AIATSIS

Australia's National Indigenous Cultural Institution

Submission by the

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

to the National Cultural Policy Discussion Paper

AIATSIS

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF
ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT
ISLANDER STUDIES

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Foreword

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) is the only national government agency whose functions are solely focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories. This is clearly stated in the legislation establishing the statutory authority and in the Corporate Plan 2010-2013, where it is identified that we promote:

> *Further understanding of Australian Indigenous cultures, past and present through undertaking and publishing research, and providing access to print and audiovisual collections.*

AIATSIS is disappointed that it is not regarded as a cultural institution in the National Cultural Policy Discussion Paper (*NCPDP* p.8*)* despite its substantial achievements. AIATSIS is a unique Indigenous cultural institution where collecting, dissemination and access to our cultural collection is integral to our research functions. The organisation is situated on Acton Peninsula adjacent to the National Museum of Australia and facilitates site visits as well as dissemination of materials across the nation.

In this submission AIATSIS will outline its achievements in preserving and promoting Indigenous cultures, languages and histories. We will also outline AIATSIS' capacity to support the goals of the *NCPDP* in regard to Indigenous culture.

AIATSIS' activities of collecting, preserving, creating and publishing Indigenous Knowledge contributes to the social and economic wellbeing of Indigenous people through policy advice, research, and by celebrating and making accessible cultural materials, languages and history. This also contributes to the Australian Government's commitment to Closing the Gap and to the social cohesion of Australian society.

For some years, AIATSIS has undertaken many activities that are funded, on contract, by other government agencies. As a result of this and the progressive effects of the efficiency dividend and our current permanent staffing levels place limits on our capacity to support the goals of the *NCPDP* in regard to Indigenous culture.

AIATSIS currently faces a major dilemma in that there is 10-15 years to preserve major parts of our audiovisual and print collections. Further delays in increasing the scale of the digitisation of these collections will make the task too great in the time remaining. The preservation of our "at risk" collections is critical to the Indigenous cultural heritage aims of the *NCPDP* and for plans to repatriate materials to communities and individuals.

AIATSIS' activities have a strong regional focus providing services (family history, language and native title research) and the return of materials to Indigenous communities and individuals in rural and remote areas.

AIATSIS looks forward to being the lead government Indigenous agency in collaborating and coordinating with other cultural and collecting organisations and thus enabling the success of the four goals of the National Cultural Policy Discussion Paper.

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1. Introduction and Background

AIATSIS is Australia's national Indigenous cultural institution

AIATSIS is a Commonwealth statutory authority within the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research (DIISR) portfolio. Our Minister is the Hon. Senator Kim Carr.

AIATSIS is a key national Indigenous cultural institution; one renowned as the world's premier research, collecting and publishing organisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and languages. It is an internationally recognised leader in setting ethical standards and practices for research, publishing, language revival, cultural collection management and access protocols, and engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the workings of the Institute.

Research in all major areas of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies is seen in the broadest sense to incorporate community, academic and personal dimensions encompassing strengths in languages, cultures and societies, family history, native title, and well being.

The collections are for Australian Indigenous people and the broader Australian and international communities. The collections have a deeply personal relationship to Australian Indigenous people that has grown particularly over the last 20 years with the Bringing Them Home Report spurring an even greater interest in family history, identity and more broadly in Indigenous languages and culture. This was stimulated more recently by Federal Parliament's Apology to the Stolen Generations.

Fifty Years of Achievement

AIATSIS' capacity to be the lead agency in supporting the goals of the *NCPDP* is evidenced by our achievements:

- In the broadest terms, our staff, our cultural experience and competency and reputation are our greatest strength;

- AIATSIS has long standing connections, partnerships and the trust of Indigenous communities, organisations and individuals – in research, collections, and policy formulation and continues to build new networks and partnerships;

- AIATSIS' activities have a strong regional focus providing services (family history, language and native title research) and return of materials to Indigenous communities and individuals in rural and remote areas through dissemination of digital collection copies;

- AIATSIS has made available online over 65,000 pages of content, comprising major historical and contemporary Indigenous resources such as the Koori Mail, Dawn Magazine receiving over ten million cumulative web hits;

- The AIATSIS collections are a rich cultural heritage resource for Indigenous family history, native title, language, culture and history. These include, extensive audiovisual and print materials – film, video, audio, manuscripts, maps, and rare books;

- AIATSIS leads research, especially on languages and native title and recognised reputation for establishing best ethical practices in Indigenous research;

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- AIATSIS has conducted and funded research on Indigenous art, music, photography, dance and literature, including economic contributions of cultural industries. AIATSIS also produces research on representations of Indigenous peoples in mainstream cultural and artistic expression

- AIATSIS provides fellowships for Indigenous people to undertake research on aspects of Indigenous culture and traditions contributes to the development and maintenance of Indigenous knowledge systems.

- Through Aboriginal Studies Press, AIATSIS is a major producer of print and digital publications on Indigenous peoples and cultures;

- AIATSIS has been innovative in digitisation technical practices that have been followed by Australian and international audiovisual archives;

- AIATSIS has led discussion and provided advice on 'hidden' cultural collections of native title materials and evidence held by land councils and the federal court

- AIATSIS has shared its catalogue metadata and finding aids to increase awareness of our collections for all Australians on the Internet via Trove and commercial database services such as RMIT's Informit service;

- AIATSIS created and developed the AIATSIS Thesauri to appropriately document Indigenous collections. The Thesauri for languages, people, place and subjects have been internationally recognised by the Library of Congress;

- AIATSIS has been instrumental in developing the ATSILIRN Protocols. The Protocols are intended to guide libraries, archives and information services in appropriate ways to interact with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the communities which the organisations serve, and to handle materials with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content;

- AIATSIS Library has created online tutorials and materials to support the best practice for other collecting organisations in dealing with Indigenous collections as outlined in the ATSILIRN Protocols;

- AIATSIS has created and developed the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Biographical Index a unique research resource for Indigenous family history with a strong focus on the Stolen Generations;

- UNESCO has placed two major AIATSIS collections – the Australian Indigenous Languages Collection and the Sorry Books Collection on their Memory of the World Register.

Many of AIATSIS' activities directly relate to the *NCPDP* and we take this opportunity to respond to the Hon. Simon Crean MP's invitation to comment on the paper and assist in shaping a ten-year vision to 'ensure our arts, cultural and creative endeavours resonate most soundly with a 21st century Australia, and in doing so, strengthen the nation's pursuit of its economic and social policy agenda'. (*NCPDP*, Message from the Minister, p. 2)

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AIATSIS is unique and culturally proficient, pivotally placed to contribute to harnessing the skills, knowledge and talent of Australia's Indigenous people to allow the following outcomes: *(See 'Some additional context', NCPDP, pp. 18–23.)*

- Use emerging technologies to allow Australia's arts sector (individuals, communities, organisations) to deliver a robust and resilient contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP);

- Contribute to an increase in the country's educational sector;

- Foster cultural harmony and cohesion through an informed and diverse workforce and communities;

- Take advantage of emerging opportunities for participation in the economy, for example, cultural tourism.

Not to fully recognise AIATSIS' capacities, nor to better use its resources and skills, would be to diminish the country's ability to meet this 'once-in-a-generation opportunity to deliver a new cultural policy which will shape the Australia of the future' (*NCPDP*, p. 5).

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2. AIATSIS and the National Cultural Policy

AIATSIS can make a major contribution to the National Cultural Policy specifically as the national Indigenous cultural institution and as a part of the broader distributed national collections held all around Australia in cultural and collecting organisations.

AIATSIS is well placed to take a more central coordination and facilitating role in Indigenous cultural heritage than currently occurs. This submission makes clear the Institute's capacities and skills in this area, and provides commentary and recommendations for change at a macro- and micro-level, in contributing to the creation of a strategic framework that would encompass the government's goals:

- To ensure that what the Government supports – and how this support is provided – reflects the diversity of a 21st century Australia, and protects and supports Indigenous culture;

- To encourage the use of emerging technologies and new ideas that support the development of new artworks and the creative industries, and that enable more people to access and participate in arts and culture;

- To support excellence and world-class endeavour, and strengthen the role that the arts play in telling Australian stories both here and overseas;

- To increase and strengthen the capacity of the arts to contribution to our society and economy. (*NCPDP*, p. 13).

AIATSIS engages in a range of activities which cover the three areas of artistic and cultural endeavour spelt out in the *NCPDP*, namely:

- Core arts;

- Creative industries;

- Cultural heritage.

These are articulated in the Institute's functions (among others) under its Act:

- to undertake and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies;

- to publish the results and assist in the publication of such studies;

- to establish and maintain a cultural resource collection consisting of materials relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies;

- to encourage understanding, in the general community, of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

AIATSIS has forged an identity over fifty years. Our activities affirm and raise awareness of Australian Indigenous cultures and histories in numerous ways:

- We foster Indigenous authors and publish and promote Indigenous scholarship (*NCPDP* goals 1 and 3);

- We recognise alternative pathways to research careers and value community research, and the importance of personal and community histories (*NCPDP* goals 1, 2, 3 and 4);

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- We are a leader in research ethics and collection management protocols for the recognition and protection of Indigenous peoples' cultural and intellectual property (especially *NCPDP* goals 1 and 4);

- We provide a secure keeping place and repository for cultural knowledge and materials (especially *NCPDP* goals 1 and 3);

- We provide a central resource via our collections for Indigenous peoples conducting research on their social history (especially *NCPDP* goals 1 and 3);

- We are a leader in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural and intellectual property issues (especially *NCPDP* goals 1 and 4);

- We are a first point of call for general information and resources on Indigenous people in Australia (especially *NCPDP* goal 1);

- We are committed to facilitating access, returning information to Indigenous communities and individuals, and providing a national leadership role on these matters for other similar cultural institutions (especially *NCPDP* goals 1 and 2); and

- We contribute directly to the wellbeing and sense of social inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (especially *NCPDP* goals 1 and 3).

3. How AIATSIS could help meet the NCPDP goals

Goal 1

To ensure that what the Government supports — and how this support is provided — reflects the diversity of a 21st Century Australia, and protects and supports Indigenous culture.

The majority of AIATSIS' functions and activities are outlined under Goal 1 as it focuses on the protection and support for Indigenous culture. The activities listed both below are based on our current level of funding largely from the Australian Government. AIATSIS would be able to better support the *NCPDP* Goals if additional funding was available. The recommendations in this submission contain some new functions and activities that would strengthen the protection and support for Indigenous culture.

General Comments

- AIATSIS is part of the diversity of 21st Century Australia and this involves the foundational place that Australian Indigenous culture, plays in Australian society and its global importance as world's oldest continuous living culture.

- As noted earlier, AIATSIS is not listed in the *NCPDP* as a key cultural organisation despite its fifty year experience in research and collecting in all aspects of Indigenous cultures, languages and history.

- Part of Goal 1 expresses the hope that 'Australia's Indigenous arts and culture are supported and developed in ways that recognise their importance as one of the world's most enduring cultures'. However the strategies listed only suggest continuing work with arts organisations, cultural partners, local authorities, new artists and arts organisations.

- Other than $4.7m support for NAISDA, and funding for the National Indigenous Languages Policy (from which AIATSIS received $430,000 in the financial year 2011-12), there is no reference to how the government will work with culturally proficient Indigenous organisations to achieve the goal.

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Critical Issues

Substantial parts of AIATSIS collections are at risk of permanent loss, in particular the audiovisual collections.

2022 is the year that UNESCO has designated as the point in time that at risk audiovisual materials need to be preserved by or face permanent loss. The UNESCO General Conference in 2005 approved the commemoration of a World Day for Audiovisual Heritage on October 27 to "raise general awareness of the need for urgent measures to be taken and to acknowledge the importance of audiovisual documents as an integral part of national identity."

UNESCO has issued many statements about the imperative to take immediate action to preserve audiovisual records, including the following:

> Audiovisual documents, such as films, radio and television programmes, audio and video recordings, contain the primary records of the 20th and 21st centuries.

> Transcending language and cultural boundaries, appealing immediately to the eye and the ear, to the literate and illiterate, audiovisual documents have transformed society by becoming a permanent complement to the traditional written record.

> However, they are extremely vulnerable and it is estimated that we have no more than 10 to 15 years to transfer audiovisual records to digital to prevent their loss. Much of the world's audiovisual heritage has already been irrevocably lost through neglect, destruction, decay and the lack of resources, skills, and structures, thus impoverishing the memory of mankind. Much more will be lost if stronger and concerted international action is not taken.

To fulfill the goal of protecting and renewing Australia's Indigenous culture will require action and funding to save not only AIATSIS collections but also Indigenous collections at risk around Australia.

There is presently no overall strategy or responsibility for a whole of government approach to the preservation, access and return of Indigenous cultural heritage. Collections are held in federal, state and local government funded libraries, archives, museums and other collecting agencies.

Another critical issue will be ensuring and facilitating the preservation of community created content. Most communities will want some or all of their digital content safely backed up in trusted repositories. Some organisations have the trust of particular communities and arrangements are in place in Queensland (Indigenous Knowledge Centres and the State Library of Queensland) and the Northern Territory (Library Knowledge Centres and the Northern Territory Library).

There is presently no overall strategy or responsibility for a whole of government approach to the preservation, access and return of Indigenous cultural heritage. Collections are held in federal, state and local government funded libraries, archives, museums and other collecting agencies.

There is a need for national leadership, liaison and coordination to ensure that digital content is backed up and thus preserved for the future. AIATSIS is a national Indigenous cultural organisation with the trusted reputation to facilitate agreements for back-up and for these to be recorded on the national discovery system.

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What AIATSIS does to support *NCPDP* Goal 1

Most functions and activities of AIATSIS support Goal 1 of the *NCPDP*.

The AIATSIS Audiovisual Archives and Library hold the world's most extensive collections of printed, audio, and visual materials on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander topics. These materials are used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for many reasons, including language and ceremony revitalisation, native title, establishing keeping places, for family history research and developing educational products. The collections are used by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers, libraries, museums, galleries, as well as the general public. AIATSIS is also a meeting palce for Indigenous organsiaitosn and events. It is a place for visitors to learn about Idingeous culture, from school teachers to overseas dignatories.

The active engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants in AIATSIS research, and in the development and use of the collections produced through this activity and deposits from individuals and communities reinforces the place of AIATSIS in the nations cultural heart. Over time, the importance of the multidisciplinary research of AIATSIS in respect to support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identities, Australian identity, and indeed in respect to world culture is becoming increasingly recognised.

Since its establishment in the 1960s there has been a shift in the use of AIATSIS' collections from solely academic research to also include use by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples outside the academic sphere, which for many is of a deeply personal nature given the particular focus on family history, native title and languages and other forms of cultural expression.

Protocols and Access to Materials: Respect for Indigenous Knowledge

AIATSIS has been prominent in developing a range of procedures and protocols for the intellectual, cultural and moral rights of Indigenous collections. One notable example is AIATSIS' involvement in the development of the ATSILIRN Protocols, published in 1995. The ATSILIRN Protocols are intended to guide libraries, archives and information services in appropriate ways to interact with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the communities which the organisations serve, and to handle materials with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content.

The protocols are a guide to good practice which will need to be interpreted and applied in the context of each organisation's mission, collections and client community. The protocols address:

- the recognition of the moral rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the owners of their knowledge, including collective ownership;

- other important issues arising from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content and perspectives in documentary materials, media and traditional cultural property;

- issues concerning access to libraries, archives and information resources by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;

- encouragement for both the involvement and the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the governance and operation of libraries, archives and information services; and,

- appropriate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their cultures in libraries, archives and information services.

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AIATSIS itself adheres to a range of strict protocols and procedures to ensure the culturally appropriate, respectful and sensitive use of materials held in its collections at all stages of deposit, archiving, preservation and access. This is fundamental to the ability of AIATSIS to maintain the confidence of the original custodians of the materials.

AIATSIS is best qualified to coordinate the national development and implementation of standards and practices to facilitate the application of cultural protocols by organisations with Indigenous collections and access to these collections.

AIATSIS has been strongly committed to these issues. In 1998, AIATSIS commissioned the ground breaking work by Terri Janke, entitled *Our Culture: Our Future – Report on Australian Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property.* This report to the Board of Commissioners of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission discussed the nature of Indigenous cultural and intellectual property and the aspects of it that Indigenous people feel should be protected. It also examined how far the existing Australian legal system protects Indigenous intellectual and cultural property and considers possible legislative and administrative solutions and policies, protocols and codes of ethics

In 2006 AIATSIS completed a follow up research project on intellectual property problems facing Indigenous people and communities in Australia. The resulting publication Indigenous knowledge and Intellectual property: access, ownership and control of cultural materials was jointly developed by Dr Jane Anderson at AIATSIS and the Intellectual Property Research Institute of Australia (IPRIA). The outcomes from this project include *Guidelines on the Legal Implications of Intellectual Property for Cultural Institutions*, and a Framework for Protocols for IP and Indigenous Communities. These documents target the discrete practical needs of Indigenous communities and their engagement with cultural institutions across the country.

The Guidelines seek to raise the standard of institutional responsibility in their relations with Indigenous people, communities and cultural materials. The Framework for Protocols will address practical community needs and expectations around intellectual property law, and control of knowledge between individuals, communities and external researchers

There is a great desire to improve the description and identification of Indigenous cultural material in libraries, but this requires liaison with communities by knowledgeable staff and is time consuming. There is an urgency to undertake this task as those able to identify the individuals in early photographs are aging and passing away.

AIATSIS is part of the National State Libraries Australasia (NSLA) Indigenous Libraries Working Group and can use this position to contribute to clear standards for accessing Indigenous cultural knowledge across collecting organisations. AIATSIS is also a key participant in the International Association of Sound Archivists, which has created the internationally accepted standards for the digitisation of audio materials.

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AIATSIS Centre for Australian Languages

The AIATSIS Centre for Australian Languages is funded by the Office for the Arts (OFTA) through a three year agreement under the Maintenance of Indigenous Languages and Records (MILR) Program. The funding for 2011-12 is $430,000.

The AIATSIS Centre for Australian Languages undertakes a variety of projects and under each activity we have listed the *NCPDP* goals that are supported:

- **Community language workshops**
  Eight workshops will be presented during 2010-2013 with two main aims: first, to provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with information on AIATSIS to enable them to make use of the resources available, especially in the AIATSIS collections; and, second, to provide assistance and advice to groups considering running language programs.

  Goals addressed: 1, 2;

- **Australian Languages web portal**
  ACAL is developing a web portal with an interactive map and an integrated language search engine to provide improved access, dissemination and sharing of information on and about Australian Indigenous languages, with sections targeted at communities, schools, researchers and the public.

  Goals addressed: 1, 2, and 3;

- **Language @ NAIDOC on the Peninsula**
  The AIATSIS 'NAIDOC on the Peninsula' event is the premier NAIDOC activity in the ACT. It will include a public presentation by ACAL of resources relating to Australian Indigenous languages.

  Goals addressed: 1;

- **Second National Indigenous Languages Survey**
  The Second National Indigenous Languages Survey will gather information about Australian Indigenous languages, their speakers and language programs, in order to build a better understanding of the current situation and activities relating to Australian languages, as well as about peoples' aspirations for and attitudes towards their languages.

  Goals addressed: 1;

- **Access Improvement**
  This project is still in the planning stages, but aims to improve the access of Indigenous people to language materials recorded and held by researchers. This will be achieved both by encouraging researchers to deposit privately held material at AIATSIS, and by negotiating changes to access conditions for material already held at AIATSIS so as to make access and repatriation easier.

  Goals addressed: 1, 2;

- **Language and Wellbeing**
  This project examines the connection between health/wellbeing and the loss, retention and revival of languages by Indigenous people through an examination of the research available on the topic in Australia and worldwide. We have recently completed the initial literature survey and are now seeking partners for a major research project.

  Goals addressed: 1, 4;

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- **AUSTLANG**

  AUSTLANG is AIATSIS' searchable, online Australian National Indigenous Languages Database. It provides users with information on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages (including preferred reference name and spelling) with links to Google maps and other databases, files and websites, and is regularly updated by ACAL staff.

  Goals addressed: 1, 2, and 3.

Recommendations - Goal 1

1. That AIATSIS be acknowledged in the *NCPDP* as a national cultural institution alongside Australian cultural institutions such as the National Library of Australia, the National Museum of Australia and the National Archives of Australia.

2. That AIATSIS be the lead Australian cultural government agency in the coordination of multi-institutional Indigenous digitisation and online projects.

3. That AIATSIS take a lead role in advising other cultural and collecting organisations about protocols and priorities in terms of their Indigenous collections, including digital repatriation of materials (via internet).

4. That a national audit be undertaken immediately of Indigenous collections at risk of permanent loss in the next 10-20 years and a plan developed for their preservation and digitisation.

5. That a ten-year plan to preserve and digitise AIATSIS' collections at risk be implemented. These collections are critical for language renewal, native title and family history research.

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Goal 2

To encourage the use of emerging technologies and new ideas that support the development of new artworks and the creative industries, and that enable more people to access and participate in arts and culture.

General Comments

Part of goal 2 expresses the hope that 'diversity is nurtured, supported and encouraged'. However, the strategies listed contain no mention of Indigenous cultural and intellectual property rights, although the overarching aim of cultural heritage (*NCPDP*, p. 6), states: 'Australia's Indigenous culture is unique, and comprises both dynamic, living systems and expressions which must be supported to develop, and endangered systems and expressions which must be protected and where possible, revived'.

Critical Issues

Broadband Access by Communities

Access to the Internet in many regional and remote areas is neither dependable or of sufficient data speed to support the demands of communities for access to internet accessible collections, for the digital repatriation from collecting institutions, or possibly a National Indigenous Knowledge Centre network. AIATSIS can fulfil the role of a national advocate for improved connectivity in remote communities and work with all stakeholders.

The Australian Government's *Indigenous Communications Program* is an essential initiative to help improve communications services specifically in remote Indigenous communities. This involves a range of communication media, from phone through to portable digital devices that are increasingly used to access Internet-based services. Several state libraries have worked productively with this Program.

AIATSIS strongly supports further partnerships with the Closing the Gap: National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Public Internet Access in improving public internet access and providing basic computer training. Remote Indigenous hub communities that have limited or no public internet facilities and a permanent resident population of greater than 100 people can qualify.

It is also another part of "Closing the Gap", that the existing inequities and imbalances in the digital world – of access to computers, training, and broadband – be addressed to enable Indigenous Australian to have the best opportunity to be involved in the digital economy. This is especially critical to enable remote, rural and urban Indigenous individuals and communities to connect with each other and with other organisations and bodies, as well as for the need to provide online resources accessible to all Australians seeking to learn more about the rich and diverse cultural heritage of Indigenous Australians.

What AIATSIS does to support *NCPDP* Goal 2

Many functions and activities of AIATSIS support Goal 2 of the *NCPDP*. Emerging technologies and creative ideas are critical and support our digitisation and online access and return of materials programs. Further information is outlined both in the Introduction and in the Appendices to this submission.

AIATSIS Centre for Australian Languages (ACAL)

It should be noted that the AIATSIS Centre for Australian Languages described above develops multiple products in digital format to facilitate remote access by Indigenous Australians and researchers.

Technology and Indigenous Communities Symposium: Community Access-Only Collections

In 2010 AIATSIS held the Information Technology and Indigenous Communities (ITIC) Symposium. The Symposium addressed three critical questions:

- What is the best way to engage in this process with limited technological support?;
- What are the opportunities of social networking, mobile phone technologies, iTunes, and Broadband roll out?;
- Servers, content clouds, or external hard drives?

The symposium brought together community workers, institutions, researchers, technical advisors and IT professionals to discuss current projects, share challenges and solutions; investigate improved digitisation options; explore new methods and technologies; and think creatively about future pathways.

The Symposium clearly demonstrated the role that AIATSIS' can play as both as an advocate for access to broadband and to online content and collections.

A key theme that emerged from the Symposium was the technology and software to place material from collecting organisations and digital content created by communities under their sole control. Software such Mukurtu allows what is referred to as Cultural Protocol-Based Access Control.

Mukurtu allows communities to define how their materials circulate and are shared between community members, to other museums, libraries and archives and to the public. Communities can easily create menus that provide granular access controls based on the cultural protocols of the community. Protocol choices are established by the community and can be updated, edited and changed at any time.

This opens up opportunities for collecting institutions to digitally repatriate materials to a community. Additionally the community can describe collections and decide what is accessible, on what basis and what can be made open available by the collecting institutions.

Another option is the *Ara Irititja* software originally developed for the Pitjantjatjara Council. The Northern Territory Library and Pitjantjatjara Council have re-developed the *Ara Irititja* Indigenous community software (also known as Our Story or Community Story). The re-developed *Ara Irititja* is standards-based and with further support could become a national model for communities to store and access digital content. The State Library of Queensland is trialling the *Ara Iritija* software in Wujal Wujal and Hope Vale communities. It will be suitable for use by local communities and by cultural collecting organisations.

Ara Iritja allows password access for individual communities to control access to specific content based on customised protocols *Ara Iritija* and *Trove* at the National Library of Australia should be inter-operable so that material can be moved and harvested from one to the other as requested by communities creating an essential backup to preserve community content.

This will enable a three-tiered approach incorporating local community digital repositories, state databases, and national database of publicly accessible material.

Preservation of Communities' Digital Collections

Digital content provided by collecting organisations to communities will be preserved in their digital archives. The critical issue will be ensuring and facilitating the preservation of community created content.

Most communities will want some or all of their digital content safely backed up in trusted repositories. Some organisations have the trust of particular communities and arrangements are in place in Queensland and the Northern Territory.

There is a need for national leadership, liaison and coordination to ensure that digital content is backed up and thus preserved for the future. AIATSIS is a national Indigenous organisation with the reputation and trust to facilitate agreements for back-up and for these to be recorded on the national discovery system.

Recommendations - Goal 2

6. That high priority should be given to for the rollout of NBN/Broadband to Indigenous remote communities and to regional areas. This will support the digital repatriation and access to Indigenous collections held in collecting organisations by Indigenous people in remote and regional areas.

7. That Ara Iritija and Mukurtu be supported to enable the digital repatriation of materials from collecting organisations to Indigenous communities.

Goal 3

To support excellence and world-class endeavour, and strengthen the role that the art plays in telling Australian stories both here and overseas.

General Comments

Part of goal 3 expresses the hope that 'Indigenous arts, language and culture continue to attract both domestic and international interest and recognition'. However the strategies listed do not articulate what the Discussion paper means when it refers to 'continued support and investment', nor are the expected or intended outcomes made clear.

Critical Issues

Contemporary Indigenous art

For numerous Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups engagement with the contemporary art market has become a major and sustainable cultural enterprise. Art production allows participation in the cash economy but in a way that is generally supportive of the unique cultural perspectives of the artists. Indigenous arts are not static; the artists are quick to point to their innovation and indeed how their cultural life is changing in response to new opportunities provided by new media and the interaction across the world that art marketing allows. Often this creativity takes the form of ever new ways of venerating important religious subject matter and stories relating to land creation. Where artists live on or near their own lands this provides inspiration for the work. Through a strong system of art centres based in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander town's even artists from very remote locales can establish enterprises that provide important cash income. Indeed marketing of Australia's unique identity to the world often involves drawing upon the efforts of Indigenous artists. Research with artists helps a world market to discern the unique nature of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander creativity and how to improve the market linkages to allow local art centres to thrive.

Recognition of the importance of art centre support has come from the recent Senate Committee Report *Indigenous Art – Securing the Future*. In particular the report found that support for art centres was a most efficient means of creating culturally appropriate employment prospects for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in remote regions that are very far from the markets.

However the response by the Federal Government to the recommendations of the *Securing the Future* report of an additional $7.6m over four years to support community arts centres is not sufficient given the potential for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art market to grow and the dire need for employment in remote regions. History has revealed the importance of concerted Federal Government intervention in expanding this industry. New support should be allocated for a major attempt to assist new communities to develop art centres for the first time, to address the inadequate infrastructure of existing centres, and to create opportunities for greater promotion of the art in Australia and overseas. While there is a relatively ad hoc programme of overseas exhibitions developed by multiple Australian institutions this is inhibited by costs and there should certainly be greater diplomatic energy in finding appropriate and high profile venues. Where exhibitions are established there needs to be support through the provision of preliminary educational materials and follow-through after the event in the respective countries in order to build the market.

What AIATSIS does to support *NCPDP* Goal 3

Blackwords

BlackWords: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander writers and storytellers

BlackWords is a wide-ranging, inclusive and informative discovery resource of structured information relating to the lives and stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander writers and storytellers. BlackWords is a Research Community supported by AustLit: The Australian Literature Resource and is constantly updated by a team of researchers. AIATSIS is the coordinator of content for BlackWords, assisting a team of researchers in Perth, Adelaide, Wollongong and Brisbane to build the database.

Currently there are over 3867 Indigenous authors listed. Information contained on Black Words also includes:

- biographical records for writers and storytellers

- details of published and unpublished works of creative writing and non-fiction

- information about publishers, theatre groups, and awards

- details of books, articles, theses on Indigenous cultures or literatures

- links to other sites and resources for study, teaching and general interest

- full text and links to material published online

BlackWords plays an significant role in documenting contemporary and historical Indigenous culture. Black Words provides access to both general and specific information about Indigenous literary cultures and traditions, providing definitions and articulations of what Black writing and Indigenous literatures are. Black Words also contains records describing published and unpublished books, stories, plays, poems and criticism associated with eligible writers and storytellers and includes works in English and in Indigenous languages.

See http://www.austlit.edu.au/specialistDatasets/BlackWords

Research and Publication Program with Aboriginal Artists

AIATSIS maintains a research and publication program with Aboriginal artists including work with many community arts centres, Australia's major art galleries and museums, as well as international links. AIATSIS has recently supported major exhibition efforts by the National Museum of Australia in China, as well as exhibitions in Basel and Geneva in Switzerland, London, Sydney, and Canberra. We also conduct research with artists to support the development of the market in this country. For example AIATSIS research of artist's biographies is published on the Art Right Now site as the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Visual Artists Database* although this material would benefit from a thorough update more than a decade.

Indigenous enterprise success

The *Success in Indigenous Community Organisations* project, completed in 2004 and published online and in hard copy, involved sixteen case studies of best practice in management of Indigenous organisations. The study assessed initiatives in local Indigenous organisations, including arts, tourism, and working on country enterprises, that have helped to promote community wellbeing or to overcome disadvantage. This series of case studies highlights the importance of research in developing, implementing and evaluating the Indigenous cultural policy framework and programs. Importantly in an Indigenous context, the integration of arts and culture into the whole of community governance, economy and social infrastructure must be taken into account in any evaluative framework.

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The National Recording Project for Indigenous Performance in Australia

The National Recording Project for Indigenous Performance in Australia is an expert coalition of concerned individuals and organisations with interests in protecting and sustaining Australia's highly endangered traditions of Indigenous of creative expression through music, dance and ceremonial performance. The National Recording Project was established in response to the first Symposium on Indigenous Music and Dance at the Garma Festival of Traditional Culture in 2002. AIATSIS was a sponsor of the Symposium and a Council member of AIATSIS, serves as a co-chair of the Project. AIATSIS encourages safe archival storage under agreed protocols and serves as a trusted repository for recordings made by Project members. The Project has been active in recording and disseminating CDs of traditional music and dance as well as promoting and assisting local Indigenous communities in creating local digital archives.

See. http://www.aboriginalartists.com.au/NRP.htm

Songlines

Since 2003, Grace Koch, Native Title Research and Access Officer, has been collaborating with the linguist, Luise Hercus in notating and documenting the music of the Lake Eyre basin. Two DVDs containing recordings of songs, texts, background mythology, maps of sites and song lines have been produced with two others close to being finalized. The work is based upon recordings of Mick McLean, who knew many song series and chose to record his knowledge with Hercus in the 1960s and early 1970s.

Recommendations – Goal 3

8. That the Australian government invest more heavily in the Indigenous community arts organisations in order to foster employment in remote areas.

9. That the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Visual Artists Database* be supported for an update.

10. That the National Cultural Policy include resources for evaluation and assessment of it's effectiveness.

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Goal 4

To increase and strengthen the capacity of the arts to contribute to our society and economy.

General Comments

Part of goal 4 expresses the hope that the arts will contribute to our society and economy. However, the strategies listed contain no mention of how Indigenous arts, cultures and language might be embedded in those strategies. The overarching aim of cultural heritage (*NCPDP*, p. 6), states: 'Australia's Indigenous culture is unique, and comprises both dynamic, living systems and expressions which must be supported to develop, and endangered systems and expressions which must be protected and where possible, revived'.

What AIATSIS does to support *NCPDP* Goal 4

Sustainability Livelihoods

The Kimberley Sustainability Project: Living Country, Working Country examined contemporary Indigenous community assets, social conditions, visions and actions for a sustainable future in the Kimberley Region. The project engaged with Indigenous and non-Indigenous community groups, government agencies, industry and individual Indigenous and non-Indigenous enterprises across a field of cultural (social), economic and environmental activities. The two regions being studied included the Fitzroy Valley, an area in dire need of innovative solutions to chronic disadvantage, and Saltwater Country surrounding the North-west Kimberley, an area undergoing rapid development and the resultant pressures and opportunities this creates. The key focus of this research is how best to achieve sustainable livelihoods in the region. This project led to a significant investment from the Christiansen Fund to develop cultural industries in the region.

A follow up project is currently being undertaken into sustainable livelihoods across three river catchments in Northern Australia, including the Fitzroy, Mitchell and Daly River districts.

Music and native title

As part of our native title research program, AIATSIS has conducted research on how song is used as evidence for Indigenous land claims under under both the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 (Cth)* and the *Native Title Act 1993 (Cth).* The paper is based upon examination of reports written by the Aboriginal Land Commissioner and determinations issued by Federal Court judges for native title claims. The importance of performance and cultural expression in establishing native title is not well researched. The direct ties between land and cultural, economic and social development are of critical importance to the National Cultural Policy

Recommendations – Goal 4

See Recommendations 8 and 10 above.

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4. Broader Issues

Various issues are outlined below that fall outside of the direct areas of the individual four goals of the *NCPDP* or encompass some or all. They are largely 'big picture' issues but are critical to consideration of the Indigenous goals of the *NCPDP*.

Lack of Coordination of Collecting Organisations across Australia, with a focus on Regional Australia

The Collections Council of Australia (CCA) was an effective means to advance the aims of the entire Australian collections sector beyond the sectoral interests of galleries, libraries, archives and museums. Its winding up in 2009 was a setback for regional Australia in particular where there are many collections including Indigenous collections. The Indigenous collections are held in keeping places and smaller regional museums and libraries.

The CCA had plans in place for conservators to travel to regional Australia at the time of its cessation. This is particularly important for the task of coordinating the care and preservation of Indigenous collections particularly in regional areas or smaller organisations or keeping places where the collections are stored varying physical conditions.

An organisation such as the former Collections Council of Australia can have a valuable role in both coordination and advice to governments not only for collections and preservation issues, but for sharing of infrastructure, digitisation resources. Such a body could work with AIATSIS and the NBN on ways to deliver content from various collecting organisations especially to regional Australia.

National Indigenous Knowledge Centre

A National Indigenous Knowledge Centre (NIKC) was proposed at the Australia 2020 Summit with recommendations that could provide an important gateway for accessing and the return of information on all levels – the collections of relevant agencies as well as those that are community based. Page 79 of the *Australia 2020 – Government Response* indicates:

> An Indigenous Knowledge Centre would build on the current role played by the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and could:
>
> - Become a national gathering place for the celebration and discussion of Indigenous culture, in a physical or 'virtual' sense
>
> - Become a reference point for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture
>
> - Engage in research to harness traditional knowledge to support sustainable management of country
>
> - Support the education and understanding of Indigenous culture and affairs across Australia and preserve Indigenous heritage.
>
> As the first step in the establishment of a centre, the community will be consulted on its form. We are therefore initiating a comprehensive feasibility study to engage the Indigenous and wider communities and existing institutions to develop options for the most effective way to strengthen and support Indigenous culture.

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The Department of Families and Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) funded a feasibility study into an NKIC. AIATSIS was involved in this feasibility study which was headed by Dr Jackie Huggins. The AIATSIS Principal, Mr Russell Taylor was a member of a Management Committee providing oversight of the feasibility study.

The NIKC Report was submitted to FaHCSIA in early 2011 but as of October 2011 there has been no response to the feasibility report's recommendations. This issue remains unresolved but could have an impact on the National Cultural Policy and services in Indigenous heritage collections and access.

Some matters raised in this submission are directly related to a potential NIKC but without a response to the report, they are important and relevant to be raised again.

A National Indigenous Cultural Authority

Any discussion of what functions a NIKC network could undertake directly raises issues such as copyright, intellectual, cultural and moral rights. It is AIATSIS' opinion that the work of Terri Janke in arguing for the establishment of a National Indigenous Cultural Authority should be considered (see *Beyond Guarding Ground: A vision for a National Indigenous Cultural Authority* Terri Janke, 2009).

see http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/55611/Beyond_guarding_ground.pdf

A national discovery system to locate where collections are held would also include the identification of who owns the rights to a particular item of cultural heritage as proposed by Terri Janke.

> The National Indigenous Cultural Authority could develop protocols which set standards for consent procedures, attribution and integrity. Consultation with Indigenous communities will be necessary to develop these protocols. Already a strong framework for protocols has developed and whilst these are largely ethical in nature, or enforced in funding agreements for projects, protocols provide scope to examine how things might be implemented by a national coordination body...

A NIKC or similar will make Indigenous knowledge available and accessible on a greater level. This will require that there are robust arrangements in place for the protection of Indigenous knowledge and the awareness and enforcement of the cultural, moral and intellectual property rights.

AIATSIS believes that the functions of a 'National Indigenous Cultural Authority' could be incorporated into a National Indigenous Knowledge Centre network and that AIATSIS is already undertaking many of the functions and role of what is considered a National Indigenous Knowledge Centre. These have been outlined in great detail throughout this submission and in the *Appendices*.

AIATSIS recognises the expertise of a number of major state and federal collecting organisations and what they have achieved in Indigenous collections and services. However, AIATSIS is the only national Indigenous organisation that has the Australia-wide profile, experience and respect to coordinate and facilitate the national collaboration required from Indigenous communities and organisations, all three levels of government, collecting organisations in developing a sustainable NIKC network.

Confusion about sources of funding

There is a lack of clarity for those organisations or individuals seeking Australian government support for the arts/cultural industries. There are multiple sites and sources of support as the discussion paper notes, even though the Australian Council for the Arts is listed as 'the main arts funding body across visual arts, performing arts and literature'. (p. 7) Moreover, there is a cross-over of funding where similar kinds of cultural practice/ output are funded by different programs or departments. This confuses Australian citizens and organisations who might seeking arts- and culture-related funding, prevents the support of a range of artists in the creative industries, and appears

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to be a less than optimal use of scarce Commonwealth resources.

Example: Two University of Western Sydney academics won funding from the Australia-China Council (ACC) (intellectual property) from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to translate two Aboriginal Studies Press (ASP) titles into the Chinese language (ASP is the publishing arm of AIATSIS). The output of two Chinese-language texts is clearly a literary production and there is apparently competing funding available from the Australia Council for the Arts, Literature Fund for translations of Australian writing (now abbreviated to Australia Council's Literature Fund).

Rewarding creativity

The government's shifting of funding between departments, and away from the Australia Council for the Arts has led to rewards for a few, rather than supporting emerging artists and endeavours, thus fostering creativity and initiative.

Example: The creation of the Prime Minister's Literary Awards has provided a large pool of money ($420,000 in 2011) with which to reward a handful of writers, four of them, substantially. The resulting prize winners have usually already been rewarded by being shortlisted for awards and having won state-based and other prizes. More importantly, the Award is for work already created, rather than encouraging innovation and creativity.

Alternatively, the almost $500,000 per annum could fund a range of new and emerging writers. By way of comparison, the Australia Council's Literature Fund support per title is $5000 through its Publishing and Promotions Grants. (The Council has recently changed its funding model but is still unable to fund the number and breadth of applications it receives.)

Comparison: In 2011, AIATSIS used its own resources and initiative to change its Stanner Award. Formerly a prize for an already published academic book contributing to scholarship in the area of Australian Indigenous studies, the award was refocused to support Indigenous writers of academic works (a category that aligns with the Institute's goals and other initiatives, but which is rarely funded). The prize money was increased to $5000 and the winner will receive editorial and mentoring support to shape their submissions into publishable work. The ensuing book will be published by Aboriginal Studies Press. In addition to publishing the prize-winner, Aboriginal Studies Press is now in discussion with two other entrants who might not otherwise have submitted their manuscripts to Aboriginal Studies Press (or any other publisher) for consideration.

For a very small sum, AIATSIS has increased the size and breadth of its Indigenous-authored publishing list. This allows those authors to become part of the creative industries, and participate in the economy, including by improving their chance of promotion in the workplace. It also increases Australia's standing in the area of cultural production and has enhanced the capacity for understanding by Australians and others of Australia's rich Indigenous histories and cultures.

Broader Issues Recommendations

11. That consideration be given to the development of a National Indigenous Knowledge Centre network to allow Indigenous people to enable the return of their Indigenous knowledge, generate their own tools for lifelong and cultural learning as well as building community capacity.

12. That AIATSIS be the organisation to have the responsibility to coordinate and facilitate the National Indigenous Knowledge Centre network.

13. As a NIKC function, that a comprehensive plan be implemented to back up and preserve born digital content created and held in community digital archives.

14. As a NIKC function that AIATSIS have the responsibility for administering a grants system to Indigenous communities and organisations for infrastructure, digitisation and return of digital copies and providing training and advice for local collections.

15. That the AIATSIS building be redeveloped to become the national showcase for a National Indigenous Knowledge Centre network.

16. That the functions of a National Cultural Authority as proposed by Terri Janke be considered as an essential part of a National Indigenous Knowledge Centre network.

17. That the Australian Government better coordinate information about its funding and move money from some departments that might better belong to the more specialised work of another department.

18. That the Australian Government create a single website/publication which lists available government funding for the arts and culture which lists what types of funding are available and the departments from which funding might be sought. The Australia Council for the Arts website, www.australiacouncil.gov.au/grants, provides a model.

19. That the Australian Government divert some of the money allocated to the Prime Minister's Literary Awards to fostering creativity, initiative and artistic endeavour at the ground level through, for example, the Australia Council's Literature Board, or via a range of smaller funding agencies or programs.

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5. AIATSIS Recommendations

Goal 1

1. That AIATSIS be acknowledged in the *NCPDP* as a national cultural institution alongside others such as the National Library of Australia, the National Museum of Australia and the National Archives of Australia.

2. That AIATSIS be the lead Australian government cultural agency in the coordination of multi-institutional Indigenous digitisation and online projects.

3. That AIATSIS take a lead role in advising other cultural and collecting organisations about protocols and priorities in terms of their Indigenous collections, including digital repatriation of materials (via internet).

4. That a national audit be undertaken immediately of Indigenous collections at risk of permanent loss in the next 10-20 years and a plan developed for their preservation and digitisation.

5. That a ten-year plan to preserve and digitise AIATSIS' collections at risk be implemented. These collections are critical for language renewal, native title and family history research.

Goal 2

6. That high priority should be given to for the rollout of NBN/Broadband to Indigenous remote communities and to regional areas. This will support the digital repatriation and access to Indigenous collections held in collecting organisations by Indigenous people in remote and regional areas.

7. That Ara Iritija and Mukurtu be supported to enable the digital repatriation of materials from collecting organisations to indigenous communities.

Goal 3

8. That the Australian government invest more heavily in the Indigenous community arts organisations in order to foster employment in remote areas.

9. That the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Visual Artists Database* be supported for an update.

10. That the National Cultural Policy include resources for evaluation and assessment of it's effectiveness.

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Broader Issues

11. That consideration be given to the development of a National Indigenous Knowledge Centre (NIKC) network to allow Indigenous people to enable the return of their Indigenous knowledge, generate their own tools for lifelong and cultural learning as well as building community capacity.

12. That AIATSIS be the organisation to have the responsibility to coordinate and facilitate the National Indigenous Knowledge Centre network.

13. As a NIKC function, that a comprehensive plan be implemented to back up and preserve born digital content created and held in community digital archives.

14. As a NIKC function that AIATSIS have the responsibility for administering a grants system to Indigenous communities and organisations for infrastructure, digitisation and return of digital copies.

15. That the AIATSIS building be redeveloped to become the national showcase for a National Indigenous Knowledge Centre network.

16. That the functions of a National Cultural Authority as proposed by Terri Janke be considered as an essential part of a National Indigenous Knowledge Centre network.

17. That the Australian Government better coordinate information about its funding and move money from some departments that might better belong to the more specialised work of another department.

18. That the appropriate Australian Government agency create a single website/ publication which lists available government funding for the arts and culture which lists what types of funding are available and the departments from which funding might be sought. The Australia Council for the Arts website, www. australiacouncil.gov.au/grants, provides a model.

19. That the Australian Government divert some of the money allocated to the Prime Minister's Literary Awards to fostering creativity, initiative and artistic endeavour at the ground level through, for example, the Australia Council's Literature Board, or via a range of smaller funding agencies or programs.

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6. Appendix

AIATSIS – Australia's National Indigenous Cultural Institution

Achievements and Record

AIATSIS is an independent Commonwealth Government statutory authority. It operates under the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 1989. AIATSIS is situated within the portfolio of the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research (DIISR). Our Minister is Senator the Hon. Kim Carr.

Located since January 2001 on lake Burley Griffin in Canberra, AIATSIS is Australia's premier institution for information about the cultures and lifestyles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Institute does the following:

- promotes scholarly, ethical community-based research;

- promotes knowledge and understanding of Australian Indigenous cultures, past and present;

- houses a world class collection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resource materials including the world's largest collections of printed resource materials for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies;

- holds a priceless collection of unique sound recordings, pictures, films and videos numbering over one million items;

- publishes quality research and writing about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures via papers, a journal and books through the Aboriginal Studies Press.

AIATSIS is governed by a Council of nine members, four of whom are elected by the Institute membership. The remaining five members, who must be Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people, are appointed by the Minister.

A staff of approximately 120 people, directed by the Institute Principal, Mr Russell Taylor, engages in a range of activities of interest to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, scholars and the general public.

Collections

The AIATSIS Audiovisual Archives and Library hold the world's most extensive collections of printed, audio, and visual materials on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander topics. These materials are used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for many reasons, including language and ceremony revitalisation, native title, establishing keeping places, for family history research and developing educational products. The collections are used by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers, libraries, museums, galleries, as well as the general public.

The active engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants in AIATSIS research, and in the development and use of the collections produced through this activity and deposits from individuals and communities, reinforce the truth of this statement. Over time, the importance of the multidisciplinary research of AIATSIS in respect to support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identities, Australian identity, and indeed in respect to world culture is becoming increasingly recognised.

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Since its establishment in the 1960s there has been a shift in the use of AIATSIS' collections from solely academic research to also include use by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, which for many is of a deeply personal nature given the particular focus on family history, native title and languages.

Protocols and Respect for Indigenous Cultures

The *AIATSIS Act* (1989) and its policies have infused the whole organisation to respect the culturally appropriate ways of handling Indigenous materials and are an Australian leader in this.

AIATSIS has always been closely involved in the development of protocols for the treatment and access to collections material. AIATSIS was closely involved in the development of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library and Information Resource Network (ATSILIRN) Protocols. The Protocols are intended to guide libraries, archives and information services in appropriate ways to interact with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the communities which the organisations serve, and to handle materials with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content.

The development of the AIATSIS Thesauri (see below) was in response to the ATSILIRN Protocols recommending more appropriate and accurate description of Indigenous collections.

The protocols also cover the contemporary issues raised by digitisation. Intellectual property and technology issues also introduce levels of complexity for the sustainable management of Indigenous materials in the digital domain that pose challenges for both the library and information services profession and for Indigenous communities.

Furthermore the ATSILIRN Protocols also include the critical issue of repatriation. Specifically:

> Archives and libraries often hold original records which were created by, about or with the input of particular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. A community may place tremendous importance on particular records and request copies for use and retention within the community. Some records may have been taken from the control of the community or created by theft or deception. In addressing this issue, libraries and archives will:

- Respond sympathetically and cooperatively to any request from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community for copies of records of specific relevance to the community for its use and retention.

- Agree to the repatriation of original records to Aboriginal and Islander communities when it can be established that the records have been taken from the control of the community or created by theft or deception.

- Seek permission to hold copies of repatriated records but refrain from copying such records should permission be denied.

- Assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in planning, providing and maintaining suitable keeping places for repatriated records.

AIATSIS has fully endorsed these protocols and has actively promoted the use of the ATSILIRN protocols in libraries and archives throughout Australia.

AIATSIS Thesauri

National thesauri for describing collections relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and issues.

AIATSIS recognised the need for libraries and archives to use more appropriate headings to describe Indigenous collections. Three thesauri were created or redeveloped for language/people, place and subject as part of the AIATSIS Digitisation Program. The Library of Congress has now approved the thesauri to be used internationally in catalogue records. The thesauri terms are now being used in national discovery tools such as Libraries Australia and internationally in WorldCat, the world's largest network of library content and services. The thesauri will be useful for the growing number Indigenous knowledge centres and keeping places. The full thesauri can be accessed from the AIATSIS web site and can also be downloaded as a working tool.

AIATSIS is currently developing training materials that will be able to be used for community people in describing their collections.

See http://www1.aiatsis.gov.au/thesaurus

AIATSIS Mura® Catalogue

Enhanced Access to Indigenous Collections

The Mura® catalogue of all AIATSIS collections became available on the web in 1998 – Mura is a Ngunnawal word meaning 'pathways'. Aside from being a means to search and discover the rich collections of the Library and Audiovisual Archive, Mura was also a practical model to demonstrate clearly how Indigenous materials should be sensitively and appropriately described, through the AIATSIS Thesauri listing places, languages and peoples. Additionally, many items have specialised annotations describing the item's content enabling an in depth access to Indigenous collections not found in a single catalogue.

See http://mura.aiatsis.gov.au

Digitisation

Creating Better Access to the Institute's Collections for Australian Indigenous People. Moving towards increased return of digital copies of our collections.

The AIATSIS Audiovisual Archives and Library hold the world's most extensive collections of printed, audio, and visual materials on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander topics. These materials are used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for many reasons, including language and ceremony revitalisation, native title, establishing keeping places, family history and developing educational products.

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. It requires the identification of resources that are of keen interest to Indigenous communities, identification of intellectual property holders, clearance of materials for electronic publication, and publication of materials in a manner that allows easy access and navigation by users.

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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 the 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. For example, without digitisation, unique recordings of ceremonies, language and music might be lost forever. AIATSIS is well placed to provide assistance to others in this complicated technical and legal area.

Since the Digitisation project was funded, a range of exhibition projects have been launched online to support public education about topical issues in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs.

Community Archives Workshops

Many organisations such as keeping places, land councils, language centres and health centres have growing collections of tapes, videos, papers, CDs and photographs. These audiovisual collections start off small but often grow to the point of being unmanageable. Audiovisual materials are extremely fragile and vulnerable to heat, dust and humidity – prevalent conditions in Australia – and if not stored and handled correctly will deteriorate.

Several years ago, AIATSIS' Audiovisual Archives program began running workshops for Indigenous communities to provide training in research and recording techniques and the management of audio visual archival collections. The workshop participants are Indigenous people involved with collections of Indigenous material. The workshops are tailored to meet the needs of participants and organisations.

Subjects covered include sound and video recording, taking photographs, archival storage and handling, documentation of collections, copying, preservation, copyright and access issues, digitisation and disaster preparedness.

Workshops have been carried out at the Institute and at other locations. 'Keeping Your History Alive' is a manual produced by AIATSIS to assist Indigenous communities and individuals who are caring for and collecting audiovisual material.

See www.aiatsis.gov.au/ava/KYHAworkshop.html

Digitisation, and Return to Communities

The Institute is addressing an ever-increasing community need to gain access to archive and library materials, and recognises that such access may be facilitated through the provision of digital materials. This service requires the identification of resources that are of keen interest to Indigenous communities, identification of intellectual property holders, clearance of materials for electronic publication, and publication of materials in a manner that allows easy access and navigation by users.

AIATSIS is well versed in this area and readily acknowledges and takes careful account of community sensitivities involved in making such materials available to the 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. For example, without digitisation, unique recordings of ceremonies, language and music might be lost forever. AIATSIS is well placed to provide assistance to others in this complicated technical and legal area.

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Return of Materials to Indigenous Communities (ROMTIC)

The AIATSIS Audiovisual Archive holds photographs and 'rough' unpublished sound and video recordings of languages, songs, ceremonies and oral histories submitted by academics, families and Indigenous organisations from all over the country. While the quality of the material is variable, most of it is unique and irreplaceable, and the copies provided may become an important and treasured part of a family's collection.

For many years the AIATSIS Audiovisual Archive has provided free copies of audio recordings, video recordings and photographs to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients through its ROMTIC (Return of Material to Indigenous Clients) program.

An increasing amount of material is now available through ROMTIC in digital form as its digitisation program provides more materials in these formats.

See www.aiatsis.gov.au/ava/romtic.html

Online Access to Collections

Since the AIATSIS Digitisation Project was funded, a range of online exhibitions have been launched to support family history research, awareness of major events in Indigenous affairs and history and for public education about topical issues in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs. These include:

- Koori Mail Online

- Dawn and New Dawn Magazines;

- To Remove and Protect - Legislation that enabled the forced removal of Aboriginal Children. Annual reports of all state and territory 'Protection Boards' and subsequent government agencies;

- Yes! – The 1967 Referendum: Newspapers, reports campaign material and background information relating to the 1967 Referendum;

- Indigenous Australians at War by Garth O'Connell. This site provides information on Australia's Indigenous servicemen and women, past and present;

- We say Sorry – The National Apology: This collection brings together videos, photos, music and documents about the National Apology, 13th February 2008, into one resource.

Research Program

AIATSIS has a 40-year history as the national research authority in multidisciplinary Indigenous studies. It has a culture of collaborative and supportive research relationships with Indigenous communities throughout Australia and a strong focus on community-based research. Over this period the work has resulted in the development of a library and archive of unparalleled importance to contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Staff within the AIATSIS Research Programs conduct high quality research and administer research grants for projects approved by the Council. Research projects supported by AIATSIS involve many aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories including the arts and expressive culture, language, history and cultural transmission, education health and wellbeing as well as land ownership, governance and development and public policy.

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AIATSIS plays the role of 'interpreter' and 'broker' of Indigenous ideas, practices, and successes into academic or policy terms. We play a similar role, in reverse, for the academy and government

AIATSIS maintains a highly productive interdisciplinary research team who build networks and partnerships to facilitate and coordinate research across academic, community and public sectors.

AIATSIS is continually adding to the research and information held in our collections and we are a secure repository for important materials. However, there is an untapped wealth of material in our collections, and our other resources, that could be rediscovered by Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike.

We have been making energetic efforts to disseminate the results of our research in new ways, as well as data and documentary evidence regarding program successes and failures.

Ethical Research Practice

AIATSIS has a strong and well balanced approach to research and ethics in Indigenous Studies. AIATSIS is regularly consulted on ethics and Indigenous issues. AIATSIS has a Research Advisory Committee and an insitutional Research Ethics Committee.

The Research Ethics Committee (REC) advises the Institute on the ethical aspects of research proposals to be carried out by its staff and grantees as well as on external collaborative research projects to be carried out with AIATSIS staff under the auspices of the Institute. Members of the committee are appointed by the Council in line with guidelines established by the NHMRC.

AIATSIS has recently released reviised Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies (GERAIS) and associated materials. The Guidelines take into account developments in ethical practices over the past decade and emerging trends for the future, with the aim of delivering a coherent policy document to guide ethical research involving Indigenous peoples.

Indigenous Visiting Research Fellowships program

One of the essential functions of AIATSIS is to assist in the training of Indigenous peoples as researchers. The Indigenous Visiting Research Fellowships (IVRF) Program supports Indigenous researchers to visit Canberra in order that they might use the collections and gain access to other organisations and government agencies in Canberra. Of relevance to the National Cultural Policy, the demand from the program for researchers in the field of expressive culture has been notable. The program to date has supported IVRFs undertaking research in visual arts, photography, dance and literature, cultural tourism and cosmetics industries. Importantly, the program has also provided opportunities for the development of Indigenous knowledge's, methodologies and pedagogies and improve the representation of the diversity of cultural perspectives and narratives in many aspects of research.

AIATSIS competitive research grants

For over 40 years, the AIATSIS Grants Program has promoted ethical, community-based research in Indigenous studies. AIATSIS offers approximately 30-40 grants per annum to assist research in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies.

This research may be in areas that include: history (including family and community history); politics, law, and public policy ; health (social, cultural and environmental aspects) and biological sciences; education and cultural transmission; Indigenous knowledge systems; linguistics; social anthropology; archaeology; the arts; relations with Government; and knowledge about and caring for country. Applicants may include Indigenous organisations that are allied with experienced researchers.

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Over 70% of applications are received from Indigenous people who are conducting research themselves or are working in partnership with researchers.

The program is more competitive than the Australian Research Council (ARC) discovery programs and reaches a more diverse 'research' community than ARC programs by reaching outside the university sector and into community based research networks.

See www.aiatsis.gov.au/research/grants/grants.html

AIATSIS Centre for Australian Languages

AIATSIS is currently funded by the Maintenance of Indigenous Languages and Records (MILR) Program of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Office of the Arts to undertake a rnage of projects.

AIATSIS is leading the way with AUSTLANG, the online Indigenous language database that assembles multiple sources of information about Australian languages including the National Indigenous Languages Survey (NILS) data. Other sources of information include: Norman Tindale's Catalogue of Australian Aboriginal Tribes; OZBIB, a linguistic bibliography of Aboriginal Australia and the Torres Strait Islands; MURA, the AIATSIS library's catalogue; and various surveys/research papers on Indigenous languages. It provides easy access to comprehensive information about each Indigenous language to language project workers, researchers, and anyone interested in Australian Indigenous languages. With its unique map based interface AUSTLANG is developing as the appropriate national finding aid for materials relating to Indigenous languages.

See http://austlang.aiatsis.gov.au/disclaimer.php

Native Title Collections support

AIATSIS maintains a Native Title Research Unit (NTRU) funded by the Department of Families and Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) to conduct and facilitate research, organise workshops and seminars, and collect and publish research in native title. The NTRU provides essential research and strategic support to Native Title Representative Bodies (NTRBs) and native title claimants.

Connection material generated by native title claims is of great value, not only to claimants, but to the wider community because it offers a valuable contribution to Australian history, anthropology, sociology, land management and other areas. With this in mind, the Future of Connection Material Project was inaugurated at AIATSIS in 2005 to help Native Title Representative Bodies (NTRBs) ensure both present and future care of connection material.

A major report was completed in 2008 to focus upon issues of arrangement, preservation, and access to connection material. A series of workshops, surveys, and web resources have resulted from directions provided by NTRB staff who have set the goals for the project. The final report lists recommendations for arrangement and description, preservation/conservation measures, access and use protocols, and secure storage. The project has continued informally by supporting grant applications by NTRBs for collection-related projects and disseminating information from professional information-management organisations and societies. On-site evaluations of collection management needs were done for two NTRBs.

Since late 2010, AIATSIS has been working with the Federal Court of Australia to advise on provisions for the Record Authority that will govern the way National Archives of Australia will deal with native title records deposited with them by the Federal Court. They are also examining Record Authorities registered by land councils established under the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976. As NTRBs have their own rules for accessing native title records, work is being done on how Federal access conditions can be in accord with those of NTRBs.

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

In September 2011 a workshop was held at the AIATSIS biennial conference to raise access issues with NTRBs about restrictions on maps and genealogies and to develop some recommendations that could be used by the Court. Work is continuing on access issues, including advising the Court on fields of information to be included in a database for their native title materials.

Blackwords

BlackWords: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander writers and storytellers

BlackWords is a wide-ranging, inclusive and informative discovery resource of structured information relating to the lives and stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander writers and storytellers. BlackWords is a Research Community supported by AustLit: The Australian Literature Resource and is constantly updated by a team of researchers. AIATSIS is the coordinator of content for BlackWords, assisting a team of researchers in Perth, Adelaide, Wollongong and Brisbane to build the database.

Currently there are over 3867 Indigenous authors listed. Information contained on Black Words also includes:

- biographical records for writers and storytellers
- details of published and unpublished works of creative writing and non-fiction
- information about publishers, theatre groups, and awards
- details of books, articles, theses on Indigenous cultures or literatures
- links to other sites and resources for study, teaching and general interest
- full text and links to material published online

BlackWords plays an significant role in documenting contemporary and historical Indigenous culture. Black Words provides access to both general and specific information about Indigenous literary cultures and traditions, providing definitions and articulations of what Black writing and Indigenous literatures are. Black Words also contains records describing published and unpublished books, stories, plays, poems and criticism associated with eligible writers and storytellers and includes works in English and in Indigenous languages.

See http://www.austlit.edu.au/specialistDatasets/BlackWords

Aboriginal Studies Press

The Institute's publishing arm, Aboriginal Studies Press, publishes outstanding authors in many fields of Indigenous studies. In the scholarly area these include: education, health, anthropology, history, land rights, native title and languages.

In the general area they include biography, autobiography and life stories, community stories and, occasionally, poetry and children's literature. Approximately six new titles are published annually and Indigenous authors, in particular, are encouraged to submit material for publication. Researchers who receive AIATSIS grants and research staff of the organisation are encouraged to publish through Aboriginal Studies Press.

The Press also publishes the Institute's prestigious, scholarly journal, *Australian Aboriginal Studies*. Through the Institute's bookshop, the Press sells an array of books, CDs and DVDs, and Ebooks are available on line from numerous resellers.

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