



Sub no - 129
ID No - 659



Ms Delwyn Rance
Administrative Co-ordinator
Productivity Commission
LB2 Collins Street East
Melbourne VIC 8003

Dear Ms Rance

As requested by Commissioner Professor Snape, please find enclosed the complete transcript of a submission read by the undersigned at a video conference conducted yesterday by the Commission as part of its Broadcasting Inquiry.

The request was made to simplify the transfer of the material to the Broadcasting Inquiry website.

Yours sincerely

Graeme Edwin
Director

10 June 1999

AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING ACT INQUIRY 1999

THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL MEDIA ASSOCIATION (ABORIGINAL CORPORATION)

SUBMISSION

The Western Australian Aboriginal Media Association (Aboriginal Corporation), known as WAAMA, was registered in 1988 under the Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act 1976.

To date, our main activity has been in training Indigenous people in radio broadcasting on our Community Radio Station, 6AR in Perth.

During the last four years, since 6AR first went to air, we have been looking to develop other media interests so as to be able to train Indigenous people in all branches of the media, as required by our constitution.

To this end WAAMA is involved at Board level and helped with the establishment of Perth's newest television station, Community/Educational Television Channel 31, due to commence transmission on the 18th of this month of June. We intend to produce programmes for this service, which will open up video production opportunities for Indigenous people.

Until the advent of Channel 31 Indigenous people have had to compete for television exposure of their productions mainly on ABC and SBS TV, with little interest from commercial channels.

WAAMA is also about to begin producing plays of an educational nature to be broadcast on the National Indigenous Radio Service, which relays programmes via satellite to Aboriginal communities around Australia.

In a brief submission tendered to the Productivity Commission by WAAMA Chairperson, Bernard Noel Morich, it was stated that:

"Indigenous Media is an essential service to everyone living in this country, specifically in the areas of community development, race relations, land management and environmental matters and therefore must be protected by and from all decisions that result from the inquiry into Australia's broadcasting legislation, and that already established and future Indigenous Media organisations be assisted financially and by any other lawful means to ensure the healthy continuation of the Indigenous culture, life and land of this country now known as Australia. Indigenous media plays a major and unique role in helping Australia along the path to reconciliation and therefore, a more harmonious and equitable Australian society."

Indigenous Media is essential for many reasons. For instance, where else in the media would you find stories **every day** of benefit to Aboriginal people, particularly concerning Aboriginal culture, education, health, housing, the law and other current issues that affect Aboriginal people?

Where else on radio would you hear Indigenous music played **every hour of every day**, which provides more benefits to Indigenous musicians, who now receive a greater share of APRA royalties. Ninety-nine percent of these musicians are simply not heard on main stream radio stations.

What other media organisation has been set up specifically to cater for the oldest culture in Australia, if not the world?

What other media group ensures that the Indigenous perspective is presented accurately and appropriately in all matters of public affairs?

What other media group ensures that Indigenous issues are not compromised or misrepresented?

Which media groups understand cultural protocol applicable to Aboriginal societies?

Which media groups have in place Aboriginal employment initiatives? The ABC's Indigenous Broadcasting Unit is actively involved in this and other areas devoted to helping Indigenous broadcasters. But, who else?

Despite an overall lack of adequate funding the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media sector is very highly developed, thanks to the dedication of its members and their staff, and is growing at a rapid pace with many new broadcast outlets coming on line.

But, adequate and consistent funding is needed to maintain current functions of all Indigenous media outlets, and to carry our sector forward.

There is no guarantee that Indigenous Media will receive, on a continuing basis, Government funding which is presently administered by ATSIC.

For Indigenous Media to provide adequate services and quality of these services on a par with either the ABC or SBS would require equality of funding.

Guarantees must be provided by some means or other to ensure the continuation of Indigenous Media for the good of the country.

The importance of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media sector has been recognised in a number of human rights reports, Government reports and by the Muirhead Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

The Royal Commission into Aboriginal deaths in Custody report brought down 339 recommendations. Two of which were paramount for the Indigenous media sector in Australia. These highlighted the vital and significant role Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media outlets have in Indigenous communities. The recommendations stated that:

205 (a): Aboriginal media organisations should receive adequate funding where necessary, in recognition of the importance of their function; and

205 (b): all media organisations should be encouraged to develop codes and policies relating to the presentation of Aboriginal issues, the establishment of monitoring bodies, and the putting into place of training and employment programs for Aboriginal employees in all classifications.

Both recommendations received unanimous support from the Commonwealth, New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia, Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory governments. The report was tabled in the Commonwealth Parliament in May 1991.

The following are two proposals that we believe should be given serious consideration to become a part of Australia's Broadcasting Legislation.

The first is in answer to recommendation 205 (a) from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal deaths in Custody referred to above.

The proposal is that:

an impost be placed on all Commercial interests who are governed by the Broadcasting Act and the Rules of the Australian Broadcasting Authority.

This impost would be by way of a percentage of all revenue received being collected annually for distribution to the Indigenous Media Industry under the administration of a Government approved body.

There are precedents for the recovery of revenue for good reasons and good purposes. By illustration, I mention APRA and AMCOS fees and Broadcast Licence fees.

In other industries that conduct business for profit there are imposts which require the giving of something back to the community.

An example is in the W.A. housing industry where part of the approval for building housing estates is to provide ten percent of the development for recreational open areas for the communities.

Another example relates to Perth in the late seventies and early eighties, prior to the introduction of the first FM radio stations. During that period it was the wish of some AM radio stations to convert to FM. The then Australian Broadcasting Tribunal saw the commercial advantage and issued an edict that those AM stations that converted would have to give something back.

In the case of 6PM, there was a component in the cost of conversion which transferred the frequency and transmission site and facilities to a community radio station now broadcasting as Radio for the Print Handicapped.

The second proposal refers to recommendation 205 (b) of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal deaths in Custody.

The proposal is that:

under the guidance of the Australian Broadcasting Authority an accord be reached between Indigenous Media and the Commercial sector to encourage the training and employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in commercial media and for the development of codes and policies relating to the presentation of Aboriginal issues, including the establishment of monitoring bodies.

The Western Australian Aboriginal Media organisation encourages its trainees to seek job opportunities elsewhere in the wider media and some of our people at 6AR have been successful in gaining employment in ABC radio at first as trainees.

The Commercial sector would be able to source staff from Indigenous media and give them the same opportunities to honour an employment accord under the above proposal.

I believe that the Federal Communications Commission in the United States have a policy of employment of African Americans, Hispanics, Asian and other Americans of foreign ancestry in the broadcasting industry. This is only a very recent recollection of mine which I will pursue for verification.

In conclusion may I say that by comparison, no other media organisation offers the exclusive services that Indigenous media provides, not only to Indigenous people, but to the wider community in helping to establish mutual understanding of different cultures and helping Australia along the path to reconciliation and therefore, a more harmonious and equitable Australian society.