as story-telling and cultural transmission) largely supported by media and arts sectors locally and regionally.

In local reports the local radio stations are often referred to as vital sources for information sharing, including promotion of important meeting and consultations, as well as cultural activities and community events.

There is a call for Aboriginal community involvement in the design, creative direction and management of Aboriginal radio services, as well as the inclusion of language and culture broadcasting segments to ensure that language and cultural elements are embedded in offerings and empowerment opportunities.

To assist this reform the following is identified as important:

- ✓ Procedures and rules for **prevention of exploitation** and erosion of Aboriginal culture by non-Aboriginal experts. Including agreed community protocols on use of language and culture in radio and media.
- ✓ Develop and support processes to **enhance cultural knowledge**, including working with elders and ensure that it is passed to younger generations
- ✓ Develop and facilitate the teaching of Indigenous culture, knowledge and language through on-air programs and **cultural education segments**
- ✓ Promotion of **cross-cultural awareness** and revitalization/ incorporation of cultural practices in everyday life
- ✓ Supporting culture-based business through promotion and advertising to support Aboriginal **economic empowerment** and self-determination
- ✓ Adequate training in new technologies and **digital literacy** to support employment outcomes and sustainability of locally run radio and media

What we don't know yet: *Impacts of new technologies on remote radio services*

Statistics show that other forms of media, such as podcasts and streaming services through mobile apps are on the rise, particularly with younger generations. Along with the recent introduction of digital radio services, the impact on new technologies on community radio in remote areas remains unexplored. 'Terrestrial' forms of radio will only continue if they seek to adjust into a multi-platformed 'audio business', offering more than just radio.

However, if use of community radio decreases, we can assume that this will negatively impact on local employment, the sharing of local news and events, as well as a decrease in the sharing of language and culture via radio.

This will need to be explored deeper in the East Kimberley to better predict the future of our local Aboriginal radios.

First Nations Media recommended to Australian Communications and media Authority in 2019 [3]:

1. Maintain access to broadcast space for First Nations radio services
2. Maintain access to information for all audiences through accessible, affordable and immediate radio services.
3. Expand the availability of FM spectrum to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples not able to access appropriate media services
4. View digital radio and online streaming, along with other audio delivery platforms, as supplementary and complementary to AM/FM broadcasting.
5. Maintain access to AM spectrum for services currently broadcasting on AM until a comparative long-range broadcast solution is established.
6. Consider the financial implications of shifting to new delivery platforms on First Nations, public and community services in a financially pressured environment.
7. Maintain equity of access to information for all people

Literature Review: What Works

Within literature relating to Aboriginal radio and media, particularly in remote settings, there is a strong recognition that Indigenous radio is valued, and somewhat essential, to living remotely. This brief literature review will focus on what works best in Indigenous radio services.

Funding and Technology

In 2017, a specific study was carried out to find the 'Social Return on Investment' in remote Indigenous media [1]. The study found:

For every dollar invested in First Nations broadcasting and media, \$2.87 of cultural, social and economic value is returned.

Across all analyses, the stakeholder group experiencing the greatest share of value are listeners and community members. Other stakeholders experiencing significant value from Aboriginal radios include employees, volunteers, Indigenous musicians, artists and the Australian Government [1]. However, the value is difficult to ascertain for small local stations- Besides there being little funding, little technical support, no central co-ordination, no regular training opportunities, there is also no 'one stop shop' through which the stations can sell their airtime effectively and thus increase revenue from other sources [2] [3].

On top of the need for funding to maintain 'business-as-usual' services, the rapid advances in technology (increasingly internet-based technologies) have the risk of leaving smaller stations behind. There are projections that community radio stations can adapt to new technologies if they branch out into these new forms of conducting business, which includes competitive commercial advertising, new streaming services such as podcasts and specialist media segments, and provides alternate services to their communities [4].

Indigenous-specific media

For many Indigenous communities, the Indigenous broadcasting sector is not, like it is in urban areas, a choice of broadcast for entertainment, it is their only source. This means the Indigenous media services often need to fulfil a 'first level of service' role. Communities can, therefore, expect that their local indigenous broadcasters, at the same time as advancing local/regional indigenous languages and issues, keep them in touch with the mainstream media and issues [2], health promotion messages [5] and government announcements [6]. Overtime, Indigenous stations have added commercial imperative (and fee structures) to become a mainstream substitute, so although it might not want to, it results in becoming a mainstream station that simply takes account of Aboriginal views, as it carries 90 per cent mainstream music, news, advertisements and language [2]. For Indigenous radio to stay Indigenous specific, it must address this debate [3].

Another aspect of Indigenous specific media is the significant role media stations play in the local digital archiving of language and cultural artefacts. Through working with elders, anthropologists, linguists, artists and historians, radio and media stations can have a strong part to play in assisting the cultural exchange, recording, transcribing and digitalizing of things that are culturally significant [1]. This is of benefit to Aboriginal media outlets, as there would be very few mainstream outlets trusted to do such important cultural work.

Aboriginal-led (staff, creative direction and management)

Co-creative media, as seen in Waringarri Media's *My Story* program [7] and PRK Radios broadcasting/recording of community events encourage the 'best of both worlds'. Co-creative media projects bring people with unique perspectives and non-mainstream stories together with professional media producers and facilitators [8]. These co-creative projects often span a number of themes, including environmental protection, arts, media literacy, language, cultural heritage, water and land management, inter-generational relationships, youth, substance abuse and juvenile justice [9]. These are opportunities for community healing, social inclusion and overcoming loneliness [10], and also form a strong place for positive Aboriginal identity and personal journey sharing [9].

Community and Indigenous radios are increasingly being recognised as leaders in recording Indigenous music and promoting Indigenous musicians. Being recorded means bands can get airplay and also access to income through royalties from performing rights on media and in public places [11]. Also often where there is a radio, live music is recorded, and innovative developments such as on-line services are being made. New multi-media services are providing marketing opportunities for remote Aboriginal communities through the viewing and sales of Aboriginal art, craft and videos on the Internet. This can bring sales directly into the community without the need to use intermediaries, who are often non-Aboriginal [11].

Strong Protocol

Local Aboriginal radio is often seen as a promoter, and regulator, of cultural protocol as well as media service. Local stories (often in language) are shared with the radio station staff to broadcast, placing trust in the radio service [11]. Aboriginal broadcasters are often acutely aware of what to say and how to behave 'on-air', to promote good community harmony and respect for cultural protocols. As such, the message may have greater credence in language from someone they recognize and trust [11] [10] [1]. Moreover, literacy skills remain low in remote Aboriginal communities, and while education aims may be increasing, the lack of bi-lingual education "facing an uphill battle" [11].

As such, video and radio may be the only way important information can be conveyed to Aboriginal audiences with low literacy skills, particularly for news that affects them and their families. When we dig deeper into protocol, Aboriginal culture traditionally defines roles between men and women and the old and the young- where media is concerned, control sits largely with Elders, as history, archiving and storytelling is deeply cultural and must be respected [11]. A large secondary impact of strong protocols on radio is the cross-cultural learning and reconciliation outcomes with non-Indigenous listeners of the radio [1].

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