

## **Fighting Fire With Fire –The Broadcasting to Remote Aboriginal Communities Scheme (BRACS)**

In the late 1980s, as the first Australian communications satellite Aussat was in its final planning stages community members in Yuendumu and other remote indigenous communities began to express concern at the potential impact that mainstream television and radio would have on their communities. Yuendumu community members to this day speak English as a 3<sup>rd</sup> 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> language, practice ceremony and other cultural activities and felt that mainstream television and radio would swiftly take this away as younger generations were introduced to Home and Away, McDonalds and Tooheys advertising.

Yuendumu community members were no stranger to television, they had been making their own for several years, covering local meetings ceremony and events. Men such as Darby Ross, Francis Kelly and Kurt Granites spoke at meetings about what they wanted to do as television came to Yuendumu.

Out of this discussion Imparja Television was formed, satellite space was dedicated to Indigenous broadcasting and the BRACS system was devised and put into over 100 remote communities bringing television with it. BRACS provides communities with a local hub through which all television and Radio programming that comes into the community is controlled. Each hub also has the capacity to broadcast locally made videos and radio.

Warlpiri Media Association's main role is as a regional BRACS coordination unit. WMA coordinates the Tanami Region whilst Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Media (SA and NT), Ngaanyatjarra Media (WA, NT, SA), Pilbara and Kimberly Aboriginal Media (WA), Top End Aboriginal Bush Broadcasters Association (NT), The Remote Island Communications Association and the Remote Indigenous Media Association of Queensland handle their various regions.

As a regional coordination unit, WMA has 9 member communities. Each of these communities receive training and support for their BRACS activities from WMA. Warlpiri Media's PAW (Pintupi-Anmatjerre-Warlpiri) Radio network broadcasts to and from these communities.

BRACS workers in WMA's member communities undergo training with WMA and Batchelor College, get paid by WMA and Broadcast over WMA's radio network.

Today BRACS activities vary greatly from area to area. Different areas all have their particular strengths. BRACS is internationally recognised for the Community Development, Cultural and Language maintenance outcomes that communities have achieved using it.

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