



Media Release

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MOVING IN ONE DIRECTION



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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media workers and organisations from across Australia met up at the **CONVERGE**, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Media Summit, in Alice Springs on Monday 22 May - Wednesday 24 May. Older and new generations shared their experiences, histories and dreams for the future of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media industry.

The delegates came together to determine the directions needed for the maintenance and growth of the vital work of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media industry for its remote, regional and metropolitan audiences. Forum Facilitator and industry pioneer Dot West said "It was great to see so many of our media organisations from across the country represented at **CONVERGE**. Everyone worked together constructively towards building a new policy agenda and direction for our industry – showing how we can achieve unity through diversity."

CONVERGE was the first gathering for Indigenous Remote Communications Association (IRCA) in its new role as national peak body.

Delegates were welcomed to Arrernte country by Elder Kumalie Riley and dancers during the Monday night Opening Ceremony, celebrating the local culture of Eastern and Central Arrernte. *Apurte irretye-ke iwerre anyente-le* translates as 'meeting together and moving in one direction' in the local Arrernte language of Mbantua (Alice Springs).

The two days that followed focussed on creating a united approach to tell the story of why communities value the work of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media industry. IRCA Secretary Sylvia Tabua said "Our media is very important to our communities – it keeps our languages and culture strong, connects our communities and families and provides meaningful jobs and skills. Our media creates and shares the stories, news and music we want to hear and provides a training ground for our young leaders".

Outgoing IRCA Chairperson John 'Tadam' Lockyer said "We are the new custodians, we are walking in the footsteps of the pioneers to ensure our industry keeps growing and evolving to achieve its full potential." Throughout **CONVERGE** the pioneers of the industry were celebrated and acknowledged for their hard work over the past 40 years in the struggle for the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to create their own media – to have their voices heard on the airwaves, their faces and stories on film and TV, their journalism and images in print and online.

Many of these people have passed on and are greatly missed. They were essential to building the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media sector to what it is today – a diverse multi-media, multi-platform industry in a convergent era. There are a broad range of organisations delivering information to their communities via broadcasting and other platforms, as well as running a range of services and activities. **CONVERGE** saw the

attendance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media organisations and individuals working across all platforms; radio, film/TV, print, online and mobile.

2017 is the 50 year celebration since the referendum that gave Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people the right to be counted as citizens in this country. 2017 also marks 25 years since the Mabo decision that recognised the rights over traditional lands. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media is as important as ever to give its communities a voice, to ask the questions of the politicians, to record the stories of the Elders, to set the history books right, to challenge the stereotypes and misrepresentation of other media services.

IRCA acknowledges all the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media organisations and workers who gave their time and energy to be at **CONVERGE**, meeting together and moving in one direction to help forge the way for the sector, update the policy that guides the industry's development from the grass roots, and set the role and direction for IRCA as the new national peak body.

Outgoing IRCA Chairperson John 'Tadam' Lockyer says "While we all work in different ways and different places across Australia, it is important to come together to share in our ongoing struggle to grow our sector into the future. Together we can build a powerful and connected media industry for our children and grandchildren to learn and benefit from."

To find out more visit irca.net.au/converge.

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IRCA General Manager Daniel Featherstone is available for interviews