



## **NIRS Response to the Inquiry into language learning in Indigenous communities**

### **Background**

For nearly three decades, a network of Indigenous broadcasters has operated across Australia. It is argued that the National Indigenous Radio Service (NIRS) has played an important and meaningful role in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander broadcasting over this period. We have witnessed firsthand the benefit our services (especially language broadcasting) has played for the Indigenous people in their communities and its impact on identity, pride and effect over into all areas of life. It is accepted and the sector is funded by Government on the basis that it continues to provide this essential service to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities.

NIRS is an effective voice for the Indigenous communities. At present, over 160 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander broadcasters take and contribute to the national scheduled program through Satellite for the national service. (Please see attachment A for a full list of stations).

Whilst the NIRS continues to operate strongly, it has at various times failed to live up to its lofty standards. Therefore, the NIRS Board has directed an upgrade in hardware, software, procedures and other means by which programs, services and connectivity is maintained via a satellite uplink in Sydney which regional, rural and remote radio stations receive via their encoders/decoders.

### **Program Development**

In summary, NIRS has played and continues to play an important role through our partner communities in the maintenance and support of Indigenous languages. NIRS estimates that we reach over 183 licensed community radio stations across Australia. This represents a valuable potential resource for language maintenance and delivery. NIRS recognizes the complexity of the task, and will strive in this important role language revival through broadcasting.

What NIRS proposes is a simple solution to language maintenance, by fostering an archive of Indigenous language logs in each community. We seek to have NIRS news bulletins produced at the top of the hour, reproduced by communities and re-played at the bottom of the hour in the local indigenous language.

NIRS is moving to a digital broadcasting platform and through our network can potentially reach every Indigenous home, community, educational, government and business organization or



association. Achieving this requires support from local community broadcasters which NIRS already is proud and privileged to say we have.

Furthermore, what this program could achieve is over 2 hours of recorded local language in high quality digital format for each day in the life cycle of this proposed program. From these logs the opportunity exists to transcribe each and every word that linguists could use to determine grammar and phonetic structures or dictionaries.

Support for this initiative would directly result in nearly 150-200 jobs created across regional, rural and remote communities in Australia. The program could result in a unique language course delivered over IP that could be further adapted for the teaching of languages in schools, through media organizations or RTOs.