



## Submission to First Languages Australia – Revive Consultation

### **Pillar: First Nations First**

To ensure First Nations stories are genuinely respected and valued, and indeed, are First as the pillar states, a key priority must be ensuring First Nations communities have equal access to information in their own languages. This demands improved access to skilled translation services, particularly for high-level and specialised content such as contracts, legal documents, policy materials, and complex public information. From ICTV's perspective as a community media organisation, this remains a critical and ongoing issue. While there has been important investment in language revitalisation and maintenance across Australia, there is still a significant gap in the availability, recognition, and resourcing of qualified translators working across Indigenous languages.

Respect for First Nations languages is inseparable from respect for First Nations stories, knowledge systems, and cultural authority. ICTV regularly produces and distributes community news and media content translated into a range of Indigenous languages. This work often involves complex materials, including health messaging, governance information, policy updates, and culturally sensitive communications. Translation in this context is not simply about converting words between languages. It is about carrying meaning, intent, and cultural responsibility in ways that remain faithful to the original message while ensuring it is accessible and meaningful for audiences who may speak English as an additional language.

This is highly specialised work requiring deep linguistic knowledge, cultural authority, and the ability to move between different knowledge systems with care and accuracy. It also requires recognition that First Nations languages are living, evolving systems of knowledge, not secondary or simplified forms of communication. However, ICTV frequently encounters barriers in accessing translators with the necessary expertise. As a result, translation tasks are often delayed, under-resourced, or concentrated among a small number of highly trusted individuals. This places significant pressure on those practitioners and increases the risk of misinterpretation or loss of meaning in critical areas such as health, legal rights, and community safety.

ICTV works closely with experienced translators, who consistently highlight the urgent need to support and develop the next generation of translators. At present, there are limited structured pathways for younger people to build advanced translation skills in their languages. At the same time, experienced translators are often not adequately supported to take on mentoring roles, despite their willingness and cultural responsibility to pass on knowledge.

Addressing this gap requires targeted investment in access and capacity building. It also requires recognising translation as more than a technical task. In First Nations contexts, translation is a cultural responsibility grounded in authority, relationships, and intergenerational knowledge. Training programs should include structured mentoring, supported on-the-job learning, and clear pathways for specialisation in media, health, legal, and policy translation.

Importantly, this work must be properly resourced and valued. Translation should not be reduced to a simple per-word or per-hour transaction. It is skilled work that carries cultural authority and responsibility to community. It must be recognised as a professional field, with fair remuneration and sustainable funding that reflects its complexity and importance. Without this, organisations like ICTV will continue to struggle to maintain access to skilled translators and support emerging practitioners.

Improving access to high-quality translation services has direct and lasting impacts. It ensures First Nations stories are shared accurately and respectfully, and that communities receive timely, meaningful information in their own languages. It strengthens engagement with essential services and supports the continued use of Indigenous languages.

Most importantly, strengthening translation capacity is central to respecting and sustaining First Nations languages and storytelling traditions, ensuring they remain active, visible, and central in contemporary life. And indeed, puts them first.

On behalf of the ICTV Board, CEO, staff, contributors and translators,



29-May-2026

Jodie Bell  
Chair  
Indigenous Community Television Ltd.

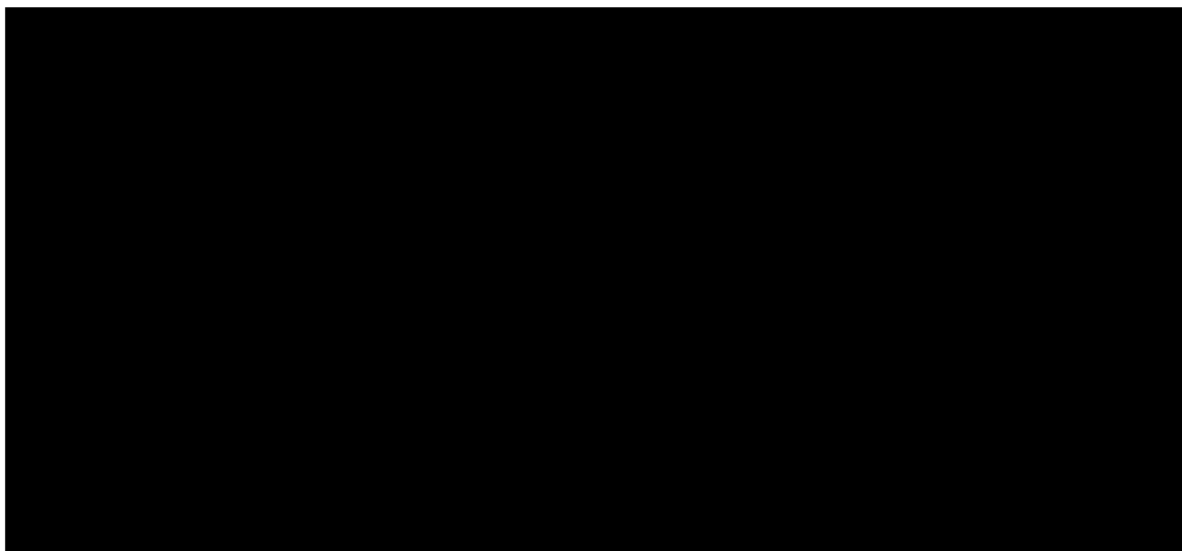
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Final Audit Report

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## "Submission to First Languages Australia" History



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