

Chapter 3

Indigenous People in the Media: Telling it Like it Is and How it Could Be

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In April 2008, the nation's capital played host to the prime ministerial knights' table that was the *Australia 2020* summit. About 100 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were amongst 1000 or so participants in the two-day gathering at Parliament House in Canberra, which was aimed at capturing 'big ideas' for Australia's future around such challenges as climate change, the economy, jobs, health reform, new ways of governing and Indigenous disadvantage.

As both a participant in the summit and editor of Indigenous newspaper *The Koori Mail*, I was keen to capture the moment for posterity, so during a break in the proceedings I shepherded my fellow participants down to the grand, marbled front foyer.¹ A handful of federal Press Gallery photographers – all muscular cameras, pro lenses and elbows – had gotten wind of the opportunity and jockeyed for prime position on the landing above the group. Accustomed to more obliging subjects such as politicians keen to build their profile or spruik one policy or another, they tried to entice the chattering group to look up towards them – and tried again and again. Things looked set to unravel until, over the din, I finally made myself heard: 'Everyone! Look over here! This one is for *The Koori Mail*.' Instantly, virtually all heads below turned to my modest camera off to the side.

Big smiles? Check. An enthusiastic wave? Check. The look of bemusement on the faces of the gentlemen of the Press? Priceless.

I share this story because it illustrates the high regard that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have for the nation's

1 *The Koori Mail* is 100 per cent Aboriginal owned. Five Aboriginal organisations in Bundjalung country (far north coast of NSW) each own 20 per cent of the newspaper. It has an independently audited circulation of 9562 copies sold per fortnight and an estimated readership of more than 100,000. In 2011 the newspaper will celebrate its 20th anniversary and publish its 500th edition.

This is a preview. Not all pages are shown.