



AIATSIS

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

Manuscript Finding Aid

MS 1867

Aboriginal Treaty Committee (ATC) Papers 1979-1983 and HC Coombs' ATC and Other Papers 1976-1994

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HC Coombs' ATC and Other Papers 1976-1994

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Collection Summary

Creator:	The Aboriginal Treaty Committee and HC Coombs
Title:	Aboriginal Treaty Committee (ATC) Papers 1979-1983 and HC Coombs' ATC and Other Papers 1976-1994
Collection no:	MS 1867
Date range:	1976-1994
Extent:	5.8 linear metres, 34 boxes (32 archival boxes and 2 folio boxes)
Repository:	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

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. This includes:

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, seeing images of deceased persons in photographs, film and books or hearing them in recordings etc. may cause sadness or distress; and in some cases offend strongly held cultural beliefs.

Access to the Collection

Access conditions for this collection

Open access - reading. Open copying and quotation. Not for Inter-library Loan.

Access and use conditions - further information

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](#) if they have been digitised. AIATSIS Manuscripts are not available for Inter-library loan, however they may be available via document supply, subject to access conditions.

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Preferred citation

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

For example:

Meeting minutes and agenda, Apr 1979-May 1981, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, MS 1867, Series 1, Item 1

Collection Overview

Scope and contents note

The bulk of the collection is material arising from operation of the ATC which ran from 1979-1983 under the chairmanship of Dr HC Coombs. Also included is material on Dr Coombs and other former ATC members efforts to advance a Treaty, and in support of Aboriginal rights, after the ATC ended.

The papers have been arranged in four series: Administrative Papers of the Aboriginal Treaty Committee, 1979-1983; Correspondence; Resource Material and Fundraising; and HC Coombs' ATC and Other Papers 1976-1994.

The first series includes meeting minutes and agendas, financial statements and accounting information and banking records.

Series two covers correspondence on office operations, publications, land rights legal papers, conferences, exchanges with governmental and non-governmental bodies, and between the ATC and its support groups.

Series three consists of papers on ATC publications and resource materials, conference papers and information on fund raising activities and donors.

Series four contains further ATC correspondence, administrative papers and some meeting records, resource and fund-raising material, as well as material on Dr Coombs and other former ATC members work on a Treaty and other Aboriginal rights issues after the Committee ended. The ATC was Canberra-based but campaigned nationally for a Treaty and on land rights and related issues, including through its extensive network of support groups.

Provenance

Dr Coombs deposited the initial collection of ATC papers in December 1983, following the Committee's termination (MS 1867). A second collection of ATC and other papers (initially processed as MS 3783) was deposited around 1994, most likely also by Dr Coombs although a separate deposit form has not been located. A note from the AIATSIS Library indicated that MS 3783 should be incorporated into MS1867.

Material separated from the collection

No material has been separated from this collection.

Related material

See also Dr HC Coombs' papers relating to the establishment of the ATC, MS 1897.

For a complete list of ATC material held by the Library, and for other related material consult [Mura®](#), the AIATSIS catalogue.

For access to Audio / Visual material please go to the 'Contact us' page on the AIATSIS website at aiatsis.gov.au or phone (02) 6246 1111

Important: Before clicking on the links to the catalogue entries please read our sensitivity message found on the 'Search the Collection' page on the AIATSIS website at aiatsis.gov.au

Administrative / Biographical 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 Aborigines 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

The collection was rehoused in 2020 and the material previously processed as MS 3783 was incorporated into MS 1867. The Finding Aid was updated in May 2021. Series 1-3 comprise the original MS 1867 material and retain the item numbering from that collection. While now part of MS 1867, the former MS 3783 material is preserved as a separate Series (Series 4 HC Coombs' ATC and Other Papers).

Series Description

Series 1 Administrative papers of the ATC 1979-1983

This series includes meeting minutes and agendas, financial statements and accounting information and banking records.

Items

1. Meeting minutes and agenda, Apr 1979-May 1981
2. Meeting minutes and agenda, Jun 1981-Jun 1982
3. Meeting minutes and agenda, Jul 1982-Aug 1983
4. Correspondence with Commonwealth Trading Bank and Price Waterhouse
5. Financial statements and Auditor's report, 1982-1983
6. Finance sub-committee minutes
7. Press statements and advertisements
8. Accounts, 1979-1980
9. Accounts, 1979-1980
10. Accounts, Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, 1981
11. Accounts, May, Jun 1981
12. Accounts, Jul, Aug, Sept 1981
13. Accounts, Oct, Nov, Dec 1981
14. Accounts, Jan, Feb, Mar 1982
15. Accounts, Apr, May 1982
16. Accounts, Jun-Nov 1982
17. Accounts, Jun-Nov 1982
18. Accounts, Jun-Nov 1982
19. Accounts, Jan-Nov 1983

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- 20. Accounts, Jan-Nov 1983
- 21. Accounts 1980-1984
 - 21(a)-21(b) Business entry sheets (oversize Item 21(b) held in Box 3)
 - 21(c) Bank statements, May 1979-Feb 1984
 - 21(d) Accounts general journal
 - 21(e) Correspondence record
 - 21(f) Office banking record, 1979-1980
 - 21(g) Payments journal, Jul 1980-Apr 1981
 - 21(h) Office daybook, 1984
 - 21(i) Office banking record, 1982-1983
 - 21(j) Bank receipts, 1980-1983
 - 21(k) Banking ledger, 1979-1980
 - 21(l) Bank books, cheque book stubs, receipt books, bank deposit slips(held in Box 4)

Series 2 Correspondence

The second series includes correspondence on office operations, publications, land rights legal papers, conferences, exchanges with governmental and non-governmental bodies, and between the ATC and its network of support groups.

Items

- 22. Office Operations - Childers Street office
- 23. Office Operations - Lease of office and equipment
- 24. Office Operations - Legal correspondence for Committee
- 25. Office Operations - Department of Taxation
- 26. Office Operations - Department of Taxation
- 27. Office Operations - Lectures and interviews by ATC Members
- 28. Office Operations - Correspondence/Committee members
- 29. Office Operations - Correspondence about a Treaty
- 30. Office Operations - Requests for material from non-sponsors
- 31. Office Operations - Support for Treaty - non-sponsors
- 32. Aboriginal Treaty News - General correspondence
- 33. Aboriginal Treaty News - General correspondence
- 34. Aboriginal Treaty News – Subscriptions
- 35. Aboriginal Treaty News – Subscriptions
- 36. Aboriginal Treaty News – Advertising

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37. Commonwealth Games
38. Community Groups - Business community
39. Community Groups - Religious community
40. Community Groups - Aboriginal organisation - NAIHO, FAIRO, Blackbooks, legal services, Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, resource centres
41. General groups - Citizens for Democracy and others
42. Conservation Groups - National Conservation Strategy
43. Conservation Groups - Human Rights Commission
44. Conservation Groups - Environment centres
45. Educational Institutions - Student Organisations
46. Educational Institutions - Student Organisations
47. Educational Institutions - Aboriginal Law Research Unit, University of NSW
48. Educational Institutions - Universities and CAEs
49. Educational Institutions - Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies
50. Educational Institutions – Schools
51. Media - General file
52. Phillip Adams
53. Advertising in journals
54. Advertising in newspapers
55. Advertising sources
56. Publications subscriptions
57. Overseas Organisations
58. United Nations Association of Australia. Correspondence about UN Media Peace Prize and copy of award
59. Committee Against Racial Exploitation (CARE)
60. Unions
61. Aboriginal Land Councils
62. 1983 Federal Election Campaign. Fund-raising for Aboriginal candidates
63. Government, State and Commonwealth - Correspondence with Senate Standing Committee on Constitutional and Legal Affairs
64. Government, State and Commonwealth - Letter to political parties canvassing attitudes to negotiating a treaty

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65. Government, State and Commonwealth - Correspondence with politicians
66. Government, State and Commonwealth - Correspondence with political parties on general attitudes to Aboriginal issues
67. Government, State and Commonwealth - Australian Democrats, correspondence and policy
68. Government, State and Commonwealth - ALP policy and comments
69. Government, State and Commonwealth - Government lists
70. Government, State and Commonwealth - State Parliament correspondence
71. Government, State and Commonwealth - Minister for Aboriginal Affairs
72. Government, State and Commonwealth - Prime Minister (1983)
73. Government, State and Commonwealth - Shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs
74. Government, State and Commonwealth - Office for Community Relations
75. Aboriginal Groups - Draft letter to groups and individuals on recording their views, sample questions
76. Aboriginal Groups - General correspondence
77. Aboriginal Groups - Land Rights, 1979-1980
78. Department of Aboriginal Affairs
79. National Aboriginal Conference
80. Land rights legal papers - General papers and correspondence with legal services and representatives
81. Land rights legal papers - General papers and correspondence with legal services and representatives
82. Land rights legal papers – Noonkanbah
83. Land rights legal papers - Queensland land rights legislation including 'Deeds of Grant in Trust'
84. Conferences - 'Implications of an Aboriginal Treaty', Anthropological Society of WA, Apr, 1981. 'Aboriginal Treaty or Makaratta', ANU, Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies, May, 1981. 'Human rights for Aboriginal people in the 1980's', University of NSW, Faculty of Law, Nov, 1981
85. Conferences - 'Aborigines and International Law', ANU, Nov, 1983

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86. Conferences - 'Fourth Russell Tribunal on the Rights of Indians', Rotterdam, November 1980
87. Aboriginal Treaty Committee Support Groups - Canberra Support Group
88. Aboriginal Treaty Committee Support Groups - Interest expressed in support group movement in individual states
89. Aboriginal Treaty Committee Support Groups - Interest expressed in support group movement in individual states
90. Aboriginal Treaty Committee Support Groups - ANU Aboriginal Support Group
91. Aboriginal Treaty Committee Support Groups - Interest expressed in support group movement in individual states
92. Aboriginal Treaty Committee Support Groups - NSW Lismore (Ms Belcher)
93. Aboriginal Treaty Committee Support Groups - NSW Paddington (Ms J. Byrnes)
94. Aboriginal Treaty Committee Support Groups - NSW Mona Vale (Mrs P. Beasley)
95. Aboriginal Treaty Committee Support Groups - NSW Gordon (Mrs B Fulton)
96. Aboriginal Treaty Committee Support Groups - NSW Turrumurra (Dr R. Langley)
97. Aboriginal Treaty Committee Support Groups - Qld Brisbane
98. Aboriginal Treaty Committee Support Groups - Qld Bundaberg
99. Aboriginal Treaty Committee Support Groups - Qld Rockhampton
100. Aboriginal Treaty Committee Support Groups - Interest expressed in support group movement in individual states
101. Aboriginal Treaty Committee Support Groups - Qld Townsville (Noel Loos)
102. Aboriginal Treaty Committee Support Groups - Qld Boonah-Kalbah
103. Aboriginal Treaty Committee Support Groups - Qld Gold Coast 1980-1983 (Sylvia Monk)
104. Aboriginal Treaty Committee Support Groups - Qld Gold Coast 1980-1983 (Sylvia Monk)
105. Aboriginal Treaty Committee Support Groups - Qld Gold Coast 1980-1983 (Sylvia Monk)

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106. Aboriginal Treaty Committee Support Groups - Interest expressed in support group movement in individual states
107. Aboriginal Treaty Committee Support Groups - NT Alice Springs
108. Aboriginal Treaty Committee Support Groups - SA Adelaide
109. Aboriginal Treaty Committee Support Groups - Interest expressed in support group movement in individual states
110. Aboriginal Treaty Committee Support Groups - Tas Ferntree (Tom Errey)
111. Aboriginal Treaty Committee Support Groups - Interest expressed in support group movement in individual states
112. Aboriginal Treaty Committee Support Groups - Vic Melbourne
113. Aboriginal Treaty Committee Support Groups - Vic Geelong
114. Aboriginal Treaty Committee Support Groups - Vic Melbourne State College
115. Aboriginal Treaty Committee Support Groups - Interest expressed in support group movement in individual states
116. Aboriginal Treaty Committee Support Groups - WA Mt Lawley
117. Aboriginal Treaty Committee Support Groups – England
118. Aboriginal Treaty Committee Support Groups - West Germany.

Series 3 Resource material and fund raising

Includes ATC publications and resource materials, conference papers and material on fund raising activities and donors.

Items

119. Fund-raising projects - Book club
120. Fund-raising projects - Book club
121. Fund-raising projects - Book club
122. Fund-raising projects - Judith Wright-McKinney's correspondence about ATC book
123. Fund-raising projects - Film lists
124. Fund-raising projects - Film Festival

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125. Fund-raising projects - Manuscript collection, correspondence with authors, National Library, catalogue
126. Fund-raising projects - Manuscript collection, correspondence with authors, National Library, catalogue
127. Fund-raising projects - Manuscript collection, correspondence with authors, National Library, catalogue
128. Fund-raising projects - Manuscript collection, correspondence with authors, National Library, catalogue
129. Fund-raising projects - Manuscript collection, correspondence with authors, National Library, catalogue
130. Fund-raising projects - Myer Foundation
131. Fund-raising projects - Oral program
132. Fund-raising projects – Publications
133. Fund-raising projects – Embroidery
134. Publications by Aboriginal Treaty Committee - 'It's coming yet'
135. Publications by Aboriginal Treaty Committee - 'It's coming yet'
136. Publications by Aboriginal Treaty Committee - 'It's coming yet'
137. Publications by Aboriginal Treaty Committee - 'It's coming yet'
138. Publications by Aboriginal Treaty Committee - 'It's coming yet'
139. Publications by Aboriginal Treaty Committee - 'Making a Treaty: the North American experience', D Barwick
140. Publications by Aboriginal Treaty Committee - Possible publications
141. Publications by Aboriginal Treaty Committee - Pamphlets, poster
142. Publications by Aboriginal Treaty Committee - Land rights publications
143. Publications by Aboriginal Treaty Committee - Other publications including cards
144. Publications by Aboriginal Treaty Committee - Other publications including cards

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145. Aborigine Art Exhibition, Sydney, 9 Jan-1 Feb 1981
146. Speakers; volunteers prepared to speak on Treaty concept and other issues
147. Letters to and responses from supporters during fund drives
148. Letters to sponsors and list of donors
149. Sponsors addresses
 - 149(a) Envelope address files containing original letter of support
150. Resource material - Land rights kit prepared for Commonwealth Games, 1982
151. Resource material - 'Aboriginal rights in international law', Gordon Bennett, 1980
152. Resource material - Human rights Bill, 1973
153. Resource material - Aboriginal Land Rights Commission, second report, Apr 1974 (Woodward report)
154. Resource material - Papers on Makarrata
155. Resource material - Kombi land claim
156. Resource material - NT Land Rights Bill, 1976, 1979
157. Resource material - NT land claims negotiation, 1981
158. Resource material - Miscellaneous papers on Aboriginal land rights, law and treaty
159. Resource material - Transcript of cable to K Colbung from Indian Association of Alberta, Canada
160. Resource material - Aboriginal comments on Makarrata
161. Resource material - Murray Island land claim and correspondence
162. Resource material - AMAX material
163. Resource material - HC Coombs papers and tape transcripts concerning Treaty and land rights

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164. Resource material - Senate Standing Committee on Constitutional and Legal Affairs, papers and report
165. Resource material - World Council for Indigenous Peoples Conference, 1981, correspondence and papers
166. Resource material - World Council for Indigenous Peoples Conference, 1981, correspondence and papers
167. Resource material - World Council for Indigenous Peoples Conference, 1981, correspondence and papers
168. Resource material - Sociological studies
169. Resource material - Sociological studies
170. Conference papers presented by ATC - Australasian Political Studies Association Conference, Aug, 1981
171. Conference papers presented by ATC - 'Aborigines and international law', ANU, 1983
172. Conference papers presented by ATC - 'Race relations', seminar, James Cook University, Townsville, 1981
173. Conference papers presented by ATC - 'Race relations', seminar, James Cook University, Townsville, 1981
174. Conference papers presented by ATC - 'Race relations', seminar, James Cook University, Townsville, 1981
- 174(a) North American Indians
175. Publications - Aboriginal Treaty Committee, Newsletter. 20 May 1980
176. Publications - Aboriginal Treaty Committee, Newsletter. 1 October 1980
177. Publications - Aboriginal Treaty News, No. 1
178. Publications - Aboriginal Treaty News, No. 2, Aug, 1981
179. Publications - Aboriginal Treaty News, No. 3, Nov, 1981
180. Publications - Aboriginal Treaty News, No. 4, Feb, 1982
181. Publications - Aboriginal Treaty News, No. 5, Aug, 1982

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182. Publications - Aboriginal Treaty News, No. 6, Sept-Oct, 1982
183. Publications - Aboriginal Treaty News, No. 7, Nov 1982-Feb, 1983
184. Publications - Aboriginal Treaty News, No. 8, May-Jun, 1983
185. Publications - Aboriginal Treaty News, No. 9, Oct, 1983
186. Publications - Information brief for 'It's coming yet'
187. Publications - 'A Makaratta - the legal options'
188. Publications - 'The importance of Noonkanbah'
189. Publications - 'We call for a treaty', pamphlet
190. Publications - 'It's coming yet', Stewart Harris – Summary
191. Publications - 'It's coming yet', Stewart Harris
192. Publications - 'Four stories', Hugh Lunn
193. Publications - Land rights pamphlets for all Australian states
194. Publications - Land rights pamphlets for all Australian states
195. Publications - Land rights pamphlets for all Australian states
196. Publications - Land rights pamphlets for all Australian states
197. Publications - Land rights pamphlets for all Australian states
198. Publications - Land rights pamphlets for all Australian states
199. Publications - Land rights pamphlets for all Australian states
200. Publications - 'Support a Treaty'
201. Publications - 'The Makaratta - some ways forward'
- 201 (a) Publications - Coombs, HC, 'Signing an Australian Peace Treaty'
Social Alternatives, Vol 1, nos. 6/7, 1980
- 202-212. Background material used in *Aboriginal Treaty News*

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- 213-243. 'We call for a Treaty', Judith Wright-McKinney, manuscript and source material

Includes press clippings, working correspondence, ATC meeting records and reports, articles and talks, tape transcripts

244. Sponsorship

245. Items added by Judith Wright, Aug 1988

(Nothing was found under this item when the collection was re-housed in Feb 2020)

246. Senate. Standing Committee on Constitutional and Legal Affairs, (Reference: Legal Feasibility of Makarrata), 1982 [Transcript of Proceedings]

Also includes material on land rights, Aboriginal health and access to legal aid, conference papers and parliamentary reports

247. Scrap book of press clippings (held in box 31)

Series 4 HC Coombs' ATC and other papers 1976-1994

This series includes further ATC correspondence, administrative papers including meeting records, and resource and fund raising material, as well as documents on ATC follow-up and Aboriginal rights issues after the ATC was terminated.

Series 4 was initially processed as MS 3783 before being incorporated into MS1867.

Subseries 1 Administrative papers

Items

MS1867/4/1 Public Appeal, Accounts 1982-1985. Treaty 88

MS1867/4/2 Meetings, Dec 1981-Aug 1983, Pt 1, Pt 2

Subseries 2 Correspondence

Items

MS1867/4/2/1 General: 1980-1984 Correspondence List. Letter on Public Lending Rights for 'We Call for a Treaty', 1988

MS1867/4/2/2 General: 1982-1990, Pt 1, Pt 2

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MS1867/4/2/3	Stewart Harris, 1976-1994
MS1867/4/2/4	Garth Nettheim, 1980-1989
MS1867/4/2/5	Charles Rowley, 1976-1986
MS1867/4/2/6	Draft Vic. land rights bill, 1983
MS1867/4/2/7	Ian Wilson, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, 1982
MS1867/4/2/8	Myer Foundation, 1979-1981
MS1867/4/2/9	Sen. Susan Ryan, 1982
MS1867/4/2/10	Judith Wright McKinney, 1987-1992
MS1867/4/2/11	Advertisement, 1984

Subseries 3 Resource material and fund raising

Items

MS1867/4/3/1	Press clippings and related material, 1981-1992
MS1867/4/3/2	Makarrata Papers, 1979-1982
MS1867/4/3/3	ATC Newsletter and Aboriginal Treaty News, Green Alliance publications, and other papers, 1980-1988
MS1867/4/3/4	Treaty of Waitangi, 1985-1990
MS1867/4/3/5	Barunga Statement, 1988
MS1867/4/3/6	Treaty and Aboriginal rights materials, 1979-1991

Box List

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3	149 (a) cont.	17
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3	171-174 (a)	22
3	174 (a) cont.	23
3	174 (a) cont.- 183	24
3	184-208	25
3	209-214	26
3	215-228	27
3	229-240	28
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3	246 cont.	30
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Finding aid updated by John Page May 2021.

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