



# **NATIONAL INDIGENOUS** RADIO SERVICE

**Annual Report 2020-2021**

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## From the Chair

While lockdowns, quarantining, self-isolation, mask wearing, and vaccination has become the norm with the COVID-19 pandemic, it was business as usual at NIRS.

The news team provided daily coverage of COVID-19 through national bulletins, special Weekly News in Review COVID-19 bulletins and daily posts on our social media platforms.

As a First Nations media organisation we felt a tremendous responsibility to report on this matter especially to mob who were quickly identified as a key priority group to safeguard against the virus. Equally, as an employer of First Nations people, NIRS supported voluntary employee vaccinations in partnership with the local Aboriginal medical service. The team is now 100% vaccinated.

Amidst the pandemic, the board also engaged Norton Rose Fulbright to help NIRS achieve DGR-status to attract philanthropic support for an independent First Nations national news service. Part of the process required adopting a new constitution which was unanimously accepted at a special member meeting in June.

This year we also began infrastructure renewal process and investing in new broadcast software and hardware to enhance news service provision and expand programming sources for users.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank our funding bodies, Community Broadcasting Foundation, Indigenous Business Australia, and the National Indigenous Australians Agency and our sponsors who contributed to the ongoing operations of the National Indigenous Radio Service. Through their investment, we've been able to employ a new cadet and importantly post a surplus for the first time in years.

I also wish to take this opportunity to thank our directors and members for their contribution to the National Indigenous Radio Service and to the Indigenous broadcasting sector. As we all know, Indigenous media is an essential service to our communities, which became evident this year from COVID-19.

**In closing, it's with great pleasure to present the 2020-2021 Annual Report of the National Indigenous Radio Service.**

**Valerie Craigie**  
*Chairperson*





## From the General Manager

I'm pleased to report National Indigenous Radio Service for the 2020-2021 has performed reasonably well in the light of a global COVID-19 pandemic.

Our team, based in Brisbane, was able to maintain normal operations as the region went into numerous lockdowns throughout the year.

We were able to do this with the support of the Australian Government, the National Indigenous Australians Agency, and First Nations Media Australia.

We received additional support from the Queensland Government and the Community Broadcasting Foundation to help meet our operational overheads like rent, wages, and satellite delivery costs.

We also began essential upgrades to our broadcast systems with an Indigenous Business Australia COVID-19 support package. This year we migrated to NewsBoss, software designed specifically for newsrooms and journalists. In the year ahead, we will upgrade our current playout system and studio hardware. We will also purchase new codecs and anticipate significant reduction in telecommunications and transmission costs.

Through these savings and increased revenue through sponsorship we have been able to expand our team with a new cadet and chief of staff.

I would like to express my thanks to NIRS Board and team for the dedication and commitment to the organisation. I would also like to express my thanks to our key partners who support the service we provide to the community broadcasting sector.

**Karen Paterson**  
*General Manager*



# 2021 Highlights



Partnership with **ABC Sport** and **NRL** to broadcast **3 State of Origin Games**



**New programs added to schedule**

Request Show with Matt Francis, People, Places & Paradise with Diat Alferink, MAMA Sings da Blues, 3RRR The Mission and Still Here, Nganampa Wangka, and The Sunday Gospel Show



**886**

COVID-19 stories  
July 2020 - June 2021



**60 Games**  
broadcast

AFL Indigenous  
Broadcasting

## Social Media Statistics 2020-2021



**17,000**

Page views

**9,500**

New users



**3.3k**

Page Likes

**125%**

Reach increase

F 64% M 36%



**514**

Followers

**8.6%**

Audience growth



**7,987**

Followers

## Conferences & Events



**Converge 2021**

Lismore

**AIATSIS Summit**

Adelaide

**Indigenous Voice  
Consultations**

Brisbane

**January 26 March**

Brisbane



## Meet the Board

### Chairperson

**Valerie Craigie** *Kalkadoon*

Media manager at Mt Isa Aboriginal Media Association with qualifications and skills in marketing, development, logistics and emergency management. Also holds a BA in Anthropology and History.

### Deputy Chairperson

**Jodie Bell** *Butchulla-Jagera*

CEO and producer at Ramu Productions, a community-owned production company based in Broome, Western Australia. She has extensive production experience and has achieved numerous awards for short film and documentaries. She holds a BA in Political Science and Anthropology.

### Secretary

**Jyi Lawton** *Bidjara*

CEO of BIMA with degrees in law and business from QUT and Melbourne Business School.

Director

**Diat Alferink Wakaid** *from Badu & Mabayag*

Operations Manager of Torres Strait Islander Media Association based on Thursday Island, QLD. She has a background in the arts and is a performing artist and comedian. She also has skills in project management and extensive experience in creating and coordinating community and major arts events and now editor of the Torres News.

Director

**Jackie Tim**

Member of  
Programming  
committee

Station manager of 98.7FM based in Cairns which is owned and operated by Bumma Bipperra Media. Through her stewardship, the station has provided many Indigenous youth an opportunity to work in radio and gain qualifications in broadcasting, expanded its local and national programming and is a major supporter of the Indigenous arts sector in Far North Queensland. Jackie holds qualifications and skills in journalism, training and assessment, marketing, development, logistics and emergency management.

Director

**Barry Anderson**

Member of  
Programming  
committee

Network manager of Radio MAMA based in Geraldton, WA. Radio MAMA has broadcast locations in Geraldton, Carnarvon, Mullewa, Mt Magnet, Meekatharra and Wiluna in Western Australia's Midwest, Gascoyne and Murchison regions (Yamaji country). Extensive skills and experience in media, communications and event management spanning 47 years.

Director

**Bukola Esin**

CEO of Waringarri Media Aboriginal Corporation based in Kununarra, WA with extensive history of working in media production. Also skilled in business planning, journalism management and business management.



## From the Editor

2021 was a busy year for the news team.

The National Indigenous Radio Service was invited to attend and cover the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Summit in Adelaide from 30 May to 3 June in Adelaide.

The summit is a unique forum for First Nations Peoples to come together to address critical and emerging issues and access opportunities which support and strengthen cultures, knowledge, and governance.

This year's summit combined the National Native Title Conference and the National Indigenous Research Conference. Keynote speakers included Minister for Indigenous Australians, Key Wyatt, academic Professor Megan Davis and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, June Oscar. Our news team reported daily from the summit covering stories about native title and young people, the importance of the Racial Discrimination Act, the need for truth telling in the country and the impact of the Mabo decision. There was also a special launch of Kurna and Ngarrindjeri language dictionaries.

Other highlights included Converge 2021 in Lismore. Our news team participated in workshops and produced several bulletins and stories including the Koori Mail's 30th year anniversary.



Kurna cultural performance on Day 3 of the Summit.  
*Image courtesy of AIATSIS.*

Throughout the year, the news team provided rolling coverage of COVID-19. There were daily updates of infections, lockdowns, and vaccinations on a state-by-state basis in bulletins across each day. Our team also focussed on emerging issues such as the impact of housing shortages in Indigenous communities on quarantining, importance of good mental health, and support for the health workforce in regional and remote communities. The news team also provided coverage of other critical issues such as Aboriginal deaths in custody, child protection matters, the Juukan Gorge inquiry, and the discovery of unmarked graves at former residential schools for Indigenous children in Canada.



Minister for Indigenous Australians,  
Ken Wyatt at the AIATSIS Summit.  
*Image courtesy of AIATSIS.*

Some exciting things have been happening in the newsroom too!

We welcomed two new team members, Alexandra Dorante and Danny Teece-Johnson. You can read about them on the next page.

National Indigenous Radio Service also signed an MOU with CBAA to share news content and we are also sharing stories with First Nations Media Australia's news sharing project being co-ordinated by former NIRS journalist, David Liddle.

Throughout the year we've also installed new software and hardware to improve efficiencies and reduce downtime. One of the new broadcast software installed this year is NewsBoss,

a news management system designed for newsrooms. Already we're seeing improvements in our workflows and our team have adapted to the new technology with ease.

Another critical software to be updated is our playout system. In the new year our studios will be equipped with Zetta, an automation system that will manage programming and news bulletins across our satellite channels.

**Adam Evans**  
**News Director**

# New to NIRS



## Danny

A Gamilaraay man from Moree NSW, Danny Teece Johnson has been working as a journalist and filmmaker in Black media for 20 years.

He has produced radio and television for ABC, SBS, BBC 4 and Foxtel. For a decade he worked as a journalist and producer at NITV. Danny says he is driven to tell real stories from Indigenous people and collaborates with Indigenous communities, organisations, Elders, and traditional owners to share their unique and engaging stories from Aboriginal perspectives. He is enthusiastic about telling unique social change stories that challenge, confront and question injustice, racism, environmental issues, and poverty in Australia and around the world.

Danny is also an accomplished filmmaker with short films "Mah" and "Songline to Happiness," the latter receiving Best Short Documentary at the 2012 ImagineNATIVE Film Festival in Toronto, Canada. In 2008 Danny started his own production company, Gondwana Productions and has produced over 200 hours of content for NITV.

Danny joins the National Indigenous Radio Service as Chief of Staff.



## Alex

Alexandra Dorante is a proud Meriam and Wagadagam woman from Mission Beach in Far North Queensland.

She began a Business and Entertainment degree at the Queensland University of Technology in Brisbane after completing her senior studies. She quickly realised it was not for her and decided to get firsthand experience in the tourism sector instead. Alex landed a job at Accor Hotels and worked her way up to a Front Office Manager position.

Three years later she was back at university, deciding to follow her passion for Indigenous media. Alex is currently undertaking a three (3) year Bachelor of Communications with a double major of Journalism and Media and Communications at the Queensland University of Technology.

Now in her second year, Alex joined the National Indigenous Radio Service as a cadet in April.

She is enthusiastic about giving back to her community, and hopes to continue in this space, and see more Indigenous faces in non-Indigenous spaces.





## Early Shifts

My name is Merinda Ninnette, and I am a Bibbulmun, Noongar woman from southwest Western Australia.

This year marks my fourth year at the National Indigenous Radio Service. I am a senior journalist and typically the first person in the office every day.

As the first journalist to arrive in the morning it is my job to ensure our broadcast equipment is operational. This requires re-booting our playout system and applying the day's playlist, so our bulletins go to air. It is also vitally important to what stations are going to air, especially those that are re-transmitted on our satellite service.

Once the broadcast systems get the all clear, I am catching up on emails, messages, and stories in our news queue. I spend the next couple of hours researching and identifying stories to write and by four-thirty I am ready to build and compile my first bulletin for the day.

Sources I like to use in the morning include social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram and online news from ABC, SBS and NITV and news wires services like AAP. I also receive story leads in emails from my fellow journalists or through phone tips and read through most online newspapers for ideas. Throughout the day I also listen to programs on Indigenous radio stations to gather potential stories for our daily bulletins.

“ I have also enjoyed the move to our new news management system, NewsBoss. It frees up a lot of time and works a lot smoother than our previous system. It also helps me to see what stories were used the previous day and brings social media straight to my desktop.

At five-thirty I record my first bulletin and start preparing for the next bulletins at 7am, 8am, 9am, 10am and 11am.

This period is my busiest time of day with constant deadlines after another. I rather enjoy the fast-paced energy and when I can get on a roll with writing stories and recording bulletins.

This year NIRS has introduced a Sunday shift, which takes the pressure off me on Mondays. It is great to come into the office with news stories ready to go and to have some interviews planned for the week.

The addition of new team members, Alexandra Dorante and Danny Teece Johnson has been most welcomed. Alexandra and I work very well together, and she has been a huge support for me in the mornings as I can rely on her to help gather and write good stories for the mid-morning bulletins. Danny brings a wealth of journalism skills, contacts, and new insights to stories.

I have also enjoyed the move to our new news management system, NewsBoss. It frees up a lot of time and works a lot smoother than our

previous system. It also helps me to see what stories were used the previous day and brings social media straight to my desktop.

Early starts mean I don't get caught in traffic in the morning or afternoon but there some downsides. It is quite isolating to be the first person in the office and it plays havoc with my sleeping patterns. It is also a lot of responsibility as the team relies on me to set up the day for them.

Highlights of the year include the mix of people I have interviewed who include Tom Calma from Reconciliation Australia, Ruby Wharton from Warriors of Aboriginal Resistance and Paul Paton from the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporation. On a personal note, a highlight for me is the confidence I have built over my voice while recording and how adventurous I have become in my story writing.

I really enjoy working with the current NIRS team, we all get on and almost always have a positive environment. I wouldn't want to work anywhere else.



# Healing Country

Callan Murray

## An overview of stories NIRS covered related to NAIDOC, land and country

Over the past twelve months, the COVID-19 pandemic has upended our lives, separated us from friends and family, and dramatically changed the way we interact with one another. Events have been cancelled, postponed, or modified to online delivery due to movement restrictions and health and safety concerns.

“Telling the truth about Australia's history not only reveals the effects of colonial conflict, dispossession, forced removal, and trauma, but acknowledges the strength and resilience of First Nations peoples and cultures.”

After being cancelled in 2020 it looked like this year's NAIDOC week (July 4 – July 11) was going ahead albeit with some COVID safe restrictions in place to keep our mob safe. But those plans were scuttled as the Delta variant spread along the east coast and many NAIDOC events were postponed or cancelled.

NIRS News covered the ups and downs of this year's NAIDOC events from date changes to Awards cancellations, poster competitions, and the announcement of this year's theme – **Heal Country!**

The theme: **Heal Country!** is a plea to protect our lands, waters and cultural heritage from exploitation, desecration, and destruction so future generations might enjoy a brighter future.

Co-Chair of the National NAIDOC Committee, John Paul Janke told NIRS of what he believes is a greater awareness of First Nation's people's cultural knowledge of country, especially since last year's bushfires.

“When we talk about Country, it is spoken of like a person. To heal Country is to heal us, and to do that we need stronger measures to recognise, protect, and maintain all aspects of our culture and heritage,” he said.

Considering the theme, and in light of changes to NAIDOCs planned gatherings, NIRS chose to mark NAIDOC by highlighting all the different ways mob around the continent continue to care for and Heal Country!

For over 60,000 years, Cultural Burning has been used by our mob to manage land, vegetation, and animals. These practices were nearly lost as European settlement spread across the nation dispossessing Aboriginal peoples of their land. NIRS broadcast a Griffith Review commissioned podcast on fire management of traditional owners.





Ngurrara Ranger, Sumayah Surprise undertaking burning in the Great Sandy Desert. *Image supplied.*

Back Story – Indigenous Fire featured Indigenous rangers from Minjerribah (Stradbroke Island), the Kimberley and the Northern Territory's Top End drawing on knowledge and cultural practices handed down through the generations on how to use fire to care for Country.

Another story we covered is weed control. In the Queensland, South Australia and the Northern Territory, Traditional Owners have been working to conserve and care for Country. Through the sharing of traditional knowledge and conservation training, Indigenous rangers have been able to remove invasive plants and return threatened species to their habitat.

But the theme Heal Country encompasses more than just the protection of our land and waters.

Healing Country means finally resolving many of the outstanding injustices which impact the lives of our people.

Truth-telling and historical acknowledgment is key to that healing and an important step towards reconciliation in Australia.

Telling the truth about Australia's history not only reveals the effects of colonial conflict, dispossession, forced removal, and trauma, but acknowledges the strength and resilience of First Nations peoples and cultures.

It is only by shining a light on our greatest shames – both in the past and importantly those that live on in the present – that we can work towards healing.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner June Oscar sat down with NIRS amid NAIDOC Week to yarn about the theme Heal Country, and the lack of government funding in First Nations communities.

The proud Bunaba woman reminded mob wherever they may be, to take time out for family, kin, and Country and to celebrate all of who we are.

"Remember, you, and the knowledges you carry, matter and are immensely invaluable to healing and protecting our Country. Yaninyja, and happy NAIDOC Week."





Launch of the Kurna and Ngarrindjeri language dictionaries at AIATSIS Summit. Image courtesy of AIATSIS.

## In the field in Adelaide

News director Adam Evans and cadet Alexandra Dorante attended the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Summit in Adelaide from May 30 to June 3 in Adelaide.

The summit was a combination of the National Indigenous Research Conference and the National Native Title Conference and provided a good opportunity to connect and interview people in both fields.

Delegates were officially welcomed to Kurna country by Jeffrey Newchurch and Rosalind Coleman. The news team set up a mobile news desk and attended several plenary

sessions featuring keynote speakers addressing summit themes on a voice, treaty, truth and community. Speakers included Professor Megan Davis, Tony McAvoy SC, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, June Oscar, and April Lawrie from the South Australian Native Title Services. Children, leadership, and the future was a common thread throughout most sessions.

To coincide with Mabo Day, the summit featured a keynote address from Koiki Mabo's daughter, Gail, who spoke about her father and the challenges he faced from the community during his quest for recognition of his traditional lands.



## Raise the Age

Stephen Clarke

The age of criminal responsibility in Australia is the age when a child is considered legally able to understand their actions were wrong and can face criminal charges.

Now all Australian states and territories have this age set at just ten years old, meaning right around the country police can arrest, strip-search, and imprison children.

This is an issue that overwhelmingly affects Indigenous people. In 2018-2019 60% of all children imprisoned were Indigenous, and 80% of 10-year-olds were Indigenous.

The low age of criminal responsibility sets in place a recurring cycle of imprisonment and reoffending that children are getting trapped in.

In December 2019, the Council of Attorneys-Generals, representing each state and territory, met to establish a review into the issue. Since then, governments have done little. The Council was criticised for not releasing the submissions received under the review, which were supportive of raising the age.

Australia-wide, forty-eight (48) organisations, including the National Aboriginal Legal Services, released their submissions made to the review and of those, 96% pointed to the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in the justice system as a major concern.





“

Now all Australian states and territories have this age set at just ten years old, meaning right around the country police can arrest, strip-search, and imprison children.

”

Australia's delay in addressing this issue has caught the world's attention. Thirty-one members of the United Nations called out Australia for failing to adopt the 2019 UN Committee on the Rights of the Child resolution to set 14 years as the minimum age of criminal responsibility for children.

Previously, the 2017 Royal Commission into the Detention and Protection of Children in the Northern Territory, recommended raising the age from 10 to 12. The recommendation has “in principle” support from the NT Labor government but so far has not passed into law.

However, in recent months two jurisdictions have pledged to raise the age:

In Western Australia, the Labor Government recently passed a motion to raise the age from 10 to 14, leaving little impediment for the state's Attorney-General to introduce the change into law.

The ACT Government has committed to raising the age to 14, with legislation expected to be introduced into parliament in 2022.

### How has NIRS been covering this issue?

Over the last year NIRS has regularly covered this issue in our news.

We have spoken with groups that are among those campaigning hardest on the issue, including the National Aboriginal Legal Services and Amnesty International.

We contacted state officials and political leaders to get their stance on whether the age of criminal responsibility will be or should be raised and to also follow up progress.

While it is clear there is still a long way to go to raise the age of criminal responsibility for children in Australia, advocates point to decisions taken that have taken the issue backwards with the introduction of harsher penalties for youth offenders and a “tough-on-crime” approach.

The NIRS news team will continue to follow the issue and to follow up on states and territories that have committed to change in this area, as well as those that are yet to do so.

# Financial Report

## NATIONAL INDIGENOUS RADIO SERVICE LIMITED DETAILED INCOME & EXPENDITURE STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2021

	2021	2020
	\$	\$
<b>INCOME</b>		
DOTPMC Funding	358,798.00	358,798.00
CBF Grants	80,000.00	30,000.00
Other Grants	52,312.73	20,424.60
Sponsorships	119,631.25	63,275.00
Interest Received	799.35	316.36
Proceeds from Investments	29,769.40	23,655.44
Appreciation / (Impairment) of Investments	24,751.61	(28,635.82)
Rental of Office	8,500.00	6,000.00
Rental of VAST Channel	15,474.51	23,315.44
Cash Flow Boost – Covid-19 Stimulus	39,472.00	39,472.00
JobKeeper Wage Subsidy	42,000.00	24,000.00
	771,508.85	560,621.02
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Audit Fees	5,000.00	5,000.00
Bad Debts	-	6,186.51
Bank Fees & Charges	423.19	215.55
Bookkeeping Fees	16,632.65	18,000.00
Commissions	22,415.70	28,409.96
Computer & Software Expenses	23,473.49	2,714.25
Contractors & Consultants	8,823.13	3,626.85
Depreciation	90,170.59	13,852.41
Electricity	-	6,240.37
Fees & Subscriptions	777.17	958.30
Insurances	6,903.83	7,219.15
Interest Expense	1,441.67	-
News Gathering	5,317.12	5,106.94
Office & Studio Expenses	2,113.87	809.42
Professional Development	1,086.11	-
Promotional Expenses	-	423.63
Provision for Employee Entitlements	8,496.69	6,724.72
Repairs & Maintenance	1,256.36	227.50
Rent & Outgoings	-	71,618.52
Satellite Delivery & Uplink Costs	33,600.00	33,600.00
Superannuation	33,198.38	25,927.53
Technical Support	14,061.85	15,000.00
Telephone, Fax & Internet	22,898.82	38,541.99
Travel & Accommodation	6,677.83	19,796.50
Wages & Salaries	355,335.27	273,335.75
Website	1,395.90	5,620.50
WHS & Industrial Relations	3,062.93	-
Workers Compensation	1,137.64	1,011.25
	665,700.19	590,167.60
<b>OPERATING SURPLUS (DEFICIT)</b>	<b>105,808.66</b>	<b>(29,546.58)</b>
<b>NON OPERATING ITEMS</b>		
Capital Grants	-	-
<b>NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)</b>	<b>105,808.66</b>	<b>29,546.58)</b>

# Sponsors and Thank You

National Indigenous Radio Service would like to express their appreciation and gratitude to our sponsors, media partners and organisations for their contribution throughout the year. With their support we have been able to provide a daily news service and deliver 24-hour programming to community radio stations across the country.



Australian Government  
National Indigenous  
Australians Agency



**NIAA**



Community  
Broadcasting  
Foundation



**Ngaarda**  
media



**PAKAM**  
PILBARA AND KIMBERLEY ABORIGINAL MEDIA



**AIATSIS**



We would also like to thank:

Mary G Show

3RRR

Koori Radio

4K1G

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

NITV

Jampakt

My105 FM

AFL Indigenous Broadcasting

Larrkardi Radio

Radio Adelaide

Nunga Wangga

Noongar Radio

We also wish to extend special thanks to Norton Rose Fulbright for their support throughout the year.



**NATIONAL  
INDIGENOUS**  
RADIO SERVICE

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