Chapter 4 • Corporate management and accountability

Goal 2
To maximise the role of Australian Indigenous peoples in the activities and services of the Institute

AIATSIS attracts Indigenous people to vacant positions through advertising in Indigenous newspapers and networks in addition to advertising in the mainstream press. Indigenous cadetships and training positions are being identified throughout the Institute to provide paid work experience and to enhance future employment opportunities for Indigenous peoples.

The Institute currently employs 108 ongoing and non-ongoing staff. Twenty seven per cent of those employees identify as Indigenous.

During the financial year the Indigenous Caucus was revitalised with the support of the Principal. The Caucus is an internal working group supported by management, that provides Indigenous staff with a forum to discuss various issues affecting them, including employment issues. Indigenous staff are encouraged to attend regular meetings of the Caucus. The Caucus is consulted separately for comment and input into employment policies and consideration of amendments to our Indigenous Training and Career Development plan, and has been involved in reviewing policies such as the studies assistance guidelines. The Caucus is actively represented at the AIATSIS Consultative Committee, which brings staff and management together to discuss employment issues. Information is regularly shared between these groups.

AIATSIS's Indigenous staff members are also eligible to join the Indigenous APS Employees Network which supports and advocates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interests, values and perspectives in the APS. Indigenous staff members are encouraged to join the Network and participate in discussion groups. Arrangements are in place to advise new Indigenous staff about the Network.

During the year, five Indigenous staff members attended the Indigenous Australian Public Service Careers Workshop for APS 1–4 staff. The workshop helps participants to identify their career aspirations and provides strategies for career development. Feedback from participants is that the course gave them some valuable information and insights into their career needs.

AIATSIS is also involved in the Indigenous Employment Group administered by the Public Service Commission. The Institute is working with the group to develop a survey on early exits from the public service by Indigenous staff members.

Goal 5
To develop and maintain strategic alliances that add value to our activities

As a small agency, AIATSIS has limited resources available to deal with the plethora of accountability, management and reporting policies required to support good corporate governance. The Institute works to improve its effectiveness by joining

with other agencies with similar corporate directions to share policy ideas. During 2003–2004 membership of the Cultural Managers Forum — a group comprising the National Library of Australia, the National Museum of Australia and other cultural agencies — was maintained, to discuss policies on information technology and human resources management.

Staff in Corporate Services have maintained and built on our strategic alliance with the Indigenous Employment Strategy team at the Australian Public Service Commission. The Commission has commented favourably on the Institute's participation in discussions about the State of the Service Report relating to Indigenous employment and our participation in the Commission's Indigenous Employment Strategy.

Executive and Corporate Services staff are members of the Corporate Management Forum known as COMNET which includes human resource managers, financial management and information technology working groups. These forums and groups provide information on issues affecting the Australian Public Service and opportunities for discussion and input to policy development.

Goal 6
To manage efficiently and effectively in a transparent accountable and supportive manner

Corporate Services provides finance, human resources, information technology and building management support to all Institute Programs. This includes assistance with regulatory compliance and accountability requirements; planning for sustainability; and risk management.

Further progress was made on reducing the real cost of corporate support to the Institute; over the past three years, the reduction has totalled about 33 per cent for each staff member:

Corporate support cost indexation
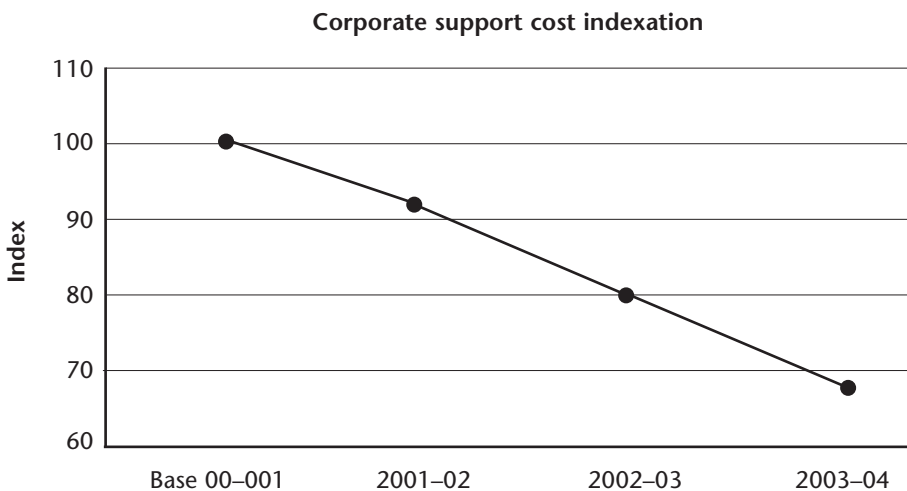
These savings have been reinvested to provide enhanced services.

Planning for the 2003–2004 year identified two activities which required substantial enhancement during the year: improved communication with staff in other programs; and upgrades to information technology services.

Communicating accountability for service delivery

Discussions with staff from other programs during the 2002–2003 year indicated that while changes to activities by Corporate Services were usually supported and seen as worthwhile service improvements, the value of changes was not often understood. It also became clear that copies of policy statements developed by Corporate Services were difficult to find, that not all staff were necessarily aware that changes had been made and that generic advice through 'all staff' emails was not a successful medium to communicate information about Corporate Services activities.

These problems were addressed by a redesign of the corporate Intranet site and the development of a hard copy bi-monthly staff newsletter, *Insights*, delivered to all staff.

Insights was first published in March with the second edition in May. Topics covered include occupation health, safety and welfare, IT security and the management of 'spam' and editorials from the Principal. Initial comments indicate that this initiative is making a positive contribution to staff awareness of Corporate Service's activities.

The new AIATSIS Intranet site was launched in May. The site includes the most requested policy statements, forms and calculators. Additional material will be added as policies are reviewed in the future.

Communications were also enhanced by changes to the information contained in Executive Board of Management reports. These now include activities under way or planned for the near future, to advise staff of forthcoming service enhancements.

Information technology services

A review of IT services in 2002–2003 demonstrated the need for major upgrades of the Institute's IT infrastructure. Equipment had been bought on an ad hoc basis, print equipment was mostly well past its useful life, six different versions of desktop operating systems were being supported and there was no planning for future needs. This lead to substantially increased costs and poor use of IT staff time.

During 2003–2004 contracts for the supply of standard desktop computers and multifunction printers commenced. A standard desktop software environment was established, using the XP version of Windows and Office software suites. This resulted in a large reduction in the number of minor technical problems experienced by staff, allowing IT staff to spend more time dealing with more difficult issues which had previously been set aside.

AIATSIS's status as an educational organisation was recognised by major software vendors who allowed substantial reductions in software licence fees. This had flow-on effects to several other suppliers.

Automated high-speed tape backup systems were installed. This has increased the reliability of backups whilst providing improved support for disaster recovery. This will become more important into the future as the digitisation of archival records generates very large volumes of data.

The EBM recognised the difficulties of providing IT services in a rapidly changing environment, particularly the development of new skills and retention of good staff. Whilst commending IT staff for their outstanding efforts during the year, it was agreed that IT operations could be better provided by a contractor. On 30 June a contract for the provision of IT support was being negotiated with Exceed Systems Integration Pty Ltd and services should commence in August 2004. These services are expected to provide enhanced technical capacity whilst containing cost increases over the contract term.

Overall, during 2003–2004, IT was able to substantially improve system capacity and reliability whilst reducing long-term costs.

A review of IT system security commenced in May 2004; an update of the review completed in November 2002. It follows two incidents where 'hackers' successfully penetrated the Institute's Internet communications.

The current AIATSIS Internet site needs to be updated. Tenders were received in October 2003, but did not proceed, pending decisions on a proposed digital asset management system (DAMS). In June 2004 the Government allocated $1.5m for digitisation activities in the 2004–2005 year, including acquisition of a DAMS.

Finance systems

The Accpac financial system continued to be used during 2003–2004. Deficiencies with this system, noted in previous years, again presented serious problems which were not resolved. Consequently, it was decided to move to a sub-contract arrangement with ATSIS using its SAP R/3 system from 1 July 2004. The Government's decision to abolish ATSIS in April 2004 however, removed this opportunity. Subsequently, Microsoft Great Plains was selected as an alternative finance system. An outstanding effort by finance staff resulted in this system 'going live' on 5 July 2004, only 9 weeks after contract terms were settled. Development of Great Plains and associated banking software has the potential to further reduce processing costs during 2004–2005.

The financial result for the year — a loss of $427,000 — represents a significant improvement compared with the initial budgeted loss of $893,000. The main reason for this is the timing of expenditure.

More extensive use of corporate credit cards to pay accounts has continued to reduce the costs of accounts processing. The use of cards will be reviewed during

2004–2005, as a number of suppliers have commenced charging fees for payment by card, possibly removing the financial benefit of using cards.

A review of publications inventory management resulted in the acquisition of BookNet software, which will provide useful information to support the retail activities of Aboriginal Studies Press (ASP). New storage facilities provide a much improved environment for ASP stock at a saving of 75 per cent of the previous cost.

Human resources

Appointment of new staff in the HR area provided the impetus to offer a wider range of training courses to improve staff skills and to streamline recruitment practices. In addition, significant progress was made on resolving long-term problems with superannuation and leave entitlements, some of which are over ten years old.

AIATSIS has a staff performance management system which aims to provide a forum to discuss an individuals' performance, provide a basis for the provision of training and development opportunities and to assist with workforce planning. Statistics collated during the year indicated that the system may not be performing as expected and needed revising. Initial activities to resolve the problems include continuing discussions in the staff Consultative Committee and planning for additional training for supervisors and a review of work level standards.

The Institute is committed to the continued development of its staff through the provision of training and career advancement. The Institute's Agency Agreement includes a Performance Feedback Scheme.

The Institute operated according to its Human Resource Development Plan and Indigenous Recruitment and Career Development Plan. Copies of the plans are available on request.

Three Indigenous staff from the Ngunnawal Aboriginal Corporation Indigenous Employment Centre were engaged by the Institute for a period of six months. For further detail on Indigenous recruitment and employment provisions see Goal 2, p. 64.

The Institute spent $90,106 on staff development activity during 2003–2004.

A dissection of staff employed at 30 June 2004 is shown on the following page. During the year ten permanent positions were filled. At 30 June 2004 two staff were on leave, one on maternity leave, the other on temporary transfer to another agency. There were twenty-three separations during the year comprised of six resignations, one transfer, fifteen contracts expired and one retirement.

Level	Male	Female	Ongoing	Non On-going	Indigenous	Full Time	Part Time	PWD*	NESB**
Staffing levels and numbers, 30 June 2004									
PEO	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0
SES	2	0	0	2	0	2	0	0	0
Exec 2	2	4	4	3	1	1	6	0	0
Exec 1	11	11	11	9	1	20	0	0	0
APS6	5	13	11	7	6	15	3	1	1
APS5	4	9	6	7	1	12	1	0	0
APS4	7	17	12	13	6	20	5	0	0
APS3	3	9	2	10	4	12	0	0	0
APS2	3	5	2	6	7	7	1	0	0
APS1	1	1	0	2	2	1	1	0	0
Total number	39	69	48	60	29	91	17	1	1
% of staff	36	64	44	56	27	84	16	1	1

* People with a disability
** Non-English speaking background

All staff except our SES Staff are covered by the AIATSIS Agency Agreement 2002–2004. AIATSIS provides a range of non-salary benefits, details of which are set out in the Agreement. A new Agreement is being negotiated and is expected to operate from early in 2005.

The following table shows the range of salaries under the Agency Agreement, by classification:

Salaries	Minimum	Maximum
Executive Level 2	73,717	83,593
Executive Level 1	63,942	69,053
APS Level 6	49,948	57,376
APS Level 5	46,245	49,037
APS Level 4	41,462	45,018
APS Level 3	37,201	40,151
APS Level 2	32,661	36,218
APS Level 1	17,316	26,262
Cadet	9,798	15,960
Apprentice / trainee	15,677	28,741

Four AIATSIS staff are covered by AWAs (one SES, three non-SES). Except for remuneration, the employment conditions in these AWAs are identical to those in the Agency Agreement. One employee not covered by an AWA is paid outside the Executive Level 2 range, as allowed by the Agency Agreement.

Three employees received performance bonuses in 2003–2004, totalling $50,094.

Further information on AWAs and performance bonuses is not provided for confidentiality reasons.

The Institute is committed to promoting a cooperative workplace and to ensuring that there is appropriate participation by staff in the decision–making processes. Both staff and management recognise that the maintenance of coopera-tive workplace relations will provide all staff with an opportunity to participate in decisions that impact directly on them.

The Institute's Agency Agreement 2002–2004 operated during the reporting period; it will expire in December 2004. The AIATSIS Consultative Committee, which brings staff and management together to discuss employment related issues, began discussions on a replacement Agreement. Health and safety, human resource development, workplace diversity and access and equity issues were also addressed through the Institute's consultative mechanisms, ensuring that the Institute's obliga-tions were met whilst maintaining a cooperative workplace environment.

The Institute's program for workplace diversity, set out in the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Workplace Diversity Program, continued operation during the year.

The Agency Agreement includes a number of specific provisions to facilitate the employment and retention of Indigenous staff and recognise the richness and diversity of Indigenous cultures. See Goal 2, p.64 for details.

Occupational health and safety

The Institute has a policy of providing and maintaining the highest degree of health and safety of all employees. It aims to:

- prevent all accidents and ill health caused by working conditions
- protect all employees from any health hazard which may arise out of their work or the conditions in which it is carried out
- place and maintain employees in an occupational environment designed to satisfy their needs for health, safety and welfare at work.

The Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) Committee meets quarterly to discuss OH&S. Measures taken during the year to protect the health, safety and welfare at work of employees of the Institute included:

- the testing of emergency evacuation procedures
- staff training in workplace practices, including the responsibilities of fire wardens
- the provision of equipment needed by staff to deal with OH&S concerns.

No accidents requiring notification under Section 68 were reported. No notices were given to the employer under Sections 30, 46 and 47 during the year, nor were any directions under Section 45 given.

Information management

The first stage of a long-term plan to improve information management was finished in 2003–2004. The TRIM records management system now contains a complete record of all files created since AIATSIS was established in 1963. Work has commenced on 'sentencing' old files for disposal or long-term retention, depending on their historical value.

Initial trials into digitising corporate records began in April 2004. A study on Institute-wide information management needs for the future also commenced. Together these projects will provide a comprehensive database of all AIATSIS information for research and archival purposes.

Building management and environmental performance

There were no major problems with AIATSIS building operations during 2003–2004. Most maintenance problems were rectified under contracts negotiated in previous years.

Planning for revised office layouts continued, with extensive consultations with staff and managers. It is expected that building works will commence early in 2004–2005. During 2003–2004 fit-out for a video editing suite was completed and work on a quarantine room commenced.

AIATSIS occupies a relatively new building with modern controls for energy management, which are designed to minimise environmental effects. Energy use is monitored to ensure the lowest use consistent with archival and office requirements. Natural gas is used for most heating requirements.

Water use is minimised e.g. through the use of dual-flush toilets and by not irrigating lawns around the building.

Used paper is recycled where possible.

Freedom of information

One request for information was received under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* during the year. It was dealt with within the prescribed time limits.

Advertising and market research

The Institute spent $52,192 during the year on recruitment advertising in the press. In addition $7,283 was spent on marketing Institute publications. No expenditure was made to fund advertising campaigns, market research, outdoor, television, radio or cinema advertising or to direct mail advertising organisations.

Service charter

The Institute's Service Charter operated throughout the reporting period. The Charter provides for the monitoring of performance and service provision, and encourages client feedback. Any indications of dissatisfaction on the part of clients are followed up by investigation and, where possible, resolved.

Consultants and contracts

AIATSIS let 12 consultancies during the year with a total estimated value of $196,000. In addition, 13 contracts each valued at $10,000 or more and totalling $415,000 were let. The majority of these contracts were for the supply of equipment. For details of consultancies and major contracts see Appendix 3.

Competitive tendering and contracting

All contracts had provisions allowing access by the Auditor-General.

Exempt contracts

No contracts were exempt from publication in the *Commonwealth Purchasing and Disposal Gazette*.