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I HEARD IT
ON THE **RADIO**

25 YEARS OF 98.9FM MURRI COUNTRY



Since the arrival of colonialism to this land, media has been a tool in misrepresentation and myth-making of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Brisbane Indigenous Media Association (BIMA) and 98.9FM were created to take back the power of representation through media for our people and community.

Prior to the advent of technologies for self-broadcast through online platforms of podcasts, video streaming and social media, there were very limited options for self-representation in the media landscape.

Radio broadcasting in the 80s and 90s provided Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a level of access and control not possible with other media at the time and offered an opportunity to redress the imbalance.

98.9FM now celebrates 25 years of broadcasting. Filling the airwaves with Indigenous language, music and storytelling, it is a platform for significant community issues and current affairs; a space to set their own news and information agenda. 98.9FM provides an essential platform for the Brisbane Indigenous community, a gathering point, by sharing music and local activities, and as a vehicle for education and reconciliation.

Voices for change



In 1982, First Nations people from across the country converged in Brisbane to protest the Commonwealth Games, demanded recognition of Aboriginal Land Rights and demonstrated against the legacy of Queensland Government's oppressive *Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, 1897* (Qld), known as the Act. The Act denied Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders the civil liberties the rest of the population took for granted.

While mainstream Australia celebrated the announcement of the upcoming Commonwealth Games, Australia's Indigenous people saw it as a platform to highlight their struggle on not only a national, but an international level. Indigenous groups in Australia found strength and solidarity in the Black Power movement of the United States through the 1960s and 70s, and their fight for self-determination.

While mainstream Australia celebrated the announcement of the upcoming Commonwealth Games, Australia's Indigenous people saw it as a platform to highlight their struggle on not only a national, but an international level. State Library previously explored this time in history through the kuril dhagun exhibition, **State of Emergency**.

“ We have the knowledge and the right to manage our own affairs and to be in control of our own destiny. ”

Letter to the dominant culture, TIGA Bayles.

On 25 September 1982 community radio station 4ZZZ staged a ‘Rock Against Racism’ concert in West End. The following day over 2,000 people marched for land rights in Brisbane, in what was reported at the time as Queensland’s biggest Aboriginal march.

The 1982 protests were a significant turning point for Indigenous activism and community mobilisation in Brisbane. Police response to the disruptions to the Games saw many activists arrested on a daily basis. 4ZZZ became a strong ally during this time, using its platform to call for donations and assistance to raise bail money for the protestors. It was this partnership that led to a dedicated Murri Hour segment on the station in 1984.



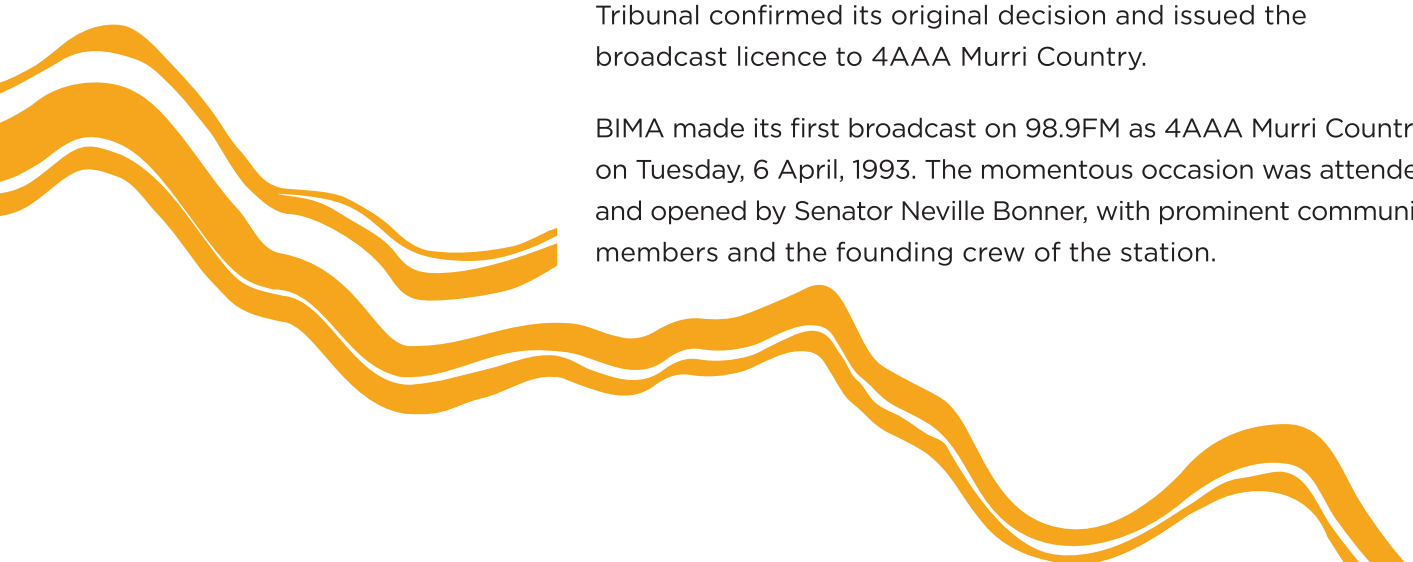
Murri Hour on 4ZZZ

Murri Hour was initiated by Gungalu and Birri Gubba frontline activist and coordinator of the Black Protest Committee, Ross Watson. Murri Hour aired on 4ZZZ from 1984-1993, beginning as a pre-recorded 20 minute daily segment in its first year, to over 16 hours a week by the end of the second year. Watson, the founder and editor of Black Nation newspaper, said Murri Hour “gave the community a chance to demand that Indigenous media be recognised as an essential service”.

In 1988 BIMA was incorporated, encompassing radio, publishing and filmmaking, realising Watson’s vision of comprehensive ownership and control of media channels. In the same year BIMA was granted a community radio licence to expand Murri Radio, however plans were stalled by an appeal from competing community groups vying for their spot on the dial.

BIMA was successfully allocated funding from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) to defend its licence after an eventful road trip to Sydney to address the first meeting of the ATSIC board. In 1991 the Australian Broadcast Tribunal confirmed its original decision and issued the broadcast licence to 4AAA Murri Country.

BIMA made its first broadcast on 98.9FM as 4AAA Murri Country on Tuesday, 6 April, 1993. The momentous occasion was attended and opened by Senator Neville Bonner, with prominent community members and the founding crew of the station.



Broadcasting with community



For many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community radio stations, broadcasting exists as part of the fabric of the community. 98.9FM emerged out of community mobilisation, as part of a broader groundswell of Indigenous run services, working hand-in-hand with Indigenous health, education, housing and legal services.

The transition from the volunteer based Murri Hour to operating a professional broadcasting organisation was not always smooth. With 98.9FM's guiding vision for advancement of community issues and perspectives at the heart of their operation, the station cemented their role in the community as a trusted source of news, political commentary, information, entertainment and, of course, music.

Not only does 98.9FM provide an essential platform for the Brisbane Indigenous community, it acts as a gathering point, sharing music and local activities, and as a vehicle for education and reconciliation.

The station maintains its community connections and presence today, regularly broadcasting from high profile community events.

Country Music Connection

“ We decided to identify common ground shared with the wider community and build on that. ”

Ross Watson, 1997

98.9FM was launched as 4AAA Murri Country, Brisbane's only country music station, as a way to pursue reconciliation through common ground – country music.

Country music was already hugely popular as well as an historically significant medium for Aboriginal people in Australia. Telling stories of the land and leaving home resonated with their experiences, particularly in rural areas. This highly accessible form of music, requiring affordable, portable instruments, became a powerful vehicle for tales of dispossession, rebellion and heartache, and provided a voice in mainstream Australia.

98.9FM is not all about country however, from its inception the station has encouraged the growth of Indigenous musicians. Only a handful of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander artists were granted regular airtime in the 80s and early 90s. Continuing the traditions of 'Murri Hour', the station made it their mission to record and broadcast Indigenous musicians, artist and spokespeople, with 35% of all music played on 98.9FM produced by Indigenous people.

Despite a recent change in call sign the station maintains its country music profile and commitment to elevating First Nations music.

“ We have emerging country artists as well as mainstream artists and we give them a platform with which they can launch their careers. ”

Andrew Smith, 98.9FM, 1997

Let's Talk

“ We are here to present an indigenous media service that is going to nurture our culture and improve relations and understanding within the entire population. ”

Ross Watson, 1997

As one of the longest running programs on 98.9FM, Let's Talk has been a prominent voice for First Nations issues for over 15 years. From its very beginnings the show has been a powerful platform for community-centred stories and political commentary. Tiga Bayles helmed the program for 12 years and laid the political and cultural foundations of the show which continues today with presenters Boe Spearim, Kaava Watson, Amy McGuire, Karen Dorante and the Wild Black Women – Dr Chelsea Bond and Angelina Hurley.

Predominantly a radio program, broadcast across the nation five days a week on the National Indigenous Radio Service (NIRS), Let's Talk also developed a series of high profile discussions for television and is played routinely on SBS National Indigenous Television (NITV).



BIMA Vision and Triple A Training

“From humble beginnings, we have grown into a successful media association that trains and employs Indigenous broadcasters and reaches a wide and diverse audience.”

Ross Watson, 1997

BIMA operates not only as the governing body for 98.9FM but also as a multimedia production unit, BIMA Vision, bringing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stories to the screen. BIMA and 98.9FM's dedication to excellence in media production has seen a stellar cast of presenters, producers and support crew come through its doors.

Through Triple A Training, BIMA prepares the next generation to continue this work through media training in Brisbane and regional/remote areas for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth. The award-winning training programs build up confidence, equipping young people with skills, and giving them cultural focus and a sense of identity.

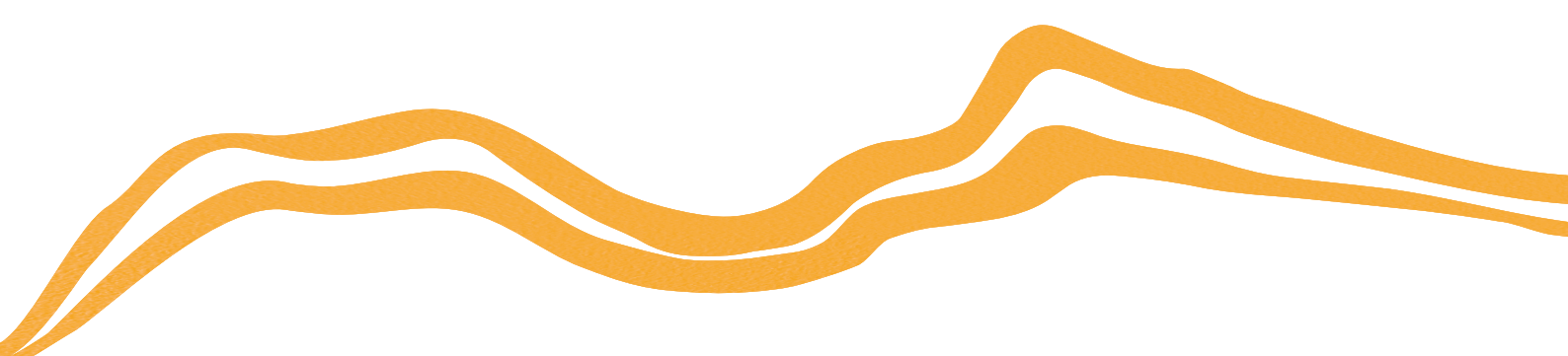
A new home for BIMA

“The recent growth and development of BIMA is an example of the possibilities open to Indigenous people in achieving self-empowerment and economic independence.”

Ross Watson, 1997

In 2011 BIMA finally realised the founding vision of the station and secured a long term home for operations in West End. Co-located with the National Indigenous Radio Service (NIRS), the new facility features multiple digital and studios, state-of-the-art recording studio and booth, three-camera television studio, control room and training centre.

Securing the facility is a significant milestone for BIMA and the achievement is an aspiration of many other community broadcasters, nationwide.



Audio playlist

from the studio in the showcase:



1. Murri Hour, 3 August 1984. Courtesy of 4ZZZ.
 - Brisbane Blacks – Mop and the Dropouts – 1982
 - Fishing – Kuckles
 - Prison Song – Sherrie Watkins
 - Black Boy – Coloured Stone – 1985, CAAMA Music
 - Traffic Lights – Kuckles
 - Wrong Side of the Road – Us Mob – 1981, Black Australia Records
2. Rock Against Racism and Land Rights Protest Report, 27 May 1984. Courtesy of 4ZZZ.
3. Thou Shalt Not Steal, Kev Carmody, 1988, Festival Records
4. Brown Skin Baby, Bob Randall, 1964, CAAMA Music (1983 release)
5. Koorie Rose, Roger Knox, 1984, Enrec
6. Stranger in my country, Vic Simms, 1973
7. Down City Streets, Archie Roach and Ruby Hunter, 1990, Mushroom
8. Neville Bonner, 98.9FM launch, 6 April, 1993. Courtesy of 98.9FM.
9. Blackfella, whitefella, Warumpi Band, 1985, Powderworks
10. Treaty, Yothu Yindi, 1991, Mushroom
11. They took the children away, Archie Roach, 1990, Mushroom
12. Inanay, Tiddas, 1993, Universal Music
13. Kev Carmody, 98.9FM/BIMA building launch, 2011. Courtesy of 98.9FM.
14. Yil Lull, Joe Geia, 1988, Gammin Records
15. Dancing in the moonlight, Coloured Stone, 1985, CAAMA Music
16. We have Survived, No Fixed Address, 1981, Polygram