



Australian Government

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet  
Office for the Arts

OFFICE  
FOR THE  
Arts

## INDIGENOUS CULTURE SUPPORT (ICS)

### AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT FUNDING FOR THE MAINTENANCE, TRANSMISSION AND EXPRESSION OF INDIGENOUS CULTURE.

The rich and diverse cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are amongst the oldest continuing living cultures in the world. Keeping Indigenous culture strong is vital to the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and is at the heart of the development of a strong national identity.

The Australian Government's Indigenous Culture Support (ICS) funding assists participation in a wide range of Indigenous cultural activities throughout Australia and enables the transmission of cultural knowledge across age groups.

New and imaginative forms of cultural expression are encouraged and the program promotes cultural exchange among different Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and between all Australians.

***'Culture is fundamental to identity –it is our past, our present and our future... We need our culture to sustain us and to keep us well. But importantly, we need culture because it tells us who we are.'***

**Tom Calma<sup>1</sup>**

The program places an emphasis on participation and achievements that enrich Indigenous culture, develop skills and encourage a strong sense of cultural identity in communities.

Through ICS, the Australian Government:

- supports the maintenance of Indigenous culture
- supports new forms of Indigenous cultural expression
- supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' engagement in cultural activities
- promotes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing by strengthening pride in identity and culture.

As strong cultural identity contributes to Indigenous wellbeing and to building healthy, safe and supportive communities, outcomes of ICS funding make an important contribution to the Australian Government's *Closing the Gap* agenda.

Research<sup>2</sup> shows that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders with high participation in cultural activities:

- have markedly better physical and mental health<sup>2</sup>
- higher rates of secondary school completion<sup>2</sup>
- are more likely to gain a post-school qualification<sup>3</sup>
- are more likely to be employed<sup>2</sup>
- are less likely to abuse alcohol or be charged by the police.<sup>2</sup>

Additionally, in remote areas feeling happy is associated with cultural activities such as making or performing Indigenous arts.<sup>4</sup>

ICS also contributes to a number of other Australian Government policy objectives and international commitments, including:

- *National Indigenous Languages Policy*
- *Indigenous Contemporary Music Action Plan*
- *Indigenous Economic Development Strategy*
- *Stolen Generations Working Partnership*
- *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*
- *UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.*

Further, the National Broadband Network and new information and communication technologies hold immense potential for the safeguarding, documentation, transmission and promotion of Indigenous culture, including opportunities for Indigenous creative content. Support for Indigenous culture also contributes to other government objectives, such as social inclusion.

ICS funding is administered by the Office for the Arts within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.



# WHAT INDIGENOUS CULTURE SUPPORT (ICS) IS ACHIEVING

## Helping keep Indigenous culture strong by supporting both the maintenance and transmission of traditional Indigenous cultures, and new and innovative contemporary cultural expressions

In 2010–11, ICS provided \$6.9 million to 131 projects across Australia, including:

- theatre
- dance
- music
- film
- radio
- cultural workshops and camps
- traditional arts and crafts
- Indigenous festivals
- storytelling.

## Helping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to connect with their culture and to share their culture with other Australians

In 2010–11, over 47 000 people were involved in ICS activities across Australia.

The number of people involved in ICS activities ranges from one person supporting Indigenous arts and culture in a community or region, to over 15 000 people participating in an annual festival.

## Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in urban, regional and remote Australia

In 2010–11, ICS provided:

- \$2.2 million to support organisations in remote Australia, including \$795 060 provided to fund projects in 18 priority remote service delivery communities
- \$2.7 million to support regional organisations
- \$2 million to support organisations in major cities.

## Providing training and employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Many ICS projects incorporate skills development and training for community members or professional artists. In 2010–11:

- Over 11 500 people received training and skills development through ICS projects
- 102 jobs based in ICS funded organisations were supported through the Australian Government's *Indigenous Employment Initiative*, in roles such as cultural administrators and support officers.

## Supporting the use of information technologies and new media to engage youth, increase skills and employability, and provide platforms for the creation and viewing of cultural content

The number of ICS funded projects incorporating film and new media elements has increased over recent years.

In 2010–11, several ICS projects primarily focused on digital content and new media, and many more utilised new and emerging technologies to increase their audience reach.



Change Media Ngarrindjeri youth team (l-r) Melanie Koolmatrjie, Edie Carter, Latoya Carter, Veronica Wilson, Rita Lindsay, Victor Koolmatrjie – facilitating the transmission of stories, culture and experiences through digital media. Supported by *Indigenous Culture Support*. Photographer: Carl Kuddell.

## References

1. Calma, T., 2008, 'Our culture: Preserving the legacy,' speech given at the *Indigenous Studies and Indigenous Knowledge Conference*, 3rd July 2008. University of Tasmania, Hobart.
2. Dockery, A.M., 2011, 'Traditional Culture and the Wellbeing of Indigenous Australians: An analysis of the 2008 NATSISS,' in *Social Science Perspectives on the 2008 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey*, 11–12 April 2011, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR), Australian National University (ANU), Canberra.
3. Biddle, N., 2011, 'Measuring and analysing Indigenous wellbeing,' in *Measures of Indigenous Wellbeing and Their Determinants Across the Lifecourse*, 2011 CAEPR Online Lecture Series, ANU, Canberra.
4. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010, *The City and the Bush: Indigenous Wellbeing Across Remoteness Areas (cat no. 41020.0)*, in *Australian Social Trends, September 2010*, Canberra.

\*Findings are based on analyses of the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS)* data, which do not support arguments about causation but show positive associations after controlling for other factors.