



AIATSIS

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

Papers relating to the formation and administration of the Aboriginal Treaty Committee

MS 1897

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Collection Summary

Collection no:	MS 1897
Title:	Papers relating to the formation and administration of the Aboriginal Treaty Committee
Creator:	Coombs, H. C. (Herbert Cole), 1906-1997
Date range:	1977-1984
Extent:	1 linear metre (5 archival boxes)
Repository:	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
Registration ID:	N/A

Cultural Sensitivity Statement

Use of the material

When using this finding aid, and the collection described within it, clients are encouraged to be mindful and sensitive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, particularly with regard to the use of this material.

Language

This finding aid and collection may contain words and descriptions which may be culturally inappropriate and insensitive. The language used in this collection may not normally be used in certain public or community contexts. Clients may encounter terms and descriptions, which reflect the author's attitude or that of the period in which the manuscript was written, that may be considered inappropriate today.

Deceased persons

Clients using this finding aid should be aware that in some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, hearing recordings, seeing images of the names deceased persons may cause sadness, or distress and in some cases, offend against strongly held cultural beliefs.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Content

People & Organisations

Includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, family or organisations that are associated with this collection (individuals or groups who have contributed to, performed in, or are mentioned within this collection). Please note that there may be additional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people or groups that are not included in this Finding Aid, as they have not been identified. If you can provide further information to AIATSIS regarding this, please contact us at collectionenquiry@aiatsis.gov.au or telephone +61 2 6246 1182

Collection Overview

Scope and Contents note

Correspondence, reports and minutes of meetings of Aboriginal Treaty Committee.

Provenance

In May 2005 an access assessment of MS 1867 and MS 1897 found that there was evidence that H.C. Coombs and the Aboriginal Treaty Committee decided that the committee's records should be deposited with AIATSIS.

Related material

AIATSIS also holds a collection of papers of the Aboriginal Treaty Committee and H.C. Coombs at MS 1867.

For a complete list of works by the Aboriginal Treaty Committee held by the library, and for other related material consult [Mura®](#), the AIATSIS catalogue.

Access to the Collection

Access conditions for this collection

Open for listening/viewing

Obtaining access, copying and quotation permission

Clients are advised that the collection materials listed in this finding aid may be subject to particular access and use conditions required by Indigenous communities and/or depositors. Materials are provided for private study and use, in accordance with the Copyright Act 1968, Section 51. Copying of, and quoting from, unpublished material may be subject to the conditions determined by Indigenous communities and/or depositors of the manuscripts.

Permission may need to be sought prior to access being granted. In cases where these permissions are required, they must be obtained in writing and must be signed. Please contact collectionenquiry@aiatsis.gov.au or telephone +61 2 6246 1182.

AIATSIS Manuscripts are not available for Inter-library loan, however they may be available via document supply, subject to access conditions.

Preferred citation

Items from this collection should be cited as: Title [or description] of Item, [manuscript title], Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, MS [number], Series [number], Folder or item [number].

Example:

Correspondence with prospective sponsors, Papers relating to the formation and administration of the Aboriginal Treaty Committee, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, MS 1897, Series 1, Item 1.

Administrative history note

The Aboriginal Treaty Committee, a voluntary non-government body, was established on 29 April 1979 for the purpose of obtaining and spreading information on the need for a formal Treaty between the Commonwealth Government and Aboriginal representatives chosen by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People to negotiate on their behalf. Its activities included the publication of newspaper advertisements, the book, 'It's Coming Yet', a number of pamphlets on land rights, media publicity, the organisation and encouragement of academic and public seminars and conferences, and nine issues of Aboriginal Treaty News. The Committee terminated in November 1983. Following cessation of the ATC, Dr Coombs and other former ATC members continued to campaign for a Treaty and for the advancement of Aboriginal rights. Publications by former ATC members include Judith Wright's 'We Call For A Treaty', written mainly while the ATC was extant and published in 1985. In the book's final chapter Dr Coombs summed up the ATC's work and suggestions for future action.

Archivists note

MS 1897 was rehoused in October 2025. This finding aid was updated to reflect new box list.

Series Description

Series 1, Committee Formation and Administration 1979-1982

Correspondence covering: Campaign for Sponsors; Treaty provisions; Interim Report; Draft Agreement; Draft Resolution for Parliament; Minutes of meetings from 1979 to 1981; Copies of material sent to Committee members 1980-1982; Legal correspondence with Pamela Coward & Associates.

Folder/Item

MS 1897/1/1	Correspondence with prospective sponsors, 1979
MS 1897/1/2	Correspondence in support of a Treaty, 1979
MS 1897/1/3	Papers re Treaty provisions, November 1978 - April 1981
MS 1897/1/4	Complete set of treaty papers, February - September 1979
MS 1897/1/5	Interim Report, July 1979
MS 1897/1/6	Drafts of statements and letters with personal corrections, May 1979
MS 1897/1/7	Draft Agreement in principle with the Aboriginal people and The Commonwealth to conclude a Treaty of Peace & Friendship, February-April 1979
MS 1897/1/8	Draft Resolution For Parliament, July to September 1979
MS 1897/1/9	Minutes of Committee meetings, April 1979 - December 1979

MS 1897 Papers relating to the formation and administration of the Aboriginal Treaty
Committee

MS 1897/1/10	Signatures of Aboriginal Treaty Committee members and original statement
MS 1897/1/11	Copies of all material sent to all committee members, 1980 - 1982
MS 1897/1/12	Legal correspondence with Pamela Coward and Associates, September to November 1981
MS 1897/1/13	Meeting notes, correspondence and other papers, January - December 1980
MS 1897/1/14	Correspondence and meeting notes, 11 - 21 May 1981
MS 1897/1/15	Correspondence, newsletters, and papers, July - November 1981
MS 1897/1/16	Meeting notes, correspondence, papers, and newspaper clipping, July - October 1981
MS 1897/1/17	Meeting minutes, 3 December 1981

Series Description

Series 2, General Correspondence. 1977-1984

Correspondence from 1980-1983 with Government; Human Rights Commission; Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Issues; United Nations Association of Australia; Aboriginal Communities and Organisations; Land Rights; Dr Diane Barwick; W.C.I.P. Third Assembly; Professor Garth Nettheim.

Reviews of Aboriginal Treaty Committee book "It's Coming Yet"; Press statements; Sub-Committee's notes; Myer Foundation; Exhibition of paintings, 1981.

Folder/Item

MS 1897/2/18	Correspondence, January - June 1980
MS 1897/2/19	Correspondence including Survival International, Murray Valley League, Prof. Alan Frost, Prof. Garth Nettheim, Women's International League for Peace & Freedom, C. Perkins, March - September 1980
MS 1897/2/20	Correspondence – general, November 1979, May - July 1980
MS 1897/2/21	Correspondence Charles Perkins, New Internationalist etc, October - November 1980
MS 1897/2/22	Correspondence including Mick Miller, J.P. Hagan, G. Harwood, Prof. J. Zubrzycki, November 1980 - May 1981
MS 1897/2/23	Correspondence including R. Moore, Citizens for Democracy, Amnesty International, Heather Sculthorpe, Black Prisoners Welfare Service, E.G. Whitlam, February - December 1981
MS 1897/2/24	Correspondence including Erik Olbrei, Prof. Garth Nettheim, Frank Brennan, May - December 1982

MS 1897 Papers relating to the formation and administration of the Aboriginal Treaty Committee

MS 1897/2/25	Daily correspondence including J. Fitzmaurice, controller of T.V. programmes A.B.C., Frank Brennan, Ross Watson, Black Protest Committee, Dr R.H. Reece, Charles Perkins, Dr J. Cawte, Phillip Adams, December 1981 - November 1982
MS 1897/2/26	Correspondence including D. Walker, NAIHO, G. McIntyre, Prof. Russel Barsh, Kath Walker, N.L.C.; The Hon. Mr Justice J.L. Toohey, November 1977, April 1981, February 1983 - November 1983
MS 1897/2/27	Correspondence with Senator Susan Ryan, July - October 1981, April 1982
MS 1897/2/28	Addresses and correspondence Federal Parliament, April 1979-February 1984
MS 1897/2/29	Correspondence with Prof. Garth Nettheim, December 1980-October 1982
MS 1897/2/30	Correspondence re invitations to A.T.C. members to address community groups and content of such talks, May 1980-May 1982
MS 1897/2/31	Press statements and telegrams, February 1980-July 1982
MS 1897/2/32	Correspondence with the Human Rights Commission, March 1979 - September 1982
MS 1897/2/33	Human Rights Commission: Summary of consultation with A.C.T. Non-Government Organisations, 16 February 1983
MS 1897/2/34	Disposal of Manuscripts and Files, April 1983 - August 1983

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MS 1897/2/35	Correspondence re arrangement of seminars and conferences, 1979-1982
MS 1897/2/36	Correspondence with Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association including a copy of the submission to the Department of Communications, 1982
MS 1897/2/37	Correspondence with Glendle Schrader, May 1981 - February 1982
MS 1897/2/38	Papers on Treaty topics and the report of the Working Party on Aboriginal Broadcasting, 1980-1982
MS 1897/2/39	Correspondence and papers from W.C.I.P. Third General Assembly 1981, 1980 - 1981
MS 1897/2/40	Papers prepared for meetings, August - September 1979
MS 1897/2/41	United Nations Association of Australia re Media Peace Prize, 1981-1982
MS 1897/2/42	Aboriginal Law Research Unit, February 1982 - November 1983
MS 1897/2/43	Correspondence with Tasmanian Writers Union re address to be given by Dr Coombs, January-June 1982
MS 1897/2/44	Correspondence and papers: Senate Standing Committee on Legal & Constitutional Issues, February-June 1982

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MS 1897/2/45	Correspondence covering Land Rights issues and Legislation
MS 1897/2/46	Correspondence and paper by ALP Standing Committee on Aboriginal & Torres Island Affairs, April 1981
MS 1897/2/47	Obituary for Professor W.H. Stanner, 1979 - 1981
MS 1897/2/48	Correspondence with Myer Foundation re Grants and ATC Balance Sheet and Accounts, July 1981 - June 1983
MS 1897/2/49	1981 Art Exhibition, personal notes from Lloyd Rees, Sir Sidney Nolan and Don Dunstan, May-December 1980
MS 1897/2/50	Sub-Committees: Oral programme, film and publications, October 1981-April 1982
MS 1897/2/51	Aboriginal Treaty Committee draft advertisements, February to October 1980
MS 1897/2/52	Reviews of Stewart Harris' Book "It's Coming Yet", March-July 1980

Box List

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Finding aid updated by Maeve Jack, October 2025.

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