



Submission to Senate Select Committee on the Future of Public Interest Journalism

**From: Ms Janine Mohamed on behalf of the
Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander Nurses and Midwives (CATSINaM)**

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CONGRESS OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER NURSES AND MIDWIVES

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Unity and Strength through Caring

This submission addresses these elements of the inquiry's terms of reference:

- a) the current state of public interest journalism in Australia and around the world, including the role of government in ensuring a viable, independent and diverse service;
- d) the future of public and community broadcasters in delivering public interest journalism, particularly in underserved markets like regional Australia, and culturally and linguistically diverse communities;
- f) any related matters.

This submission covers these topics:

1. Overview of CATSINaM
2. CATSINaM's interest in this inquiry
3. Recommendations for the committee's consideration

Overview of CATSINaM

We are the peak body representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives across Australia, but we are also Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples before we are nurses. This means we are on a lifelong journey together to fulfil our cultural obligations and commitments to our communities, families and ourselves. The primary function of CATSINaM is to implement strategies to increase the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples into nursing and midwifery professions. This means engaging in wider advocacy and debates affecting the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including our members. We also advocate for cultural safety to be embedded at all levels of healthcare – from policy development and implementation, to health service management and delivery, research, and education and training. For this major change to take place, it will be necessary for wider spheres - including the media and others contributing to public debate – to also engage with cultural safety as part of professional practice.

FURTHER READING

- ④ CATSINaM Position Statement: Embedding Cultural Safety across Australian Nursing and Midwifery
- ④ <http://catsinam.org.au/static/uploads/files/embedding-cultural-safety-across-australian-nursing-and-midwifery-may-2017-wfca.pdf>

2. CATSINaM's interest in this inquiry

The practices of journalists and the media industry have enormous ramifications for the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, both good and bad. The institutional racism that we see throughout the health system is also embedded within the structures and practices of the mainstream media industry. Mainstream media coverage too often reinforces racist stereotypes and deficit framing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, while also undermining our rights to self-determination. At the same time, some public interest journalism practitioners have done important work in uncovering injustices and prompting governments and other groups to take action, a recent example being the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory. There is a long and proud tradition of Indigenous journalism and Indigenous media that have challenged colonial narratives and provided platforms for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to have voice, an important determinant of health and social and emotional wellbeing. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations have engaged creatively with the opportunities offered by the digital revolution, as evidenced by the successful IndigenousX media platform. The transformation of the media industry that is now underway as a result of digital disruption brings new opportunities for policy to support new models of public interest journalism that better serve the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The references below will be useful for committee members wishing for more information about these matters.

- Bacon, W. (2005). A Case Study in Ethical Failure: Twenty Years of Media Coverage of Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. *Pacific Journalism Review*, 11(2), 17-41.
- Due, C., & Riggs, D. (2011). *Representations of Indigenous Australians in the mainstream news media*. Queensland: Post Pressed.
- McCallum, K., & Waller, L. (2013). The intervention of media power in Indigenous policy-making. *Media International Australia, incorporating culture & policy*, 149, 139-149.
- McCallum, K., Waller, L., & Meadows, M. (2012). Raising the volume: Indigenous voices in news media and policy. *Media International Australia*, 142, 101-111.
- Meadows, M. (2013b). Reporting Indigenous Affairs. In S. Tanner & N. Richardson. (Eds). *Journalism research and investigation in a digital world* (pp. 244-266). South Melbourne, Victoria: Oxford University Press.
- Meadows, M. (2005). Journalism and indigenous public spheres. *Pacific Journalism Review*, 11(1), 36-41.
- Meadows, M. (2001). *Voices in the wilderness: Images of Aboriginal people in the Australian media*. Westport, Connecticut, USA: Greenwood Press.
- Meadows, M., & Molnar, H. (2002). Bridging the Gaps: Towards a history of Indigenous media in Australia. *Media History*, 8(1), 9-20.
- Mohamed, J. (2012). *Social media: following in the Songlines tradition*. Croakey. Retrieved from <http://blogs.crikey.com.au/croakey/2012/06/14/from-songlines-to-twitter-communicating-and-connecting-for-aboriginal-health/>
- Stoneham, M. (2014). The portrayal of Indigenous health in selected Australian media. *The International Indigenous Policy Journal*, 5(1), 1-13.
- Sweet, M., Pearson, L., & Dudgeon, P. (2013). @IndigenousX: A case study of community-led innovation in digital media. *Media International Australia, Incorporating Culture & Policy*, 149, 104-111.

3. Recommendations

The recommendations that CATSINaM respectfully asks the Committee to consider address the terms of reference as outlined below.

- a) the current state of public interest journalism in Australia and around the world, including the role of government in ensuring a viable, independent and diverse service.

It is clear from many other submissions to this inquiry (including those from the Public Interest Journalism Foundation, Dr Bill Birnbauer, the Croakey team, and Schwartz Media) that there are serious ramifications for civic society from the collapse of the business model that has traditionally supported much public interest journalism. Public interest journalism will have a reduced capacity to hold governments and other powerful interests to account on matters affecting the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This is clearly an area where policy innovation is needed. It is critical that the interests, expertise and voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations are represented in the development of such policy.

- d) the future of public and community broadcasters in delivering public interest journalism, particularly in underserved markets like regional Australia, and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

As per the recommendation above, we call for the interests, expertise and voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations to be prominently represented in the development of any policies aiming to support public interest journalism in underserved markets like regional Australia, and culturally and linguistically diverse communities. In particular, the emergence of innovative new media forms, such as the IndigenousX media project, has the potential to advance the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people because of its work in exposing and tackling racism and some of the wider determinants of health that are not well covered by mainstream media. Policy should support the development of Indigenous public interest journalism initiatives that provide a clear public service in line with the ethics and principles of public interest journalism.

- f) any related matters.

This inquiry offers a rare opportunity for innovation in policy to support new models for public interest journalism education, training, research and practice that might help to address some of the deficits in media reporting outlined in section 1 above. CATSINaM is a strong advocate for cultural safety training in healthcare, and also would like to see cultural safety training embedded in journalism education and training, including newsroom managers and media executives as well as journalists. While cultural safety was developed in the health sector, it has also been applied in many other fields, including education and justice, and the general principles have much to offer public interest journalism practice.

Indeed, we are aware of journalists and communications professionals who have undertaken cultural safety training provided by CATSINaM. Given our expertise in delivering such training, we would be happy to present further evidence to the Committee on the potential value of cultural safety training for journalists and newsrooms.

Thank you for considering our submission. As mentioned, we would be happy to present to the Committee or to provide any further information that may be required.