

## **No Voice Without Pictures – urgent action needed to address the crisis facing remote TV broadcasting**

Four out of five Indigenous households won't be following this week's televised broadcasts on a voice to parliament as remote areas remain deprived of basic television services.

That's the blunt message representatives of Imparja, the Indigenous-owned not-for-profit broadcaster delivering commercial television services to the most remote areas of the country, will deliver today to government MPs.

Imparja Television CEO Mr Alistair Feehan pleaded with the Albanese Government to take urgent action to address the remote broadcasting crisis which continues to cut off remote Indigenous Australians from national and international news, views and entertainment.

'Instead of being included in a community debate about the need for Indigenous voices to be heard by decision-makers, remote Indigenous Australians will be out of the loop,' Feehan said. 'It's a bitter irony that the very people the voice is designed to assist won't have a clue what's going on in Canberra.'

Recent work by the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT)<sup>1</sup> has revealed that up to 80 percent of Indigenous households have no working free television service due to damaged cabling or dishes and defunct set top boxes.

Appeals to government for rescue packages to ensure Indigenous Australians can access the same news, information and entertainment as other Australians have for years been ignored.

'If we are serious about using the Voice to Parliament to include First Nations peoples in policy debates, we must connect them to those debates through a television in their homes. This is a very basic service other Australians take for granted,' said Feehan.

'We need the Government to step up on this. A demonstration of good faith with Indigenous communities would be if we left Canberra this week with a firm commitment to a plan for the restoration of basic remote television services and a regular program of equipment repair and maintenance.'

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<sup>1</sup> <https://apo.org.au/node/321218>

‘Imparja is also fighting for survival. Without urgent additional funding, remote Australians who can access television will receive fewer channels from 30 June as Imparja struggles to keep the doors open.

‘While successive past governments have recognised Imparja’s perilous financial position, they have only offered morsels. We are now at crisis point. This is crunch time.

‘We cannot continue to provide the range of services we provide today when there simply isn’t the commercial revenue available to support them. We are at the point now where either the Government contributes towards the cost of these services or some services will go black on 30 June.

‘There has rarely been a more important time for all Australians, including First Nations people living in remote areas, to be connected and involved in a public policy discussion.’

**For interviews with Imparja CEO Alistair Feehan, please call Ross Mitchell on 0411 111 743**

### **Background on Imparja**

Imparja is a free-to-air television broadcaster established in 1987 with eight retransmission sites at Ceduna, Coober Pedy, Leigh Creek and Woomera in South Australia and Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine and Bathurst Island in the Northern Territory. Imparja’s first test program was telecast on 2 January 1988, bringing a live broadcast of the Australia vs Sri Lanka test cricket match to a delighted outback population. Regular transmissions began two weeks later, reaching a total audience of 62,000 people.

Imparja’s broadcast area is now over 3.6 million square kilometres, spanning six states and territories – Northern Territory, South Australia, Tasmania, Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria, with an estimated one million-plus residential viewers. Our service is also watched by approximately three million tourists who visit Outback Australia each year, and 200,000 viewers in terrestrial black spots.

Imparja’s signal is sent out across the Viewer Access Satellite Television (VAST) platform direct to some 200 very remote Indigenous communities and 75,000 homes within its license area. Imparja also broadcasts from 28 transmission towers as well as more than 20 remote towns that retransmit the signal on low-watt transmitters. Imparja’s VAST service also provide digital infill for all black spots east of the WA border.