

On

the Cutting Edge

Living Black makes the shift to prime time, with a truly deadly woman at the helm.

As the face of Australia's only national Indigenous news and current affairs program, Karla Grant is fulfilling a lifelong dream – to give Indigenous Australia a voice in the mainstream media.

Karla has spent the last 10 years at SBS raising awareness and creating a national platform for Indigenous issues. She originally worked as the producer, reporter, director and presenter on the Walkley Award-winning ICAM program, SBS's ground-breaking Indigenous current affairs show.

In 2002, she came up with the concept for Living Black, a current affairs program with up-to-the minute issues that affect Indigenous communities nationally, and became both presenter and executive producer of the show.

"Living Black is a unique and vital program," she says. "Not only is it the only program of its kind on Australian television, it also fills a void by providing Indigenous Australians with a platform to debate and discuss issues that affect them."

"It's a program where communities can voice their concerns about how they feel and what's important to them; how they can improve the lot of their people. It's national issues from an Aboriginal perspective."

Now in its fifth season, Living Black has made the important move to prime time, screening at 6pm on Wednesdays.

"It's certainly exciting, but it's also very stressful," Karla admits. "We're

now the lead-in to the news, which puts more pressure on us to deliver quality information that is relevant and up-to-date."

The first show of the new season screened on March 8, and the response was extremely positive.

"People have been saying that we should be on prime time for a while," Karla says. "Now that we're here I want to build up a good audience, and become a stronger program, with harder-edged stories."

As well as her work with Living Black, Karla is also heavily involved with a number of charity organisations such as UNICEF, Field of Women – Breast Cancer Network Campaign and Lights Camera Action, an organisation that aims to get more young Indigenous people involved in film and television.

"Australian film and television rarely reflects Aboriginal society, or any society other than the blonde-haired, blue-eyed society you see on our soap operas," she says. "Lights Camera Action is working to change that, while at the same time helping to raise the self-esteem of young Indigenous people and giving them the opportunity to gain work."

For the past three years, Karla has also been Executive Producer of SBS TV's coverage of The Deadlys.

"I love working with The Deadlys," she says. "It's a huge job, but it's rewarding. I'm proud to be associated with such an important event that highlights the achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people."

During her time with Living Black, Karla

has had many highlights of her own. But probably what sticks in her mind the most is a difficult interview she had with a very feisty lady.

"I had to interview Amanda Vanstone," Karla says. "It was the toughest thing I've ever done. She wasn't the most pleasant person!"

"It was during the time that she was Minister for Immigration, and all the troubles were going on with Cornelia Rau, who'd been wrongly detained at the Baxter Detention Centre. She was very defensive, questioning everything I said. I just wanted to hide under the desk, and I couldn't sleep for days afterwards!"

Karla has certainly covered plenty of tough issues in her time, including Land Rights, the relationship between Aboriginal people and the police, the Black GST and petrol sniffing. But while the program is raising awareness of important issues, Karla wants to do more.

"We need more Indigenous content on commercial stations," she says. "This is something that I believe is still a long way off. It's quite disappointing, because people are so interested in Aboriginal culture, and want to learn more about it. It's also a shame because Indigenous Australians contribute so much to sport, politics, entertainment and the arts."

"People need to be made aware of this. That's why Living Black is so important."

Living Black screens every Wednesday at 6pm, and is repeated on Mondays at 5.30 pm and Tuesdays at 3:30pm.

ACTIVITY 1:

SKIMMING FOR MAIN IDEAS

Look at the heading on page 4 (*On the Cutting Edge*) and the words in bold type below the heading ("*Living Black makes the shift to prime time, with a truly deadly woman at the helm*").

Read the first and last paragraphs in the article.





1. What does the title *On the Cutting Edge* mean?

2. What change has been made to the screening time of the *Living Black* television program?

It has shifted to _____.

3. Read the first paragraph. Give two reasons why *Living Black* is such an important program for Karla Grant.

4. Read the last paragraph. What times is *Living Black* screened on SBS?





ACTIVITY 2:

SCANNING FOR SPECIFIC INFORMATION

1. Read paragraphs 4 and 5. What features make *Living Black* a “unique and vital program”?

2. The sentence “It’s national issues from an Aboriginal perspective” means

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“Living Black is a unique and vital program,” she says. “Not only is it the only program of its kind on Australian television, it also fills a void by providing Indigenous Australians with a platform to debate and discuss issues that affect them.

“It’s a program where communities can voice their concerns about how they feel and what’s important to them; how they can improve the lot of their people. It’s national issues from an Aboriginal perspective.”



ACTIVITY 3:

TRUE OR FALSE?

1. Karla Grant came up with the idea for *Living Black* in 2002.
T F
2. *Living Black* is now in its sixth season on SBS.
T F
3. According to Karla Grant, the most difficult interview she has done so far has been with Amanda Vanstone.
T F

ACTIVITY 4:

UNDERSTANDING WORDS IN CONTEXT

Write your own meaning for the words from the article in the boxes below. (Read the words from the article as well as the sentences around them).

WORDS FROM THE ARTICLE	MY WORDS THAT MEAN THE SAME THING
“We’re now the lead-in to the news...”	
“...I want to build up a good audience, and become a stronger program, with harder-edged stories.”	
“Australian film and television rarely reflects Aboriginal society, or any society other than the blonde-haired, blue-eyed society you see on soap operas.”	



ACTIVITY 5:

PLUS, MINUS, INTERESTING

Think about what it would be like to be the host of a national Indigenous television news and current affairs program like *Living Black*. List the points that would make it enjoyable (plus), things that you wouldn't like about it (minus) and things that you like the idea of (interesting).

Fill out the grid below with your responses.

PLUS	MINUS	INTERESTING



