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Australian Institute of  
Aboriginal and Torres Strait  
Islander Studies

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04  
Annual  
05  
Report



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



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

**Annual Report**

**2004–05**



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

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Photos of Professor Larissa Behrendt and Professor Martin Nakata by Brendan Bell, AIATSIS; Chairperson, Principal and remaining Councillors, David Coltman, AIATSIS; p. 14 Gerald Preiss, AIATSIS; p. 41 Kirstie Parker; p. 45 Otis Williams; p. 54 Clint Shinn, AIATSIS; p. 58 Brendan Bell, AIATSIS; p. 59 Rhonda Black, AIATSIS; p. 65 Alex James, p. 76 photographer unknown, from the JW Schomberg Collection, AIATSIS.

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The Institute logo is taken from a Gu:nani (Kunjen) shield from the Mitchell River region, Gulf of Carpentaria. The shield was purchased by Ursula McConnel in the early 1930s on behalf of the Australian National Research Council and is now part of the AIATSIS Collection.



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

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

The Hon. Brendan Nelson, MP  
Minister for Education, Science and Training  
Parliament House  
Canberra, ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

In accordance with the *Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997*, I am pleased to submit the annual report on the operations of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies for 2004–05.

Councillors are responsible, under Section 9 of the above Act for the preparation of this report. The report is made in accordance with a resolution of the Councillors.

Prof. Mick Dodson, AM  
Chairperson of Council

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## About this report

This report continues the direction taken by the restructuring of last year's, in reflecting outputs as they relate to our goals across the organisation, rather than by individual program area. The goals are listed in the overview chapter which identifies the main program areas that implement them.

The Chairperson's and Principal's contributions together provide a snapshot of the Institute's achievements and challenges throughout the year under review. This year we have broadened the scope of the overview chapter, and moved some detail previously found there to Chapter 4.

Other new features include a general index to supplement the compliance index, and a list of shortened forms. In addition, some of the appendices found in previous annual reports can now be accessed instead on the AIATSIS website.

We would welcome your feedback on this year's annual report. Please contact:

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## Chairperson's message

Forty years can exceed the span of a person's working life, and almost certainly the average working life of an Indigenous man or woman living in Australia today.

At the AIATSIS Conference in November 2004 we celebrated the fortieth anniversary of the formal coming into being of AIATSIS. In my keynote address, under the title 'Forty years of excellence', I expressed my confidence that this milestone of the Institute would be repeated many times over.

During the celebration of our anniversary, we looked with justifiable pride at the historic struggle of our still-young Institute to find its niche in Australian life. We acknowledged that much of the sweat of that struggle resulted not only from establishing AIATSIS as a significant national institution, but also from convincing our own Indigenous community of our role, its value and its significance. That we achieved both in forty years is certainly worthy of note.

As impressive as the achievements of our first four decades have been, there was a subtext to our marking of this significant anniversary. And that was the huge contrast between our short history and the immense depth, breadth and longevity of the cultures that we study, cultures so rich and varied that we can barely begin to represent them through our endeavours and our collections.

Viewed from this perspective, the task ahead of us could be described as daunting. But it is one that we tackle year by year.

This annual report shows a level of relevance and productivity of which I as Chairperson, my fellow members of the Council, and indeed all at AIATSIS can be proud. I believe that we've more than kept faith with the vision of the Institute's founders and those who have followed. And we've risen to the challenge implicit in the trust that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have placed in us.

Council has been particularly heartened by the high level of Indigenous participation in the Institute's Competitive Research Grants Program, with Indigenous researchers—either as individuals or collaborators—in receipt of more than half of all grants awarded.

Perhaps nowhere is the relevance of the Institute's work better illuminated than in our current digitisation endeavours, where cutting edge technologies are juxtaposed with ancient Indigenous cultures.



Prof. Mick Dodson,  
AM



The result—increased accessibility of much of the Institute’s written, photographic, film and audio collections—goes directly to our vision of worldwide knowledge and understanding of Australian Indigenous cultures, past and present. It will benefit all Australians, especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the research and educational communities.

And it comes at a time when, following the demise of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, credible information, knowledge and expertise about Indigenous traditions, histories, and societies—such as that gleaned through research undertaken by Institute staff and grantees—is surely needed more than ever.

Against a re-chiselled Indigenous affairs landscape, events such as the AIATSIS-convened annual Native Title Conference, too, take on new significance. In the words of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Tom Calma, the conference is ‘one of the last remaining forums for Indigenous groups to organise and speak with a single voice’.

A nation’s maturity can be judged by its willingness to ensure that all voices and perspectives are heard. Many of those involved in the founding and development of AIATSIS have come and gone. However, the work of the Institute in the development of thoughtful Indigenous perspectives on native title and a raft of other issues—from social health, regional organisation, and governance to intellectual property, education, language and mediation—has never been more vital.

I would like to acknowledge the commitment and expertise of my colleagues on the AIATSIS Council, and also express my appreciation of the ongoing contribution of the Institute’s membership to the field of Indigenous Studies. And lastly, my sincere thanks to the Institute’s management and staff for their professionalism, cooperation and dedication.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Dodson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Professor Mick Dodson, AM  
Chairperson  
AIATSIS Council

## Principal's report

A year after our move to the Education, Science and Training portfolio, and AIATSIS has emerged invigorated and stronger than ever in its role as Australia's peak multidisciplinary research institution on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies.

Amid significant changes in Australian Indigenous affairs, we've further consolidated our research programs and our partnerships with other research institutions, communities and individuals.

Output by research program staff increased during the year, as did requests from outside the Institute, including from individuals, Indigenous communities, representative bodies, research consortia, universities and government agencies.

There was a high level of successful Indigenous participation in the Institute's Competitive Research Grants Program. More than half of all applications and awards involved Indigenous researchers. We also attracted a number of established Indigenous scholars to work at the Institute over the past year.

AIATSIS has also approached DEST and the Australian Research Council (ARC) to consider our eligibility for the Nationally Competitive Grants Program. Currently our Research Fellows are considered ineligible to apply as lead investigators because the Institute is deemed to be funded primarily for research. However, AIATSIS is required to direct the majority of its resources to its Library and Audiovisual Archive. The issue is that the nationally competitive activity of our research staff may well be under-supported by national standards.

In August, our Chairperson, Professor Mick Dodson, AM, was appointed to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. In May, he was elected Special Rapporteur for this influential committee. As a result, Professor Dodson will be responsible for settling the Forum's final report to the UN Economic and Social Council on a range of issues including economic and social development, culture, the environment, education, health and human rights.

While continuing to earn the regard of our academic peers and allies, in 2004–05 AIATSIS has been very much involved with the wider community. Our academic standards are steadfastly guarded but, at the same time, our doors are open to all who have a genuine interest in Indigenous affairs.

AIATSIS is a secure repository of precious cultural knowledge and materials but it is also a meeting-place. It exists not just in Canberra but across Australia, through our continuous liaison with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and through our virtual presence on the web.



Mr Steve Larkin

This broad AIATSIS community will continue to grow, following the 2005 Budget announcement of almost \$13 million over three years for the Institute's digitisation project. This funding will enable digitisation of a significant amount of the Institute's film, video, photographic and audio collection, providing improved and faster access to material in the archive. The funding will also enable the AIATSIS Library to digitise important historical documents such as Stolen Generations legislation, 'Protectors' reports, mission magazines, and language wordlists of value to communities and researchers.

The Library's collections grew substantially during the year owing to closure of ATSIC libraries in Canberra and Hobart, and the closure of the WA Department of Indigenous Affairs Library, all of which contributed selected material to AIATSIS. The Audiovisual Archives took on the responsibility for the ATSIC Photographic Collection—around 35,000 images that document the history of the activities of the Commission.

Aboriginal Studies Press published new titles on a range of topics from the Stolen Generations and cultural transmission to Aboriginal political history and archaeology. These books were the outcome of close collaboration with authors whose work is of special significance to our community.

Corporate Services continued to ensure the smooth running of the Institute with particular attention to our finance, human resources, information technology and building management support. Excellent advances were achieved in reducing the real cost of corporate support to the Institute, bringing the total reduction to around 44 per cent over four years for each staff member supported. The number of Indigenous staff members rose by eight during 2004–05, increasing the percentage of Indigenous staff from 27 to 32 per cent.

Earlier in this report, I mentioned the role of AIATSIS as a meeting place. No report would be complete without acknowledgment of the outstanding support provided by our Chairperson and Council members, and by the members of the committees that underpin our operations: the Research Advisory Committee, the Native Title Research Advisory Committee, the Research Ethics Committee, the research project reference groups, and the Publishing Advisory Committee. Their deliberations contribute a great deal to the reputation and effectiveness of AIATSIS.

To them, to our staff and finally to our Minister, the Hon. Dr Brendan Nelson, MP, I express my appreciation.



Mr Steve Larkin  
Principal

# Overview

## AIATSIS at a glance

- the **world's leading research, collecting and publishing institution** in the field of Australian Indigenous Studies
- a **network** comprising a Council and committees, members, staff and other stakeholders in urban, regional and remote areas throughout Australia, and abroad
- a **community** working in partnership with Indigenous Australians to carry out tasks that acknowledge, affirm and raise awareness of Australian Indigenous cultures and histories, in all their richness and diversity
- a **team** with a vision of worldwide knowledge and understanding of Australian Indigenous cultures, past and present
- a **staff** of over 100 people, headed by the Principal, engaged in a range of endeavours of interest to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, scholars and the Australian and international public
- a **research team** conducting high-quality research and administering research grants for significant projects approved by Council
- a prestigious **publisher**, Aboriginal Studies Press, producing an extensive array of books, cassettes, CDs, films, videos, reports and the Institute's journal, *Australian Aboriginal Studies*
- a **Library and Audiovisual Archive** managing the world's most extensive collections of printed, audio and visual materials on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, history and societies
- an **accessible source of abundant information** about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies, retrievable by Internet, mail, telephone or email, or by arranging to visit the headquarters on Acton Peninsula in Canberra.

## The Council

**Professor Mick Dodson, AM (Chair)** is a prominent advocate on issues affecting Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as well as other Indigenous peoples around the world. He was Australia's first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. He is currently the Director of the National Centre for Indigenous Studies at the Australian National University, the Special Rapporteur for the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and a Director of Dodson, Bauman & Associates Pty Ltd, Legal and Anthropological Consultants. He holds a Bachelor of Jurisprudence and a Bachelor of Laws from Monash University, an honorary Doctorate of Letters from the University of Technology and an honorary Doctorate of Laws from the University of NSW.



**Emeritus Professor Robert Tonkinson (Deputy Chair)** held the Chair of Anthropology at the University of Western Australia until his retirement in 2003. He is well known internationally in his field of social anthropology for his contributions to the Aboriginal Australian and Melanesian literature. He has worked with Aboriginal people since 1962 and he has published extensively, especially on Western Desert society and culture. His closest links are with the Martu people in the eastern Pilbara, with whom

he has been involved for forty years. A Fellow of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia, he holds a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) and a Master of Arts from the University of Western Australia and a PhD in Anthropology from the University of British Columbia.

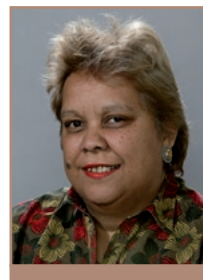
**Mr Eric Bedford** is Chairman of the Malarabah Regional Council. He has strong family and cultural links throughout the Fitzroy Valley in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. He was previously the Executive Director of the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre. He has been active in developing concepts and models for regional autonomy for Aboriginal people to enable communities to exercise their right to self-determination, and in promoting economic development projects in the Fitzroy Valley.





**Professor Larissa Behrendt** is Professor of Law and Indigenous Studies and Director of the Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning at the University of Technology, Sydney. Her research interests focus on the protection of Indigenous rights, particularly those of Indigenous legal and policy issues, particularly Indigenous governance and international human rights. She holds a Doctorate of Laws from Harvard Law School, a Master of Laws from Harvard Law School, a Bachelor of Laws/Bachelor of Jurisprudence from the University of New South Wales and a Diploma of Practical Legal Training from the University of Technology, Sydney. She sits as a Judicial Member on the NSW Administrative Decisions Tribunal (Equal Opportunity Division) and the Serious Offenders Review Council and is a Director of the Sydney Writers' Festival and the Bangarra Dance Theatre.

**Ms Jackie Huggins, AM** is Deputy Director of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit at the University of Queensland, a Co-Chair of Reconciliation Australia and a Director of the Telstra Foundation. Her work spans university, government and community activities. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Queensland, and a Diploma of Education and Honours Degree in History/Women's Studies from Flinders University.



**Ms Raymattja Marika** is the Teacher Linguist at the Yirrkala Community Education Centre, and is on the Board of Directors of Reconciliation Australia. She has a long involvement with issues relating to Aboriginal education and is the author of some 20 papers covering a range of topics in the areas of education, history and ethnobotany. She is a Rirratjingu woman and speaks Rirratjingu, Gumatj and English. She holds a Graduate Diploma in Adult Education and Training from the University of Melbourne and an Advanced Diploma of Teaching (Primary) and a Certificate of Literacy Attainment from Batchelor College, NT.

Ms Natascha McNamara, AM, MBE has had a distinguished career in Aboriginal education. She is extensively involved across a broad spectrum of public life in both the Aboriginal and mainstream communities, with many and varied interests including the media and the international domain. She holds a Bachelor of Business Studies, a Diploma in Teaching and a Diploma in Business Administration.



**Professor Martin Nakata** is Director Indigenous Academic Programs, Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning at the University of Technology, Sydney. He has worked in the field of Indigenous education for over two decades and has published extensively in national and international journals and anthologies. His current research interests are in Indigenous Knowledge systems and online learning possibilities for Indigenous students. He holds a Bachelor of Education with First Class Honours and a Doctorate of Philosophy from James Cook University.

**Mr Michael Williams** is the Director of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit at the University of Queensland. He has been involved in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs for over 30 years and his ongoing research focuses on cultural heritage, archaeology and social history and is conducted in close collaboration with other members of his Goorang Goorang community. His special academic interests include Indigenous language use, cross-cultural communication and the emerging field of Indigenous Knowledge, lecturing in mainstream history, and involvement with Indigenous Australian students' support programs. He has served on the Board of the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), various boards and committees in community organisations and government bodies, academic boards, faculty boards, equity committees and other working parties concerned with Indigenous and non-Indigenous student interests. He holds a MPhil (Qual) from Griffith University, and is formally trained in anthropology and history.



Table 1 sets out the Council meetings held during the financial year and the number of meetings attended by each councillor.

**TABLE 1 ATTENDANCE AT COUNCIL MEETINGS**

NAME	MEETINGS ELIGIBLE TO ATTEND	MEETINGS ATTENDED
Professor M Dodson, AM	3	3
Emer. Prof. R Tonkinson	3	3
Mr E Bedford	3	2
Professor L Behrendt	3	3
Ms J Huggins, AM	3	2
Ms R Marika	3	2
Ms N McNamara, AM, MBE	3	2
Professor M Nakata	3	3
Mr M Williams	3	3

## Functions

The functions of the Institute are set out in Part 3, Section 5, of the *Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Act 1989*:

- to undertake and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies
- to publish the results of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies and to assist in the publication of the results of such studies
- to conduct research in fields relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies and to encourage other people or bodies to conduct such research
- to assist in training people, particularly Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders, as research workers in fields relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 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 societies
- such other functions as are conferred on the Institute by this Act, and
- to do anything else that is incidental or conducive to the performance of any of the preceding functions.



## Corporate goals

To carry out its functions as defined in the Act, the Institute has adopted the following goals:

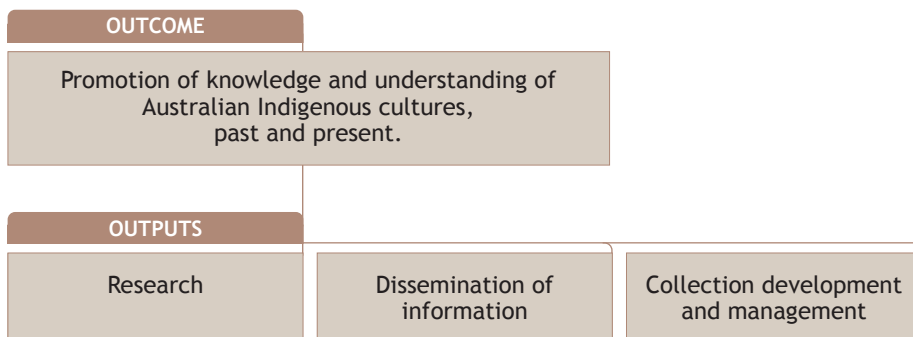
1. to provide leadership and excellence in promoting, facilitating and undertaking high-quality research in Australian Indigenous Studies
2. to maximise the role of Australian Indigenous peoples in the activities and services of the Institute
3. to develop, maintain and preserve well-documented archives and collections, and to maximise access to these, particularly by Indigenous peoples, in keeping with appropriate cultural and ethical practices
4. to create, develop and disseminate a diverse range of publications and services about Australian Indigenous cultures
5. to develop and maintain strategic alliances that add value to our activities
6. to manage efficiently and effectively in a transparent, accountable and supportive manner
7. to promote and market the products, services and capacity of AIATSIS.

Corporate goals 2 and 5 are implemented by all program areas of AIATSIS. Goal 1 is specific to the Research Program, goal 3 to the Library and Audiovisual programs, goal 4 relates primarily to the dissemination program (Aboriginal Studies Press), and goal 6 to Corporate Services. Goal 7 was introduced in 2004–05 and is implemented by all program areas.

## Outcome and outputs structure

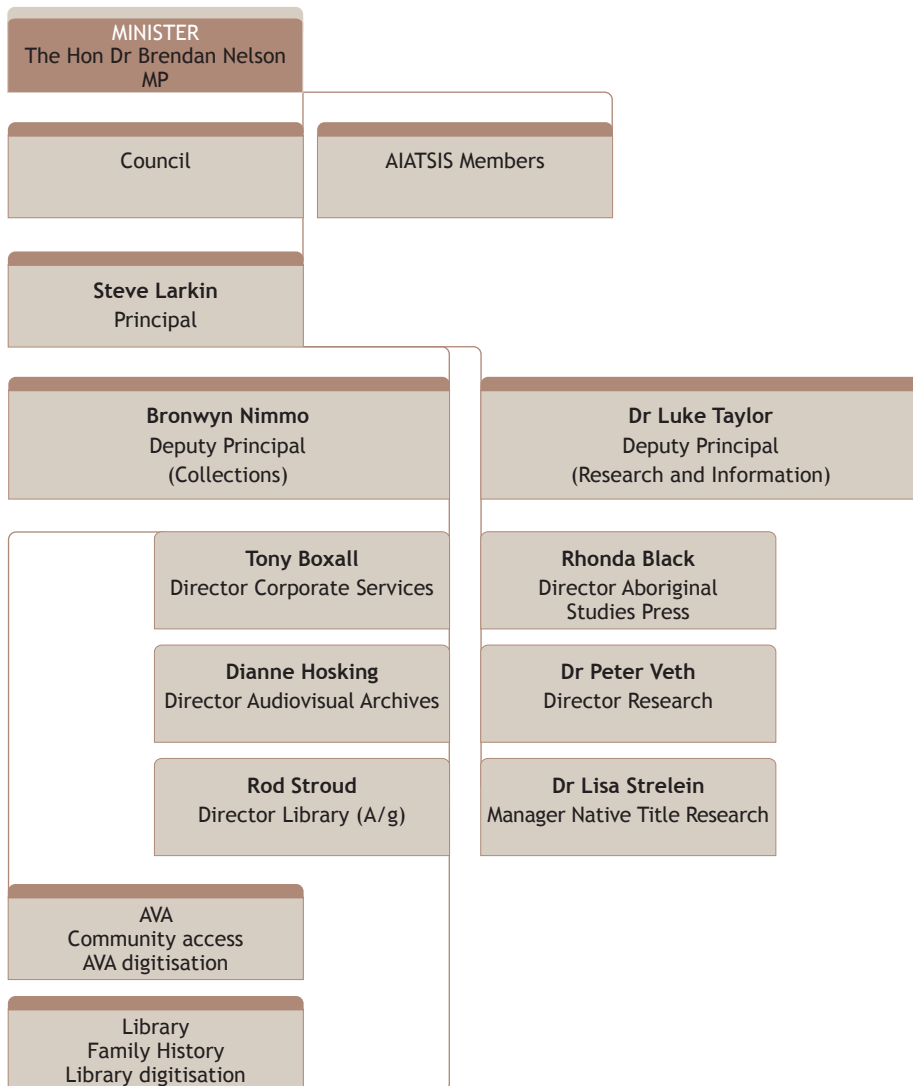
There has been no change to the Institute’s outcome and output structure during 2004–05.

FIGURE 1 OUTCOME AND OUTPUT STRUCTURE



## Organisational structure

FIGURE 2 AIATSIS ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE



The **Executive** ensures the smooth transition of Council directives through to the business plans of AIATSIS programs. The Council-appointed Principal is responsible for the organisation's performance and advises Council on all operational matters. The Principal is assisted by the Deputy Principal (Collections) and Deputy Principal (Research). These senior executive staff are ultimately responsible for ensuring that all Council's policy and budget directives are implemented. They are also responsible for maintaining high-level relationships with the organisation's stakeholders and for program directors' performance. Executive staff assist Council and its committee meetings, liaise with the AIATSIS Members, develop the organisation's media profile, and facilitate senior AIATSIS staff meetings, including those of the Executive Board of Management.

The **Research Program** of AIATSIS undertakes multi-disciplinary research, sometimes collaboratively, in diverse areas of Australian Indigenous Studies. It also contributes to policy formulation in priority areas. In addition, the Research Program supports Indigenous Australian studies, teaching and trainee researchers, and publishes widely in print and via the AIATSIS website. It holds seminars, workshops and conferences and has established a comprehensive set of ethical research protocols. The Native Title Research Unit addresses specific needs arising from the recognition of native title. The Research Program administers the Institute's research grants program and supports the Institute in providing training, facilities and support for Indigenous trainee researchers and visiting and honorary scholars.

**Corporate Services** supports other programs by providing financial, personnel, information technology and building management services. It is also responsible for ensuring that good practices in risk management and business planning are followed by the Institute.

The **Library** contains one of the most comprehensive collections of print materials on Australian Indigenous Studies in the world. Through the AIATSIS website, remote users can access the Library's catalogue, online exhibitions and electronic documents. The Library also provides document delivery, inter-library loans and reference services to all. The Library's Family History Unit can assist any Indigenous Australians with their family history research.

The **Audiovisual Archives Program** is responsible for activities such as facilitating access to archival materials including films by Indigenous communities and researchers, audio recordings and photographs; preserving materials in the audiovisual collections for future generations; developing the collections through ongoing acquisition of material; recording and documenting contemporary events affecting Indigenous peoples; and operation of a collections management system to allow access where this is appropriate.

**Aboriginal Studies Press (ASP)** publishes up to 12 new titles annually in the area of Indigenous Studies. Academic books include history, anthropology, archaeology, land rights/native title, health, education, languages and art, while general books include biography, autobiography and community stories. ASP publishes in print, sometimes with CD-ROMs, and will move into electronic publishing selectively in 2005–06. ASP is the publisher of the best-selling Aboriginal Australia Wall Map and, with Research, publishes the journal *Australian Aboriginal Studies*. ASP runs a bookshop within AIATSIS and uses national and international trade distributors.

## Social justice and equity

AIATSIS is committed to social justice and equity. It has constituted committees and has a policy to maximise the involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Institute's membership, governance, staff and functions. Provision is made in the Institute's Act for the Council to have a majority (five out of nine) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members. Since November 2002 there have been eight Council members in this category. At 30 June 2005, 37 of the Institute's 117 staff were Aboriginal people or Torres Strait Islanders.

One of the greatest contributions that the Institute makes to social justice in general terms is its wide dissemination of information on Indigenous Australians resulting from research. It does this through publishing; through its journal, *Australian Aboriginal Studies*; through seminars, and by answering requests for information.

The AIATSIS collections are open to all for reference and research. Some material is restricted because it is culturally sensitive or because donors or stakeholders have requested that access be limited. These restrictions are largely driven by considerations of social justice and equity.

## AIATSIS Council Room named after bark petition signatory

The naming of the Council room at AIATSIS is a permanent reminder of a revered Indigenous leader, who, as well as being party to momentous developments in the land rights movement, dedicated much of his life to bilingual education.

The DM Mununggurr Ralkan Room was officially named at a ceremony on 24 February 2005 in the presence of members of Mr Mununggurr's family and a group of Djapu clan members from Yirrkala, in north-east Arnhem Land, who performed a traditional ceremony to mark the event.

Mr Mununggurr was head of the Djapu clan and was one of 12 Indigenous leaders who signed the bark petitions sent from the Yolgnu people at Yirrkala to the Commonwealth Parliament in Canberra. The petitions remain on display at Parliament House.

Speaking at the ceremony, AIATSIS Principal Steve Larkin said that the presentation of the petitions had been a defining moment in Australian history.

'The petitions were a vital part of an ongoing campaign for constitutional and societal change,' he said. 'They influenced many changes in the ensuing decades, from the amendment of the Australian Constitution after the 1967 Referendum and the statutory acknowledgement of Aboriginal land rights by the Commonwealth in 1976, to the High Court's overturning of the doctrine of *terra nullius* in the 1992 Mabo case.'

Chairperson Professor Mick Dodson told the gathering that, in addition to his central involvement in the Yirrkala bark petitions, Mr Mununggurr was a respected educator and a major figure in the development of bilingual education in Australia.

Mr Mununggurr was a Council member of AIATSIS for eight years from 1975.



AIATSIS main building plays host to members of the Djapu clan