

Transcript

Breakthrough launch, Gadigal Information Service Aboriginal Corporation
Redfern
30 March 2009

COOKE: My name is Brad Cooke. I'm the General Manager of Gadigal Information Service and we do welcome you here to our rooftop. We want to thank the ILC, the Indigenous Land Corporation for letting us utilise the rooftop today who own this beautiful building and allow us to use the third floor as well. And we do invite you too at some stage later today to come on down and check out our floor as well if you would like to come down.

Well it's exciting for us to be involved in helping the federal government launch this new initiative in Indigenous contemporary music. It's something which we are passionate about. We also, just on this rooftop, in November launched our own Indigenous music label, Gadigal Music and we're excited by what the Minister's about to launch today.

Before I introduce the Minister, straight after his speech we're going to have a performance from one of our fantastic performers. His name is Wire MC and he's going to be on our newest compilation CD which is called Making Waves Hip hop. It's going get released this Saturday through ABC Music, so make sure you guys check that one out as well. He'll be performing straight after the Minister's speech.

It gives me pleasure to introduce the Minister for [the] Arts, Mr Peter Garrett.

GARRETT: Thanks very much Brad. I add my acknowledgement to the Gadigal people, traditional owners as well up here on the roof of this fantastic building and I've just had an opportunity to have a look at the studio facilities, the radio facilities and the rest of the facilities that you have there and I've very very excited and confident that out of this new facility we are going to see an extraordinary profusion and delivery of Indigenous talent through the Sydney region, around NSW, out into Australia and internationally as well.

And that's why today it's a real pleasure for me to be able to announce that applications are open for the Breakthrough initiative. This has come from the Cultural Minister's Council which is the arts ministers of the states and the federal arts minister signing on to an Indigenous Contemporary Music Action plan. We want to provide additional opportunities for our Indigenous musicians to get out there and get their music heard and what better way than having access to \$25,000 to go and do some recording in a good professional setting and to come out with product which can actually be used by people, not only by way of getting airplay but also by getting out there and promoting themselves right around the place.

The fact is that contemporary Indigenous music is one of the most important vehicles for young Indigenous people in this country to express their creativity

and their culture and they can do it and build careers for themselves both here and overseas.

And that's why the Commonwealth government and in my role as Arts Minister is particularly pleased to be providing people with this opportunity through the Breakthrough initiative.

And look at the track record of Indigenous artists: Warumpi Band, Yothu Yindi, Christine Anu and of course Gurrumul Yunupingu more recently with that outstanding record that he made and the recognition that he's getting not only here in Australia but overseas as well.

If you go to the suburbs, the towns or the remote communities right around this country, you'll find young people playing sport and making music. This is a tremendous opportunity for people to take their music to that next level. There's some great young talent around the place, young warriors. I know there's a young Pigram that's on the way and there are many many others.

And, for this government, really focusing on ways in which we can actually help people take the next step that they need to take with their music careers. I'm really pleased that we are here – on the roof – to be able to announce applications are open through the Breakthrough initiative.

I guess just to conclude by saying that the opportunities in producing work—which has got cultural strength and pride, which is creative and different, which is cutting edge—are endless. And I think there is tremendous enthusiasm and appetite for the music and the work that young Indigenous performers and artists are bringing to bear.

We know there's a market out there because of the track record of those who have gone before. But we also know that that's a market that over time, I think, can increase considerably.

So, thanks very much for having us here today. This is a great day and this facility and the roof of this building, Koori Radio, Gadigal—it's great to be here to see what you have got to offer all those performers and artists and writers who have come through. We look forward very much to seeing the great progress that happens over the years.

Thanks everybody.

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WHITTON: It is about six minutes away from 12 o'clock on the Koori clock and we have in the studio right now with us, as promised, the Federal Government Minister for the Arts and Environment, Mr Peter Garrett, who is joining us this morning after launching a special project on the top of our building.

Good morning to you Peter and welcome to the show.

GARRETT: Thanks very much Paulette. Great to be here.

WHITTON: Now tell us, what have you been up on our rooftop doing?

GARRETT: I have been up on this fantastic rooftop announcing that applications are open for a special program which we are bringing forward called *Breakthrough*. And this is providing three Indigenous performers or bands or outfits with the opportunity to have \$25,000 level of support for recording, which will enable them to make a broadcast quality, standard recording for use, airplay, building their careers and getting promotion for their career both here in Australia and, depending on how red hot they are, even overseas.

WHITTON: Fantastic, that is a great opportunity. Now how was it received upstairs?

GARRETT: Yeah look it was great up there. We had a fantastic time telling the media about this program. What's happened is that I have come into the Government, I am the Environment Minister and the Arts Minister, but of course I have had a long interest in aboriginal issues, Indigenous culture and Indigenous music and one of the things that I thought was really important was to provide a little bit of extra support where we could, for bands of performers who quite often have got great songs but they just don't get the opportunity to get in a studio and have enough time to work up those songs the best they can be. So, the idea of *Breakthrough* is that it will give these people that opportunity. It means that they are going to have a bit of time, a decent budget, great engineers and they get the best out of their music and performance with that support.

WHITTON: Now you would have seen a lot of great talent on your travels around aboriginal communities prior to your role in the Government, wouldn't you?

GARRETT: Yeah look I have and one of the things that I said upstairs on the roof is that it doesn't matter where you go – you could be here in Redfern, you could be in any of the suburbs of the cities, country towns, western New

South Wales, western Queensland, down in the Riverland or out in the remote communities, and you will often find, in fact more often than not, people making music. There is some great bands, fantastic people I have seen over the years, who have been good songwriters, good performers. And quite often they've made a bit of a name for themselves in their own area but for whatever reason it hasn't gone further than that. So I reckon with this support that we're providing, it will give people an opportunity to get the recorded material up to a really, really good level, and hopefully there will be some other interest for them so they can build their career after that.

WHITTON: Deadly. Now does that include recording here at our very own, state-of-the-art Gadigal music label recording studio which is next door to where we are sitting?

GARRETT: Well, it is fantastic...look Brad took me through and I had a look at it and look, it really is, it is a fantastic facility and I imagine that the opportunity is there for people to do that. You're putting in a plug but it is beaut – you've got all the right gear there, there is no reason why not.

WHITTON: Now, so we have got to wait for applications so we don't know who these arts and bands will be until then?

GARRETT: Look that process will take a little bit of time; it will be decided at arms length and won't be decided by me. It will be decided by a proper panel at arms length. But there is opportunities there for people and in the next couple of months we expect those applications to come in. I reckon there will be a heap of talent there. So the ones who eventually end up getting the gig – keep your eye on them because they will be going to the studio and I reckon they will have plenty of energy.

WHITTON: Now this *Breakthrough* initiative, this is part of a bigger picture isn't it about Indigenous Contemporary Action Plan, is that right?

GARRETT: Yeah that's right. When the arts ministers from the states and myself as the Federal Arts Minister got together in Alice Springs last year, one of the things that we signed on to was an Indigenous Contemporary Music Action Plan. And the reason for that is that there is some pretty straight forward barriers to people realizing the fruits of their ambition and their ability. Quite often it is distance issues, quite often it is just getting them into the place where they get heard or maybe onto radio or into some form of the media, so we have got a couple of components that we are looking at. One is the touring circuits - the opportunity for Indigenous musicians and artists to get on the festival circuit. Another one is looking at ways in which we can actually translate and bring them across to other media forms so people know who they are and know what they have got to offer.

WHITTON: Is this action plan going to as well involve access for our artists to be played on commercial radios as well? Because I notice that in the Action Plan it is only to promote greater use of Indigenous contemporary music content on the ABC, SBS and National Indigenous Television?

GARRETT: Well, the existing quotas that apply to locally produced music applies to Indigenous musicians as well. And certainly, if you listen to someone like a Christine Anu or Gurrumul or Yothu Yindi from an earlier era, you can hear people getting played on those commercial radio stations, but the fact is that generally speaking when people are starting off, they are more likely to get played on the community radio stations, on stations like this one, and on the ABC. And we very much see that as a launching pad. If they are making music which has got that commercial applicability as well then we would very much like to see them bouncing across into those commercial networks too.

WHITTON: And talking of radio stations like ourselves, I guess community broadcasting funding has remained stagnant for a couple of years - at least a decade. Will there be more funds going into building up community radio stations like Koori Radio?

GARRETT: We've provided some support for Gadigal here and through community radio for that funding. I think the fact of the matter is that we operate in a pretty tough environment in terms of budgets. You will have heard people like the Prime Minister, the Treasurer and others saying that with the global financial crisis biting here in Australia, budgets are going to be tough. I expect that will be the same both for Minister Conroy and also for myself. We strongly support community radio and we certainly support Koori Radio and my expectation is that the we want to and will continue that support. Will there be additional funds? Well, that is a question for the Treasurer when he looks at the overall budget. I think it'll be pretty tough in this coming budget but you know what we're doing today is providing additional opportunities for people who get played on radio to bring music through which you can actually play and give good broadcasting to, so I think that is going to make a big difference.

WHITTON: We have got heaps of fantastic musicians on this station already and this is going to add to the pool I am sure.

GARRETT: I reckon it's going to be beaut.

WHITTON: So what is the end result that you would like to happen through the *Breakthrough* initiative?

GARRETT: My hope is that once people have been able to take advantage, if they succeed in the competition and they find themselves with the opportunity to spend some money, that means that they can produce a really good EP or a number of different songs - broadcast level quality, you know really high quality - the sounds that they can hear themselves but also the sounds that the engineer can take and make the best of. That will provide them not only with the opportunity for greater airplay potential but also it is a fantastic thing for them to have in their back pocket when they go to see labels, when they are talking to promoters, when they are talking to people who are putting on

big tours and things like that. It will be a fantastic promotions tool for them because it will show people what they are capable of.

WHITTON: When are applications open, as of today?

GARRETT: As of today.

WHITTON: Well good on you, thanks very much for your time this morning and for being with us here on the Black Chat show.

GARRETT: Thanks for having us

WHITTON: That's the Federal Minister for the Arts and Environment, Mr Peter Garrett, there and here launching the new initiative called *Breakthrough*. It's an emerging Indigenous Contemporary Musicians Initiative, and it's part of the Indigenous Contemporary Music Action Plan which is aiming towards a stronger Indigenous contemporary music sector.

Breakthrough a pilot initiative and it is open to three successful applicants who will receive \$25,000 each to cover recording costs, production and engineering fees, mixing, mastering, design work and printing, as well as publicity and media costs. It's open to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contemporary musicians who have built up a reputation in their field, and will benefit from the opportunity to cut a broadcast quality recording.

Now your application will be assessed on performance or recording experience, your industry partnerships, evidence that a recording company, CD or digital distributor with a strong track record in production and promotional of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander music will be involved in that recording project, and your capability and your quality project plan with budgets and appropriate marketing activities, all that sort of stuff.

Now the closing date is the 11th of May 2009 and for more information and guidelines you can check out this website its called arts.gov.au/indigenous/breakthrough – that's arts.gov.au/indigenous/breakthrough.

[ENDS]

Music by Wire MC