



**Australian Institute of Aboriginal
and Torres Strait Islander Studies**

Executive
Ph: 02 6246 1118
Fax: 02 6261 4286
Email: exec@aiatsis.gov.au

Promoting knowledge and understanding of Australian Indigenous cultures, past and present

The Committee Secretary
House of Representative Standing
Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

CAPACITY BUILDING
INQUIRY
Submission No. 10

28 August 2002

Dear Mr Wakelin MP,

Submission to Parliamentary Inquiry - Capacity Building in Indigenous Communities

I refer to your letter inviting the Institute to submit to the Parliamentary Inquiry on Capacity Building in Indigenous Communities. The Chairman of AIATSIS, Dr Dodson, has asked me to respond on his behalf.

Our submission, together with a summary of the main issues is attached. Please contact me on 6246 1118 if you require any further information from us about this submission.

Yours sincerely

Russell Taylor

Principal

Submission

to the

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

by the

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

on

Capacity Building in Indigenous Communities



AIATSIS

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Submission
by the
Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
to the
Parliamentary Inquiry

Capacity Building in Indigenous Communities

Summary

1. The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (The Institute) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this Parliamentary Inquiry into capacity building in Indigenous communities.

2. This submission raises concerns over the widespread and uninformed use of the term ‘community capacity building’ in relation to Indigenous Australia.

3. The Institute considers that capacity building in the Australian Indigenous context is essentially a political process. This process must be informed by the past, promote healing and draw on the strengths of present generations of Indigenous people, so that they can look forward to self-determining futures.

4. The Institute urges the Indigenous community, the research community, and the policy community to come together to promote ethical, considered and coordinated approaches to community capacity building.

5. The Institute is well positioned to provide research direction and coordination on matters related to community capacity building, self-governance and sovereignty.
6. The Institute supports Indigenous peoples in their pursuit of sovereignty and self-determination through a multiplicity of research programs and services that nurture, investigate and inform change.
7. The Institute also promotes research to assist governments to realise their commitments to changing their relationships with Indigenous peoples, and to produce more equitable relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous governing structures. Such structures will allow Indigenous governing processes to be more directly accountable to their constituents and funding departments.
8. Ultimately, the process of capacity building must be a political one, aimed at supporting individuals and families, and one that recognises that Indigenous peoples' greatest resource is their children. It must acknowledge that the future depends on the strengths and capacities of families and communities to nurture their children so that they grow to be confident, self-determining participants in Australian society.

Capacity Building in Indigenous Communities

1. Introduction

The Institute welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this Parliamentary Inquiry into community capacity building in Indigenous communities. The community capacity jargon has permeated all levels of public policy and research in recent times, and scholarly investigation into its meaning and application in the Indigenous Australian context is due.

This submission aims to promote the Institute as the peak national research institution on Indigenous issues which focuses on supporting Indigenous communities in their quest for sovereignty and self-governance and to assist Indigenous peoples to make informed decisions about issues affecting their lives. It achieves this by promoting ethical, scholarly research in partnership with communities and other research institutions and by responding to the research needs of communities. It also disseminates information in accessible form to Indigenous people and their organisations, to researchers and government. It promotes discussion and debate at local, community and national levels, through seminars, publications, workshops and conferences.

The Institute perceives capacity building as inextricably linked to issues of self-governance. The Institute responds to community needs through a multiplicity of programs and services, which are ultimately aimed to assist Indigenous people make informed decisions about issues of importance to them.

In particular, recent initiatives to promote research into governance via the establishment of an Indigenous Capacity-Building Research Program, proposes long term, community based, collaborative research, to inform the development of community based institutions and support and strengthen Indigenous self-governance initiatives. This program aims to work with Indigenous groups to influence public policy in Indigenous affairs through the support and development of effective models of self-governance.

2. Method

The Institute responds to the Parliamentary Inquiry into community capacity building in Indigenous communities, firstly by contextualising the term ‘community capacity building’ in Indigenous studies and secondly by presenting the Institutes responses to promoting capacity building, sovereignty and self-governance issues through its programs and services to the Indigenous community. The submission will conclude with a summary of the Institute’s current activities as well as future proposals and research directions in relation to community capacity building in Indigenous communities.

3. Contextualising Community Capacity Building

This section aims to define and contextualise ‘community capacity building’ in the Indigenous Australian context. It establishes the contested nature of ‘capacity building’ and calls for scholarly and cautious application in Indigenous community contexts. Ultimately, it proposes that community capacity building at any level in the Indigenous domain is a political process. It is bound by collective and individual experiences of colonisation, exclusion and misguided public policies, and progressed through individual, family and community assertions for self-determination and greater control over issues that impact on their lives.

As the national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak research organisation, the Institute expresses its concern with the rapid, widespread and unformed use of the term ‘community capacity building’ in relation to Indigenous Australia. Indeed Hawe (2002) has suggested that “the words ‘capacity building’ have spread rapidly throughout the health system, almost like a virus.”¹ It has the potential to wreak havoc in Indigenous communities as with previous development policy trends. It also has the potential to encourage strong, sustainable community development.

3.1 A definition

There are many views about what capacity building is and how it should be implemented. We favour the definition of capacity building used by Eade and Williams: “Strengthening people’s capacity to determine their own values and priorities, and to organise themselves to act on these, is the basis of development”². This definition, as pointed out by O’Shaughnessy and colleagues, “..at least in principle, puts the intended beneficiaries in the driver’s seat”³.

¹ Hawe, P. 2002 Capacity Building: For What? *Healthlink* p1

² Eade, D. and Williams, S. 1995, *The Oxfam handbook of development and relief*, vol. 1, p.9. Oxfam, Oxford.

³ O’Shaughnessy, T., Black, L. and Carter, H. 1999, *Capacity Building; A new approach? Principles and practice*, World Vision, Mel.

3.2 Research trends

Australian and overseas research in Indigenous studies indicates that the key to successful community capacity building will entail ethical, scholarly and accessible research at the community level, extensive support and training of emergent self-governing institutions, their staff and constituents, and importantly, commitment by all levels of government to be open to changing existing relationships with Indigenous communities, particularly in relation to power, accountability and funding arrangements. Fundamental to community capacity building is the recognition of assertions for self-governance. Programs with greater accountability at the community level where program outcomes have the most impact, have consistently shown to be the most successful.⁴

Despite extensive national and international interest in community capacity building in Indigenous Australia, there is no formal coordinated systematic process by which to monitor research programs or to coordinate and direct research opportunities. There is no comprehensive analysis and assessment of projects, and most strikingly nothing in accessible format that could be used as a resource for Indigenous organisations and peoples in their pursuit of sovereignty and self-governance. The Institute sees its strength as being well positioned to respond in these areas to the research needs of Indigenous Australians in community capacity building and governance, and has been exploring further funding options and partnerships to this end.

3.3 Public policy developments

Capacity building is an important issue in Indigenous affairs. It has been influenced by past events as well as by existing public policy in Indigenous affairs. There have been a number of significant developments that lay the foundations for new relationships to emerge between governments and Indigenous peoples in Australia.

The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody spoke of the role of the broader society in providing assistance to empower Indigenous society, and that such a relationship must be based on the principles of self-determination. The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation proposed a process of negotiated agreements between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and government by way of a legislated framework to resolve outstanding issues of reconciliation such as self-determination and self-government. The High Court's Mabo decision has significantly influenced the reconciliation process, having changed the basis of the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

⁴ Cornell, S. and Kalt J.P. 2001 *Sovereignty and Nation-Building: The Development Challenge in Indian Country Today*, Harvard Project Web Site.

Capacity-building is an increasingly important focus of Commonwealth Government policy and programs in the area of Indigenous affairs, as shown in the recent statement by the then Minister for Reconciliation and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs⁵ ‘Our Path Together’. Recent major reports support this focus, and stress the importance of capacity building in overcoming Indigenous disadvantage.

Significant Commonwealth Government Indigenous capacity-building initiatives outlined in the ‘Our Path Together’ statement include the ‘ATSIC army community assistance program’ (AACAP), the ‘Primary health care access program’ (PHCAP), the ‘Coordinated care’ approach to health service delivery, the ‘Community participation agreements’ program within the *Australians working together: Helping people to move forward* initiative and the ‘Capacity-building projects’ within the *Stronger families and communities strategy* based on principles established by the ‘Indigenous community capacity-building roundtable’.

3.4 Prerequisites for community capacity building

Before capacity building processes can take hold in the Indigenous community context there must be an acknowledgment that the current state of Indigenous health and participation in the wider society is unacceptable, and that this situation must change.

3.5 Individuals and families

Fundamental to discussions of community capacity building is a focus on individual and family strengths. In particular there must be a focus on family capacity to nurture and support their children so that they develop the confidence and skills to participate in society as they choose. Capacity building must aim to improve the quality of life for Indigenous Australians increase their life chances and opportunities. Effective governing institutions and processes are dependent on the capacities of the human resources from which they draw. Capacity building at the individual and family level aims ultimately to ensure that people have the capacity i.e. the health, well-being and the confidence, as well as access to decision making processes, to make informed decisions about issues which affect them.

Individual capacity building must ensure that individuals and their families have the means and confidence in themselves to participate fully in their local community and the wider society as they wish. Extensive research in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders studies indicates that significant numbers of Indigenous people are suffering the debilitating effects of colonisation and past government policies to the extent that their capacity to participate in social and political life cannot be realised without significant support.

⁵ Now the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs.

At the same time, Indigenous people remain marginalised from basic services enjoyed by non-Indigenous people and the response from requests for more holistic community-based services with appropriate programs has been grossly inadequate.

In particular, the “Bringing them home” report identified that many Indigenous people and their families have been severely effected by the ‘gross violations of human rights’ and these effects continue today and impact on younger generations⁶. The Inquiry found that many Indigenous people require access to appropriate counselling services and mental health services to help deal with grief, loss and trauma that they, and their families have experienced.

Not only do individuals require the capacity and confidence in themselves to participate in decision making process, they need to have confidence in their local social and political structures and governing institutions and processes.

Many people are currently not in this position and are incapacitated by grief, drug and alcohol problems, violence, and family breakdown. Confidence in their local political structures and processes may be reduced by repeated allegations of mismanagement, embezzlement and intimidation. Increasing allegations of violence and sexual abuse in Indigenous communities, combined with self destructive tendencies among youth populations, leave many communities in despair. These are not fertile grounds for the active pursuit of self-governance. Effective Indigenous governance is unobtainable without well-resourced support services at the local level, targeting individuals and families.

3.6 Better relationships with government

Overseas research, particularly available through the Harvard Project indicate that community capacity building in Indigenous communities must be preceded by fundamental changes in the relationship between federal governments and Indigenous people⁷.

In Australia recent government initiatives reflect the need to re-consider relationships between governments and Indigenous Australians, and allow for the development of new relationships between Indigenous Australians and the State. There has been a reluctance by governments to devolve power and resources to Indigenous governing institutions and over-accountability requirements to funding bodies have tied up already stretched community resources.

⁶ HREOC 1997 *Bringing Them Home A guide to the findings and recommendations of the National Inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families*, p. 34.

⁷ Kalt, J.P. 2001 *Policy Foundations for the Future of Nation Building in Indian Country*, Harvard Project Web Site

The November 2000 Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meeting noted that “Drawing on the lessons of the mixed success of substantial past efforts to address Indigenous disadvantage, the Council committed itself to an approach based on partnerships and shared responsibilities with Indigenous communities, program flexibility and coordination between government agencies, with a focus on local communities and outcomes”.⁸

The June 2001 COAG meeting “confirmed its continuing commitment to addressing the social and economic disadvantages experienced by many Indigenous Australians”, and reiterated its previously agreed priority areas for action under the reconciliation framework of “community leadership, reviewing and re-engineering programs and services to achieve better outcomes for Indigenous peoples, and building links between the business sector and Indigenous communities to advance economic independence”⁹.

The outcomes-based funding approach to Indigenous disadvantage, strongly supported by the Commonwealth Grants Commission, continued in the 2001-2002 Commonwealth Government budget¹⁰. Policy and programs involving Indigenous capacity building are widely considered an important part of this approach to overcoming Indigenous disadvantage. The “Indigenous community capacity-building roundtable”, convened by the Commonwealth Government, is contributing towards this approach to overcoming Indigenous disadvantage¹¹.

3.7 Effective Indigenous governance

Australian research, particularly from the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research on effective Indigenous governance models, show that Indigenous organisations that have developed effective accountability processes and structures ensuring representation of their constituents are also those organisations that have been accountable to governments and funding bodies¹².

Overseas research, particularly coming out of the well resourced Harvard Project has found that effective governing institutions in Indian Country must have; stable institutions and policies; fair

⁸ *Communique, Aboriginal reconciliation, COAG ninth meeting in Canberra, 3 November 2000.*

⁹ *Communique, Reconciliation framework, COAG tenth meeting in Canberra, 8 June 2001.*

¹⁰ *Our path together, statement by the honourable Philip Ruddock MP, Minister for Reconciliation and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, 22 May 2001.*

¹¹ *Communique: Indigenous community capacity-building roundtable 24 October 2000, Minister for Family and Community Services.*

Joint media release 16 January 2001: Strategy creating opportunities for Indigenous Australians, Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs.

¹² See Martin, D.F. and Finlayson, J.D. 1996 *Linking accountability and self-determination in Aboriginal organisation*, CAEPR, ANU, Canberra

and effective dispute resolution; separation of politics from business management, a competent bureaucracy and a cultural match¹³.

Other success stories reveal similar principles where community institutions possess a cultural fit, have developed processes where governing bodies and business are separate, and embrace fair and transparent dispute resolutions processes. Many successes have evolved through a process of community based research informing decisions and directions and access to expert services for advice on a range of professional issues such as business strategies, dispute resolution and mediation, to effective administrative processes.

How effective governing institutions in Indigenous Australia develop and sustain themselves across space and time are critical factors facing Indigenous communities today. In the same way that individuals need access to support and services to develop their own capacities to participate in the social and political community, so too, do existing and emerging Indigenous governing organisations.

The Institute is positioned to support Indigenous community governing structures by promoting ethical, scholarly and relevant research, disseminating accessible information for communities to assist Indigenous people make decisions about their future, as well as by targeting programs to nurture emerging leaders, to develop models of effective governance, and to inform governments on important public policy directions.

4. The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS)

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies is an independent Commonwealth government statutory authority. It is Australia's premiere research organisation focusing on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It promotes scholarly, ethical community based research. It aims to promote knowledge and understanding of Australian Indigenous cultures, past and present. It houses a world class collection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resource materials including the world's premiere collections of printed resource materials for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and holds a priceless collection sound recordings, pictures, films and videos and including Institute's publishing unit, Aboriginal Studies Press.

4.1 The Research Program

¹³ Cornell, S. and Kalt, J.P. 2001 *Sovereignty and Nation-Building; The Development Challenge in Indian Country Today*, Harvard Project Web Site.

The AIATSIS Research Program currently has nine research fellows on staff focussing on aspects of social organisation and expressive culture, education and contemporary issues, tradition and transformation, language and society, human relationships with landscapes through time, health, native title, and regional organisation and governance. There are strong and developing collaborative linkages between the AIATSIS research program and other academic agencies such as the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) and the Centre for Cross Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the Australian National University, and the Indigenous Studies Centres located at various universities around Australia.

AIATSIS has a Research Advisory Committee (selected from the AIATSIS membership) and a Research Ethics Committee (selected according to the NHMRC guidelines for Human Research Ethics Committees). AIATSIS has a long history and culture of collaborative and supportive research relationships with Indigenous communities throughout Australia, and has a strong focus on community-based research.

AIATSIS has an extensive 40 year history as the national research authority in Indigenous studies. This tradition continues through the diversity and experiences of researchers based in the Research Section, through its considerable research partnerships with other research institutions as well as through its extensive externally funded programs.

AIATSIS also manages a number of externally funded programs including the Native Title Research Unit, funded by ATSIC, the Family History Unit jointly funded by AIATSIS and ATSIC, the Preserving Endangered Language Heritage project, funded by through the ATSIC Language Access Initiatives program, The Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre, the Australian Indigenous Cultural Network and the Treaty Research Project.

The NTRU

The Native Title Research Unit conducts and facilitates research, organises workshops and seminars, and collects and publishes research in Native Title. The NTRU provides essential research and strategic support to Native Title Representative Bodies and Native Title Claimants.

The NTRU has also pursued funds to progress a mediation project which aims to research the Indigenous issues in relation to the mediation of disputes and the development of dispute resolution mechanisms to provide support to individual, family and community level who are experiencing conflict. Research from the Harvard project indicates that fair and accountable dispute resolution processes lead to more effecting governing institutions and enhances the

confidence of constituents and external agencies alike. This project also aims to explore appropriate mediation models for intra and inter organisational dispute, and resolve disputes between the community sector and others.

The ultimate objective of this program is to facilitate the development of dispute resolution mechanisms within community governance structures as well as enabling access to dispute resolution skills development and independent mediation services by Indigenous people for Indigenous people in their domestic and professional capacities.

The Treaty Research Project

Following the success of a funding submission to ATSIC, the Institute developed a joint research project to investigate the implementation of a treaty between the Australian Government and Indigenous people. The intention was to investigate the full range of agreement making and to facilitate broad based debate and awareness raising around the issues and to consider options rather than promulgate a particular model.

The Treaty research project was supported by a steering committee comprising members of the Institute, Jumbunna (University of Sydney), the Koorie Centre (University of Melbourne), and ATSIC

The Preserving Endangered Language Heritage project

The Institute is being funded for three years through the ATSIC Language Access Initiatives Program, to undertake much needed work on language material in its Recorded Sound Archive. This material has been collected over forty years and represents the most extensive Indigenous recorded sound archive in world.

The Institute is currently focusing on primarily on languages undergoing revival. The production of compilation tapes of specific languages will be a significant outcome and Indigenous people and organisations will be able to access these, to promote learning of their languages.

The Family History Unit

The Institute and ATSIC jointly fund the Family History Unit. Funds come from the Bringing Them Home Taskforce, as part of the recommendations from the Bringing Them Home Report. This unit actively assists Indigenous people find information about their family members and their heritage.

The Australian Indigenous Cultural Network

The Australian Indigenous Cultural Network is an independent initiative driving a national non-government Indigenous cultural policy framework which aims to streamline the process for Indigenous Australians to access cultural materials in collecting Institutions in Australia. It is particularly focusing on making cultural collections identifiable and accessible to Indigenous people. It is fostering the development of a network of Indigenous cultural collections, utilising information technology to record and archive information. It aims at developing its information technology resources to assist communities in the management of their own cultural heritage materials and to access their cultural materials housed in collecting institutions.

The Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre

The Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre operates as an executive training facility aimed at developing the leadership skills and capacities of Indigenous Australians. It aims to foster the development of leadership ability and skills of Indigenous peoples, conduct educational and experimental courses and seminars in leadership and professional development, develop materials for education and training in leadership, promote Indigenous leadership skills and ability and create forums for Indigenous people to share ideas, experience and skills.

The AILC is separate from but supported by the AIATSIS and we refer you to their separate submission to this Inquiry.

Digitisation

The Institute is addressing an ever-increasing community need to gain access to archive and library materials. In recognition that such access may be facilitated through the provision of digital materials, ATSIIC has provided a grant to AIATSIS for a period of three years to assist in the digitisation of collections. The development of the digitisation proposal incorporates efforts from the Library, Archives and Production, and Research programs. The program requires the identification of resources that are of keen interest among Indigenous communities, identification of intellectual property holders, clearance of materials for electronic publication, and publication of materials in a manner that allows easy finding and navigation by users.

AIATSIS is at the forefront of best practice in this area and readily acknowledges and negotiates through community sensitivities involved in making such materials available to a general public. Given the rapid change in technologies for recording film, video, still photography, and audio materials, digitisation will be a key issue for all archives and libraries into the future. AIATSIS is well placed to provide assistance to others in this complicated technical and legal area.

These developments highlight the opportunity for research directed into the development of digital projects that add value to the collections and make archive collections broadly available in a strategic way. For example, in the area of linguistics it is possible to develop tools such as taking dictionaries, databases of language terms that may be useful to health workers, or translations of legal terms for use in legal proceedings. Given the lead role of the organisation, it is appropriate that AIATSIS may fund some of this research by means of a Visiting Fellowship designed to create products that add to AIATSIS' offering of digital materials on the web.

The Institute is committed to developing cooperative and collaborative relationships with other research institutions with a focus on Indigenous Australia. As such, research partnerships have been developed with the Centre for Cross-Cultural Research and Centre for Aboriginal and Economic Policy Research at the Australian National University. The Institute is involved in other cooperative research projects with the University of Technology, Sydney, and the University of Melbourne.

4.2 The Grants Program

The Institute runs a Grants Program that promotes ethical, long-term community based research in Indigenous studies. The AIATSIS Grants Program in particular supports researchers whose research programs are “founded on Indigenous peoples’ inherent right to self-determination, and to control and maintain their culture and heritage”.¹⁴

The Institute recognises that it has a responsibility as a leading institution in Australian Indigenous studies and recognises that its ethical guidelines are therefore intended to be of general application and to reach the broadest community of researchers in Indigenous studies.

Apart from undertaking ethically based research, one of the essential functions of the AIATSIS is to assist in the training of Indigenous peoples as research workers in fields relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. The Grants Program supports research which assists in the training of Indigenous peoples as researchers.

4.3 Governance Research

Our 40 year history of grounded community based research in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies informs our research directions in relation to community capacity building and governance issues. Community organisations and their management come through as an important focus in a number of research areas. The Native Title Unit has considerable expertise in research of processes of agreement making. We have added to this expertise through a focus

on governance research in the grants program and through staff projects. In particular our *Visiting Research Fellow – Regional Organisation and Governance* is investigating new models of regional governance and service delivery that extend beyond the native title regime.

The Institute has been pursuing recent developments in Indigenous community capacity and governance research and has submitted a proposal to the Department of Health and Aged Care, Department of Family and Community Services and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission for the establishment of a National Centre of Excellence in Indigenous Governance and Community Capacity Building.

It is proposed to develop research that draws upon existing expertise but to focus more particularly on policy questions. AIATSIS proposes to work with key government departments to jointly frame the research questions and to design research in a manner that will assist program delivery. It is well known that Indigenous cultural matters impinge on the success of government program delivery. AIATSIS is particularly well placed to investigate such linkages. This Centre will also operate as a National clearing house for research coordination and direction in community capacity building.

A major methodological strength of this research program is the combined (long and established) practical experience and understanding of the core partners in working collaboratively and ethically with government agencies, Indigenous communities and organisations at the grass-roots level throughout Australia.

5. Future directions in Indigenous capacity building in Indigenous communities

The Institute recognises that essential research and support at the community level must inform community capacity building processes. In particular it has focused its current activities to pursue governance and community capacity research in the following ways.

Firstly, the Native Title Research Unit (NTRU) has been established for a number of years and is recognised for its expertise in legal and policy advice in native title issues. Research within the NTRU involves investigation of issues relating to governance particularly in matters concerning native title arrangements between government agencies and representative bodies. The NTRU

¹⁴ AIATSIS 2002 *Guidelines for Ethical Research in Indigenous Studies* p 4

has an established track record in producing publications in this area and has been able to draw additional resources as a consequence of its capacity to provide advice to governments.

Secondly, the Institute has been active in emphasising governance and capacity building activities as priorities in the research program. For example, the Institute Research Grants program has applied a special emphasis criterion over the last two years to promote and encourage governance-related research proposals. Further, the creation of a Visiting Research Fellow in Governance reflects the views of the Institute that governance is a critical research area.

Thirdly, the Institute has entered into a research partnership with the Jumbunna Centre of the University of Technology, Sydney, to create Ngiya – National Institute of Indigenous Law, Policy and Practice in order to encourage research of legal policy issues. The establishment of Ngiya reflects a further commitment to the concepts of Indigenous governance and capacity building given the aims, goals and objectives encapsulated in Ngiya's mission statement and will be an important way of drawing Indigenous researchers, and more formalised training for Indigenous researchers, into the broader AIATSIS program.

The primary expansion of activities that AIATSIS proposes in this area is the establishment of a Centre of Excellence for Indigenous Capacity Building research. This Centre would carry out research, training, and function as a clearing house of information about relevant research in relation to capacity building in Indigenous communities. It is proposed that AIATSIS expansion into this activity would be jointly supported by a number of government agencies that have responsibility for Indigenous programs. The research would be directly fed back to government departments and to community groups in order to facilitate the development of new and culturally appropriate models of program delivery.

It is anticipated that the realisation of this Centre will enable a significant expansion of the Institute's research activities, increase the Institute's profile both within government and the Indigenous community, and strategically position the Institute as a key agency within national discourse and policy development on governance and capacity building.

5.1 Supporting individuals and families now and in the future

The Institute considers that building the capacities of individuals and families to support each other and participate in social and political life as they wish ultimately leads to the development of strong effective governance processes and structures. This must be achieved through the assistance of a multiplicity of locally initiated and adequately resourced research programs and services, targeting individuals and families.

In line with the recommendations of the 'Bringing Them Home' report the Institute recognises that Indigenous peoples have suffered and continue to suffer the legacies of our colonial histories. It is these continuing debilitating effects that ensure Indigenous exclusion in contemporary Australian society. To this end the Institute promotes ethical, community based research and access to the results of research through special programs that promote access to cultural resources. AIATSIS is also geared to the dissemination of information and promotion of discussion and debate on issues of sovereignty, self-governance and community capacity building in the Indigenous community, the policy community and political forums.

The Institute's research programs and services promote the recognition of past wrongs; strengthening of local cultural institutions by access to family histories and cultural and linguistic materials; the reduction of self-destructive behaviours through access to research on appropriate drug and alcohol counselling and intervention programs; and access to appropriate mediation and conflict resolution for individuals and families experiencing conflict, particularly through the native title processes.

The Institute is also exploring opportunities to expand its role in Indigenous leadership training. Currently, it supports the Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre that offers executive training to emerging Indigenous leaders. Beyond this, the Institute is investigating cooperative arrangements with the University of Canberra to deliver flexible training units for Indigenous managers. It is envisaged that links with government departments will allow managers of programs to become involved in research projects that review service delivery performance. Indigenous program managers will additionally be able to access relevant accredited University level courses in management and administration. These programs will aim to improve the skills base of Indigenous leaders and managers and assist in the development of better Indigenous governance structures.

The Institute's research focus supports community learning initiatives and life skills education, parenting and domestic skills development, and governance research and education. The grants program assists local researchers and outreach in terms of the delivery of skills workshops are another means of working with community representatives at a local level. The NTRU workshops particularly assist those engaged in native title negotiations. AIATSIS also runs workshops in family history research, archival, and research skills training. The Institute's programs are built upon established long term associations and partnerships with communities. However, AIATSIS's limited ability to fund these programs currently restricts the depth and breadth of activities that are possible.

5.2 Self-governance and accountability now and in the future

A feature of the Institute's research to date has been a focus on the broader political issues of self governance and relationships between Indigenous communities and the State through its research of native title, agreement making, treaty development and mediation.

Our governance research focuses on regional governance issues, on relationships between communities and government agencies, the policy ramifications of agreement making, and broader issues of Aboriginal representation and is informed by long term research associations and community partnerships. It acknowledges that research is needed to inform and support self-governance initiatives and responds to dynamic and diverse Indigenous political environments.

The Institute advocates for the support of long-term, ethical and scholarly research to inform not only Indigenous communities in their pursuit of self-governance, but to inform policy debates and directions at the state/territory, regional and national level. It aims to create an environment where informed and honest discussion and debate about such matters can occur within families, communities, policy networks and governments and where indigenous people can participate fully in social and political life in the local and wider community as they choose.

Attachments

1. The Family History Unit information
2. The Research Program and Native Title Research Unit information
3. Australian Indigenous Cultural Network
4. Guidelines for Ethical Research in Indigenous Studies publication