

CHAPTER 1

Research

Highlights 2006–07

- ACT Prisoner Health Project earned World Health Organization praise
- Results reported from the Success in Indigenous Community Organisations project
- Memorandum of understanding signed with the Australian National University
- AIATSIS led the way in providing support and resources for native title bodies
- Annual National Native Title Conference went from strength to strength

OVERVIEW OF AIATSIS RESEARCH PROGRAM

AIATSIS is the premier national, multidisciplinary research institution focusing on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies. It has a special mission to mobilise this knowledge and increase understanding of Indigenous cultures and societies within Australia and internationally.

AIATSIS has responsibility for a multitude of research programs and services and engages in numerous partnerships with research institutions and Indigenous regional alliances, communities and individuals. The research activities of AIATSIS are conducted by the Research Section and the Native Title

Research Unit. Research projects are primarily carried out by research fellows, who are experts in their fields of study and practice. AIATSIS aims to offer an ideal research environment, increasingly for early- to mid-career Indigenous scholars.

The Research Program maintains wide-ranging expertise in Indigenous studies and policy research. In September 2006, AIATSIS resolved to improve information sharing and cooperation between researchers, and improve the quality of planning and reporting, by centring the activities of the program around six areas of research focus, under two thematic headings:

- Indigenous social and cultural wellbeing
 - Indigenous health and wellbeing
 - education and cultural transmission
 - Indigenous language and cultural expression
- Indigenous country and governance
 - Indigenous governance and government
 - country management
 - native title and traditional ownership.

In addition, in recognition of the need to increase revenues from external sources, the Institute created a new position of Director, Research Business. This position will identify potential sources of income, develop funding applications and manage successful bids. The Director will also facilitate relationships with other organisations, including joints bids, and provide assistance with grant applications.

INDIGENOUS SOCIAL AND CULTURAL WELLBEING

Indigenous health and wellbeing

The health team at AIATSIS, as part of the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health (CRCAH), continued its broad program of research into the social determinants of health and wellbeing. The team, comprising Dr Graham Henderson, Ms Kerry Arabena, Ms Jilpia Nappaljari Jones, Ms Leila Smith, Dr Gordon Briscoe, Dr Geoffrey Gray, Dr Heather MacDonald and Dr Graeme Ward, worked — in various combinations and together with key external research partners — on a number of projects in 2006–07.

Building the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistical Workforce Project

The project, led by Mr Larkin, commenced in mid-2006 to explore ways to develop a strategy to build the capacity of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander statistical workforce in Australia, particularly in health. The project

was adopted by the National Advisory Group on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Information and Data (NAGATSIHID) at its meeting in December 2006. A workshop involving senior representatives from CRAH, AIATSIS, National Health and Medical Research Centre, Department of Health and Ageing, Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FACSIA), Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, National Aboriginal Controlled Community Health Organisation (NACCHO), Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST), Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (OATSIH), the Australian National University (ANU) and Curtin University/NAGATSIHID was hosted by AIATSIS in June 2007. The major outcome from this workshop was a proposal to engage a consultant to develop a strategy. This was subsequently approved by NAGATSIHID, and a funding proposal for the consultant is currently being considered by OATSIH.

Indigenous Health Citizenship Project

This project, undertaken by Ms Arabena, outlines a model of the 'Universal Citizen', and uses a framework that connects Indigenous philosophies with ecological perspectives to underpin strategies for living into the twenty-first century. The framework synthesises the relationships between Indigenous and ecological knowledge, place and sustainable citizen states in Australia. Ms Arabena published preliminary results in a paper entitled 'The Universal Citizen: An Indigenous citizenship framework for the twenty-first century' in a peer-reviewed journal and was invited to present this work at a conference on ecological sustainability and sustainable societies in Halifax, Canada in June 2007.

ACT Prisoner Health Project

This project involved a Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service researcher interviewing ex-prisoners, families of prisoners and ex-prisoners, health service staff, and staff of organisations and agencies associated with the justice system in the Australian Capital Territory and other jurisdictions in Australia. The main outcome of the study has been the development of a model of holistic health care provision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inmates of the new Alexander Maconochie Correctional Centre in the ACT, due for opening in 2008. This model may be applicable to prisons in other Australian jurisdictions. A report on the study will be published and presented to the ACT Government in August 2007. The project was one of fifteen case studies from around the world presented at the World Health Organization's International Symposium on the Social Determinants of Indigenous Health, Adelaide, 29–30 April 2007 (see breakout box, page 7).

Muuji Regional Centre for Social and Emotional Wellbeing Research Project

Phase one of this project involved more than fifty interviews with senior staff from a wide range of service delivery organisations in the domains of education and training, health, employment, justice, local government, welfare and housing located in the Muuji region. The purpose of this research is to explore the nature of services available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in the area of south-eastern Australia covered by the consortium of three Aboriginal Medical Services that make up the Muuji Regional Centre for Social and Emotional Wellbeing, which includes services in the ACT, Wagga Wagga and Narooma. A report on this project is scheduled for completion in the second half of 2007. A similar but smaller Armidale Regional Centre for Social and Emotional Wellbeing research project was completed in April 2007.

National Trachoma and Eye Health Program History Project

This project has involved survey questionnaires, archival and literature research, seminars, an oral history focus group, meetings and presentations, and historical writing by a team of Aboriginal scholars who were directly involved in the program in the 1970s. Two papers, 'They Used to Call It Sandy Blight: Aboriginal health and censorship in Australia' and 'The National Trachoma and Eye Health Program History Project: An Aboriginal perspective', will complete the project. A draft manuscript, 'Beyond Sandy Blight: Five Aboriginal experiences as staff on the National Trachoma and Eye Health Program', has now been completed.

Gurriny Yealamucka Health Service Research Project: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family violence — a whole of community approach

This project, based in Yarrabah, commenced in late 2006. It is a collaboration between Gurriny Yealamucka Health Service, Gindaja Alcohol Rehabilitation Centre, Yaba Bimbie Men's Group, Yarrabah Women's Group, Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council, James Cook University, the University of Queensland, CRCAN and AIATSIS. The project was funded by a grant from the AIATSIS Council, and builds upon a large body of continuing work on empowerment conducted by our research partners in far north Queensland. The project is based on the principle that 'ordinary' people become researchers in their own right and generate relevant knowledge they can use to address issues that are of concern to them. The project is researching the impact of a crime prevention project, a dance group, a rehabilitation project, and new approaches to health promotion and family violence prevention with men's and women's groups. The project is due for completion in December 2007.

‘Australian Aboriginal Studies 2006/2 Health and Society: An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context’ project

This project, led by Dr MacDonald, resulted in the publication of eleven peer-reviewed papers by fifteen authors, ten of whom are Indigenous. The papers cover a broad spectrum of topics, all centred on the social determinants of health, including health policy, nursing education, men’s health, health care during pregnancy, universal citizenship, and specific case studies in rural and remote locations.

Policing illicit drugs in remote local communities

August 2006 saw the launch, in Darwin, of the final report and good practice framework for policing illicit drugs in remote local communities. The reports, prepared by Mr Brendan Delahunty and Dr Judy Putt, were the result of a collaborative project with the Australian Institute of Criminology, which was funded by the National Drug Law Enforcement Research Fund, an initiative under the National Drug Strategy.

Uranium and Indigenous health monitoring

Adjunct Professor Colin Tatz, a Council Honorary Fellow, worked with colleagues to complete a discussion paper, *Aborigines and Uranium: Monitoring the health hazards*, which was published in December 2006. The paper is a follow-up to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies report *Aborigines and Uranium*, published in 1984. The authors emphasise that their results are preliminary and need confirmation. However, the findings are alarming: there are about 90 per cent more cancers (other than lung cancer) in communities in the vicinity of Northern Territory uranium mines than would be expected in comparable communities.

Alcohol-related morbidity in Yalata

Dr Henderson and Dr Maggie Brady continued their work to assess the effects of alcohol sales restrictions on morbidity and mortality in Yalata, South Australia. The final paper in the series will be published during 2007–08.

Education and cultural transmission

Early childhood education transitions

Dr Jo Taylor continued work on an early childhood research project in metropolitan Perth, monitoring the transition of Aboriginal children from preschool to primary school. During 2006 she undertook ethnographic field-work in two Western Australian kindergartens — one an all-Aboriginal kindergarten and the other a mainstream but independent kindergarten. In

2007 a focal group of ex-kindergarten children is being tracked into pre-primary school. The particular focus of the initial transition into the school system has been these children's engagement with school processes and their capacity to form peer friendships in varying inclusive and exclusive contexts.

Indigenous literacy, numeracy and curriculum

Dr Taylor continued her involvement in a large Edith Cowan University project looking at the relationship between literacy and numeracy benchmarking scores, and students' engagement with middle primary to lower secondary school in Western Australia. She has also been asked to sit on the DEST committee assessing curriculum science teaching, to identify matters that might have implications for Indigenous people.

Politics of Australian anthropology

Dr Gray completed *A Cautious Silence: The politics of Australian anthropology*, due for release in August 2007. The book examines the way in which anthropology, as the dominant discipline in the construction of understanding of Indigenous people in the twentieth century, helped define Aboriginal people. It also looks at the politics of anthropology as a discipline, including how it functioned as mediator between administrators and government officials and Indigenous peoples, and the manner in which it represented Aboriginal people to government officials, as well as its own self-perception. Reading anthropology within this frame helps us to better understand the formulation and implementation of twentieth-century Aboriginal policy.

Indigenous language and cultural expression

Endangered Indigenous languages

Dr Patrick McConvell began working with Dr Eva Schultze-Berndt in late 2006 on the Documentation of Endangered Languages, or Dokumentation Bedrohter Sprachen (DoBeS), project funded through the Volkswagen Foundation. The project aims to collect language and cultural materials with several groups in the Victoria River District, Northern Territory, in cooperation with Diwurruwurru-Jaru, the Katherine Aboriginal Language Centre. Dr McConvell carried out fieldwork and, with the assistance of the Institute's Audiovisual Archive, has been collecting digitised tapes which will be transcribed using new software developed for DoBeS. A database of loanwords in Gurindji was completed in June 2007 for the Loanword Typology Project (Max Planck Institute, Leipzig).



AIATSIS at the WHO International Symposium on the Social Determinants of Indigenous Health in Adelaide, April 2007.

New prison, new start: 'getting it right' for Indigenous prisoners

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are disproportionately represented in Australian prisons, and, like other prisoners, are prone to injecting drug use and the risk of hepatitis. But they also suffer a range of additional health and wellbeing problems.

With the ACT Government's decision to build its first prison, Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service (WNAHS) saw it as an important opportunity to 'get the health service right' from the start. To provide the necessary evidence base for this Healthpact ACT agreed to fund the project and provide guidance.

WNAHS engaged Dr Nerelle Poroch to conduct the research, and asked AIATSIS to help coordinate the project. Partners included Muuji Regional Centre, the Australian National University, The Connection, the University of Canberra, and CRCAH. Ex-prisoners and members of their families and support groups were interviewed, together with staff of the many organisations who work

with Indigenous prisoners. As one family member commented, 'She was well when she came out. She was good in gaol. She never got into any arguments and when she came out she was really good. A lot of people need that.' Whereas the difficulties faced by ex-prisoners are typified by, 'I got no support and walked out to nothing — not a flat or somewhere to go to.'

Dr Poroch's research showed that family, health and spirituality are important supporting components for prisoners to develop a strong sense of identity, and reduce subsequent recidivism.

The resulting model of holistic prison health care, applicable in the ACT and elsewhere in the country, deals with all aspects of the prison experience, from entry through to post-release support and re-integration into community life.

The project report is expected to be presented to the ACT Government in August 2007.

Aboriginal Child Language Acquisition Project

Dr McConvell continued his work on this project, in conjunction with the University of Melbourne and University of Sydney. The project involves case studies of three Aboriginal communities designed to find out what kind of language input Indigenous children receive from traditional Indigenous languages, Kriol and varieties of English; what effect this might have on the children's language acquisition; and what the processes are of language shift, maintenance and change resulting from this multi-lingual environment.

Online access to language materials

The Australian Research Council-funded EthnoER (ethnographic electronic research) project, in which Dr McConvell was a chief investigator, has also been completed. The project focused on developing online tools for annotating and analysing Indigenous video and audio cultural material.

AIATSIS has signed an agreement with the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts to conduct two pilot studies into making language materials accessible online in communities in Cape York Peninsula and the Katherine area. The contract has been awarded initially for project methodology and infrastructure development.

Indigenous languages database

Dr Kazuko Obata continued to work on the AUSTLANG (web-based Australian Indigenous languages database) project. The initial compilation of data has been completed and she is now checking and editing the data. The Institute contracted the ANU to upgrade the AUSTLANG language database system with more advanced mapping capabilities, a web interface and additional datasets. This work will continue during 2007–08.

Dr Obata completed a tentative classification of Australian Indigenous languages, based on previous research, and gave a presentation at an Aboriginal languages workshop held in March 2007. Further work by regional language specialists is required on classification of languages that lack previous research.

Dr Obata presented on the project at the Puliima National Indigenous Languages Information Communication Technology Forum held in April 2007, and participated in a language catalogue workshop in Leipzig, Germany in June 2007.

Indigenous music, art and performance

Ms Grace Koch presented a paper at the annual conference of the Australasian Sound Recordings Association at the National Film and Sound Archive in Canberra in August 2006. Ms Koch also worked with Luise Hercus and Colin

MacDonald to complete the musical notation and ethnography of the story of Wurru (crane), as told by Mick McLean Irinyili.

Dr Luke Taylor completed three weeks of fieldwork with Kuninjku language-speaking artists in Maningrida in July 2006. He conducted this research to support the presentation of a keynote address entitled 'Paint as Power Among Kuninjku Artists' to the Re-materialising Colour Symposium at the ANU's Centre for Cross-Cultural Research (CCR) in September 2006. He also presented a paper on Kuninjku bark painters at the CCR and at AIATSIS in the 'Art and Identity' seminar series. Dr Taylor also presented a paper on Kuninjku pencil drawings for the Drawn Together Symposium at the CCR in May 2007. He gave three public floor talks at the *Mumeka to Milmilngkan: Innovation in Kurulk art* exhibition at the ANU's Drill Hall Gallery in November and December 2006 and published an essay in the catalogue. Senior artists and their families from Maningrida, Northern Territory, attended these events.

Indigenous intellectual and cultural property

This year saw the conclusion of a three-year partnership with the Intellectual Property Research Institute of Australia to study legal understandings and protocols surrounding national cultural collections and intellectual property. One result of the project was *Cultural Institutions, Law and Indigenous Knowledge: A legal primer on the management of Australian Indigenous collections*, which was published in July 2006. Another product of the study, the Framework for Protocols with Aboriginal Communities, will be incorporated in AIATSIS Guidelines for Ethical Research in Indigenous Studies.

INDIGENOUS COUNTRY AND GOVERNANCE

Indigenous governance and government

Effective service delivery in remote communities

AIATSIS joined the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre (DKCRC) as an affiliate in July 2006. Visiting Research Fellow in Indigenous Regional Organisation, Governance and Public Policy, Dr Patrick Sullivan, worked with the DKCRC to investigate impediments to effective service delivery in desert settlements and regions.

Dr Sullivan successfully negotiated a research agreement and set of research topics with the Ngaanyatjarra Council of central Western Australia. The research will concentrate on whole-of-government policy with particular attention to the Ngaanyatjarra Regional Partnership Agreement and its subsidiary Shared Responsibility Agreements.

Dr Sullivan also undertook an AIATSIS Council-identified project on the operations of the Indigenous Land Corporation in the Kimberley region.

Barrie Dexter papers

Ms Heidi Norman was commissioned to conduct research on papers donated to AIATSIS by Mr Barrie Dexter. Mr Dexter was chief administrator of the Council for Aboriginal Affairs and first head of the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs during the decade following the 1967 Referendum, a period of considerable change in Indigenous affairs. Ms Norman's report will be available in conjunction with the AIATSIS Library's finding aid on Mr Dexter's papers.

Success in Indigenous Community Organisations

Dr Julie Finlayson and Ms Jo Lunzer completed the Success in Indigenous Community Organisations project, funded by the Australian Collaboration. The project initially involved thirteen case studies, to identify lessons that might be learned from successful organisations.

Funds were also provided by the Australian Conservation Foundation and the Poola Foundation (Tom Kantor Fund) for three additional case studies in successful management of conservation reserves. Ms Toni Bauman and Dr Dermot Smyth studied Indigenous partnerships and joint management of the Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge) National Park, the Dhimmurru Indigenous protected area and the Booderee National Park. The findings from these case studies were presented at the AIATSIS seminar series 'Country, Law, Knowledge and Culture: Indigenous natural and cultural resource management in northern Australia' in June 2007.

The project resulted in a report directed to Indigenous communities and organisations, *Maps to Success*, and a policy paper for relevant funding agencies and government programs.

Indigenous country management

Kimberley Regional Sustainability Project

Mr Steve Kinnane continued his collaborative work on the Kimberley Regional Sustainability Project with the Kimberley Land Council, initially concentrating on the Broome–Derby–Fitzroy Crossing region. Workshops were held with traditional owners and facilitators for the Salt Water Country Project, progressing three case studies focusing on cultural and natural resource management issues at the Prince Regent River (Wanambul), Berkley River (Balangarra) and Horizontal Waterfalls (Talbot Bay) sites.

These sites are experiencing increasing tourist pressure, requiring heritage conservation and management measures, with concomitant economic

development opportunities for local communities. The Minbi Caves and Mt Pier Station are the key study sites in the Fitzroy Valley. A regional overview of the Fitzroy Valley has been identified by traditional owners and the executive of the Kimberley Land Council as a core area in need of research.

Cultural heritage protection

Dr Peter Veth completed the *Dampier Archipelago National Heritage Listing Report* for the then Department of the Environment and Heritage and made a parliamentary presentation on the report. These are important contributions to the government's decision to include the Archipelago on the National Heritage List.

Dr Veth continued his work on the Canning Stock Route, and participated in drafting an application to the Australian Research Council for a substantial linkage grant to examine management, cultural heritage, interpretation and training issues on the route. The application was successful, and a significant grant was awarded to the Ngaanyatjarra prescribed body corporate and partners. The Canning Stock Route will likely be nominated for World Heritage listing.

Dr Veth also completed the final text for a monograph on the Aboriginal history of the Montebello Islands, which will be published by *British Archaeological Reports*, Oxford, and finished a chapter for a Cambridge volume on Aboriginal histories.

Cultural heritage and tourism

Dr Graeme Ward finalised fieldwork in the Daly River–Wadeye–Fitzmaurice River region, in collaboration with traditional owners and members of the Kanamkek-Yile Ngala Museum, Wadeye Aboriginal Languages Centre and Thamarrurr Rangers. The research focuses on cultural heritage places of significance to traditional owners that are, or might be, subjects of tourism initiatives, and that are related to the recent history of the area.

Sites with rock markings are major loci of tourism developments, and making assessments and developing awareness of the impact of tourism on heritage places are central concerns. The Wadeye Aboriginal Languages Centre is updating a popular work on history and culture of the Wadeye area, and assisting to develop resources on local history requested by community members, Thamarrurr school and regional council, using both written and oral sources.

Native title and traditional ownership

The Institute's native title activities are conducted primarily through its Native Title Research Unit (NTRU). The NTRU plays a central role in facilitating the recognition and protection of Indigenous land rights by contributing to the

capacity of claimant communities, producing timely research, coordinating information and promoting policy debate within the native title system. The NTRU commenced a new three-year research and services program in July 2006. The activities of the NTRU are supported chiefly through a funding partnership with the FaCSIA, with some specific research projects attracting funding from other project partners.

The work of the NTRU this year coincided with the implementation of an extensive Australian Government program of reforms to the native title system and the introduction of the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006*. The NTRU's 2006–09 research program addresses emerging issues relating to taxation and the distribution of benefits, authorisation and Indigenous decision making, native title corporations and connection requirements.

The NTRU provides high-quality independent research and policy advice through the outcomes of its research projects and ongoing publications. The unit maintains a comprehensive website (as part of the AIATSIS website) that provides access to a wide range of native title resources and publications including the *Native Title Resource Guide*, research resource pages, the monthly *What's New*, the bi-monthly *Native Title Newsletter*, and *Land, Rights, Laws: Issues of Native Title*, a peer-reviewed issues paper series. The NTRU also conducts outreach activities such as the annual Native Title Conference and workshops that engage the native title community, practitioners, the courts, government agencies and other interested parties.

Taxation, trusts and the distribution of benefits

Taxation, trusts and the distribution of benefits are urgent issues for native title claimants, their organisations and the governments and agencies that deal with native title transactions. The NTRU convened a one-day workshop for Native Title Representative Bodies and Native Title Service Providers (NTRBs) senior professional officers in September 2006. Dr Lisa Strelein completed a discussion paper for and gave a presentation at the workshop. A report was published detailing the current issues associated with post-determination benefits, the scope and scale of agreements, and the legal requirements for creating a charitable trust and maintaining charitable trust status, as well as practical issues in creating a trust and effective distribution policies.

The project team and partners at the Aurora project (University of New South Wales and Monash University) will now examine current practice, develop scenarios and coordinate expert pro bono legal advice to improve the available knowledge base in this area.



AIATSIS Chairperson Professor Michael Dodson, giving the Mabo Lecture at the Native Title Conference, Cairns, June 2007. Photo courtesy of Leigh Harris, Ingeous Studios.

Prescribed bodies corporate

AIATSIS has taken the lead in developing resources for the emerging sector of native title prescribed bodies corporate (PBCs), the entities established to hold and manage native title after a successful determination. The NTRU's work this year has directly influenced policy development and communication between government and PBCs. The Australian Government's review of PBCs recommended greater support and coordination of information and the development of resources, particularly by AIATSIS.

In December 2006, the NTRU hosted a workshop for NTRBs on current policy and practice relating to PBCs. A workshop report has been published that details the reforms proposed by the Australian Government for PBCs (with presentations by senior officers from the Attorney-General's Department and FaCSIA), the design of PBCs, the relationship between PBCs and NTRBs, the roles and aspirations of PBCs and directions for future research.

The workshop was followed by a national meeting of PBCs in April 2007. The meeting was the first of its kind and brought representatives from twenty-seven PBCs nationwide together with representatives of government departments who may be able to assist PBCs in meeting their aspirations (see breakout box page 16).

Dr Strelein gave a presentation to the Native Title Consultative Forum (convened by the Attorney-General's Department and made up of state governments, native title institutions and peak bodies) about the PBC project in March 2007. In June she undertook a preliminary trip to the Torres Strait where over half of the existing PBCs are located.

Ms Jessica Weir prepared an issues paper on the current operating context for PBCs and Ms Lara Wiseman developed draft resources and toolkits for PBCs seeking to access funding and development opportunities. Mr Tony Lee, Indigenous facilitator and mediator, joined the project on a short-term Indigenous Visiting Fellowship during May and June 2007. Mr Lee facilitated the workshop and national meeting and conducted a further session at the annual conference. Ms Bauman prepared a submission based on the input from NTRBs and native title groups to the design of the Australian Government's new guidelines for funding of PBCs.

The NTRU has successfully negotiated sponsorship for the PBC project from the Minerals Council of Australia to facilitate participatory case studies. The Office of the Registrar of Aboriginal Corporations has also joined as a research partner and agreed to produce PBC-specific materials and guides in relation to the transition to and requirements of the new *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006*.

Role of applicants, authorisation and Indigenous decision-making

The decision-making processes within Indigenous groups are pivotal in the native title process, in resolving the scope of claims, the nature of native title groups, issues of representation and the distribution of rights within native title groups. As part of this research project, in March 2007 Ms Bauman facilitated the Family Violence Prevention Legal Service: Annual Solicitors Workshop in Canberra, which focused on working in communities where there are family feuds. The NTRU also undertook a collaborative project on authorisation and resolution of boundaries and groups with the Queensland South Native Title Services' Ms Valerie Cooms and Mr Tony McAvoy, which was presented to the annual Native Title Conference and will result in a report to be published in 2007. Ms Tran Tran also developed legal resources on authorisation, which were published online as a part of the NTRU research resource pages.

Although the Indigenous Facilitation and Mediation Project (2003–06) came to an end last financial year, several noteworthy tasks from the project were completed during 2006–07. Ms Bauman gave a final seminar on the project at AIATSIS in July 2006 and participated in meetings during July and August with the National Alternative Dispute Resolution Advisory Council, the Office of the Registrar of Aboriginal Corporations, the Attorney-General's Department and the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health to present the project

findings and discuss implementation of the project's outcomes. Three resources arising from the project were printed and distributed: an evaluation toolkit, a workshop report and a final report. The project's website was also updated with final publications and modification of content to reflect the completion of the project. The NTRU website will continue to operate, providing access to a wide range of information, publications and resources.

As a result of the project and the findings of the National Alternative Dispute Resolution Advisory Committee, the Attorney-General's Department has dedicated a position within the department to work on Indigenous dispute resolution and the Federal Court of Australia instigated a case study research project on Indigenous alternative dispute resolution. AIATSIS retains an advisory role on the Federal Court project.

State Connection Requirements Project

The State Connection Requirements Project is an ongoing NTRU research project. A background paper prepared by Dr Strelein and Ms Tran Tran examined the processes currently applied in each state to assess connection to country prior to agreeing to a consent determination and the pressing criticisms of the process. The confidential report was circulated to research participants and NTRBs in September 2006.

The NTRU and National Native Title Tribunal have agreed to coordinate a workshop for state parties and NTRBs to examine how processes for assessing connection in native title may be improved. The workshop has been scheduled for July 2007.

Gunditjmara Land Justice Project

At the request of the Gunditjmara native title group, the NTRU has been conducting this land justice project. Ms Weir and Ms Amy Williams travelled to south-west Victoria to record oral histories and conduct interviews with the claimants when the consent determination was handed down on 30 March 2007. Their fieldwork will provide the basis for an electronic resource file and community booklet documenting the Gunditjmara land justice struggle.

Current law, policy and practice

The NTRU continues to provide updates and analysis of key developments in native title law, policy and practice. Ms Elizabeth McDonald was engaged by the NTRU to produce annotated summary tables of recognised rights and interests arising from determinations of native title. Dr Strelein completed an issues paper on the *Bennell* (Noongar) decision. Dr Strelein and NTRU intern Ms Ally Foat also completed a review of the Australian Government's native title reform process.



The first national meeting of Prescribed Bodies Corporate, held at AIATSIS in Canberra, 11–13 April, was a unique opportunity to meet with other PBC members facing similar opportunities and challenges across Australia.

Sharing the challenges: first national PBC meeting

The members of PBCs, or native title ‘prescribed bodies corporate’, are responsible for looking after their country on behalf of their people. They’re all keenly aware of the work of the generations who’ve gone before, and the younger generations to follow. Their responsibilities cover vast tracts of the continent but their apparent wealth in land rarely translates into working funds to help them administer their obligations, or even to travel to share their concerns with others.

So it was an important step forward when the AIATSIS Native Title Research Unit gathered representatives of several of these scattered corporations in Canberra in April 2007. They met national government representatives, shared their hopes and frustrations, learned about new legislation, and put forward their views. As one participant commented, ‘Governments need to

develop a strong relationship of trust and confidence in PBCs directly’.

What became clear was the complexity of the obligations that PBCs have undertaken, and the scarcity of resources to do justice to their responsibilities. While some are engaged in large-scale mining and other economic developments, others seek to carry out cultural heritage and social programs — but nearly all are strapped for cash.

For many participants, just getting together was a major boost. One commented, ‘Came here with nothing but going away with a whole lot of ideas’.

The meeting put a strong case for more direct funding, for administrative support and for further opportunities to meet and discuss the issues. The NTRU’s assistance to PBCs continues, and it hopes to be able to cast the net wider on future occasions.

Management of connection material

The NTRU has continued to work with NTRB research staff, information managers and librarians to formulate plans for NTRBs to establish standards and develop skills for the proper management and secure storage of connection material and other original documents generated by the native title process.

LINKS WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

During the year, AIATSIS formalised its relationships with a number of key partners. The Institute's close partnership with the Australian National University has led to extensive interactions over the last forty years, and a formal memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed on 21 February 2007. The MOU recognises the separate identities of the two organisations and their shared interest in encouraging the growth of research activity in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies. Among many benefits, the MOU arrangements will assist AIATSIS staff to obtain adjunct positions at the ANU to support student supervision, encourage staff training secondments and facilitate access to research collections.

During the year AIATSIS held formal discussions with senior staff of the Charles Darwin University. The discussions focused on encouraging joint applications for additional research funding and exploring research areas where staff might collaborate. A primary outcome was the development of a joint research seminar series in the first semester of 2007, 'Indigenous Natural and Cultural Resource Management in Northern Australia'. Participants in Canberra, Darwin and Broome were linked in real time by video-conference.

In April 2007, Mr Steve Larkin, Principal, and Dr Luke Taylor, Deputy Principal, Research and Information, of AIATSIS met with the chief executive officer of the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS), Dr Ian Poiner, and other senior staff to discuss possible joint research on the Indigenous use of marine resources. AIMS, a research agency in the Department of Education, Science and Training, has much in common with AIATSIS. Discussions focused on the need for social research on new commercial ventures that use marine products and on industry development that may affect Indigenous use of marine zones.

AIATSIS undertook more than thirty discrete research projects in addition to ongoing research-centred activities such as conferences, workshops and seminars. Approximately 85 per cent of projects involved external partners and/or sponsors (see Table 2). The Institute's emphasis on collaborative research is supported by developing key links and coordinating research among community, government and private sectors.

Table 2: AIATSIS research partners and sponsors

Indigenous health and wellbeing
Key research partner Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health
Building the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistical Workforce Project <i>Project partner:</i> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
ACT Prisoner Health Project <i>Research partners:</i> Winunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Medical Service, National Centre for Indigenous Studies, Australian National University, Muuji Regional Centre, University of Canberra, The Connection, World Health Organization <i>Research sponsor:</i> ACT Health
Muuji Regional Centre for Social and Emotional Wellbeing Project <i>Research partners:</i> Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Services, Riverina Medical and Dental Aboriginal Corporation, Katungul Aboriginal Corporation and Community Medical Service, Armadale Regional Centre for Social and Emotional Wellbeing
National Trachoma and Eye Health Program History Project <i>Project sponsor:</i> The Fred Hollows Foundation
Gurriny Yealamucka Health Service Research Project <i>Project partners:</i> Yarrabah Aboriginal Medical Service, James Cook University <i>Project sponsor:</i> AIATSIS Council
Alcohol-related morbidity in Yalata <i>Project partner:</i> Australian National University
Additional health and wellbeing research partners NAGATSIHID Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Branch, Department of Health and Ageing Diabetes Australia
Indigenous language and cultural expression
Endangered Indigenous languages <i>Research partner:</i> Katherine Aboriginal Language Centre <i>Research sponsor:</i> Volkswagen Foundation
Aboriginal Child Language Acquisition Project <i>Research partners:</i> University of Melbourne, University of Sydney <i>Research sponsor:</i> Australian Research Council
Online access to language materials <i>Research sponsor:</i> Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts
Indigenous languages database <i>Research partner:</i> Australian National University

Hunter-gatherer language — comparative collection

Research partner: Max Planck Institute

Indigenous country and governance**Effective service delivery in remote communities**

Research sponsor: Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre

Indigenous Land Corporation Project

Project sponsor: AIATSIS Council

Success in Indigenous Community Organisations

Research sponsors: Australian Collaboration, Poola Foundation (Tom Kantor Fund), Australian Conservation Foundation

Management of conservation reserves

Research sponsors: Australian Collaboration, Poola Foundation (Tom Kantor Fund), Australian Conservation Foundation

Indigenous country management**Kimberley Regional Sustainability Project**

Research partner: Kimberley Land Council

Research sponsor: Kimberley Development Commission

Native title and traditional ownership**Key research sponsor**

Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

Taxation, trusts and the distribution of benefits

Project partners: Aurora project (University of New South Wales and Monash University); Centre for Indigenous Governance and Development, Massey University, Aotearoa New Zealand

Prescribed bodies corporate

Research partner: Office of the Registrar of Aboriginal Corporations

Research sponsor: Minerals Council of Australia

Role of applicants, authorisation and Indigenous decision making

Project partner: Queensland South Native Title Services

State Connection Requirements Project

Project partner: National Native Title Tribunal

Indigenous peoples and rivers management: the Murray–Darling

Research partners: Murray and Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations

Indigenous Natural and Cultural Resource Management in Northern Australian seminar series

Research partners: Charles Darwin University, Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Service, Northern Land Council

GRANTS

The Research Advisory Committee (see page 23 for further information) approved thirty-four new research grants totalling \$680,000 during the year. In addition, eight grants to support attendance at conferences, totalling \$21,285, were approved. The committee noted that there was increasing engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants with the Research Grants Program from 51 per cent of applications in 2005 to 62 per cent in 2007.

Research Ethics Committee

The AIATSIS Research Ethics Committee (see page 24 for further information) requested that a standard set of 'informed consent' principles be developed for grant applicants, and that the impact of the *Privacy Act 1988* on research be reviewed.

Workshop on winning and delivering research grants

AIATSIS convened a grants workshop to respond to observations that some Indigenous applications were positive in conception, but less competitive in project planning and application skills, or failed to show a sufficient familiarity with research principles to be successful. This trend is illustrated in Figure 3, which shows consistently lower success rates for Indigenous applicants, compared with non-Indigenous applicants.

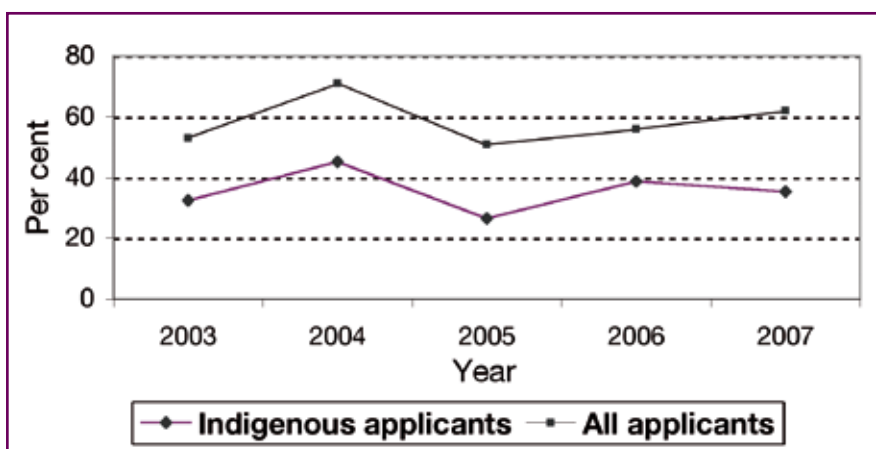


Figure 3: Comparison of research grant success rates

The workshop, held in December 2006, focused on:

- developing research designs and plans with a clear methodology
- linking community researchers with local and national research institutions
- profiling existing collections, archives and databases which may be useful to support the development of research plans
- ensuring that applications comply with the AIATSIS Guidelines for Ethical Research
- fostering best-practice projects and studies with regional or national implications.

Thirteen Indigenous participants attended, and all reported that the workshop was useful in developing their skills. The Research Advisory Committee subsequently noted that the overall quality of grant applications for the 2007 round was higher, and represented better compliance with the grant guidelines.

CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS

AIATSIS seminar series

The AIATSIS seminar series was again a great success. Themes this year were:

- ‘Aboriginal Art and Identity’. This seminar was held jointly with the ANU. A significant number of AIATSIS research grantees, staff and visitors who are working on projects that explore various aspects of Indigenous art production and how this production relates to personal and group identity were invited to participate. One of the common themes to emerge from this series is how individual artists and groups create and maintain their identities.
- ‘Country, Law, Knowledge and Culture: Indigenous natural and cultural resource management in northern Australia’. Held in conjunction with Charles Darwin University, this series focused on natural and cultural resource management in action, and showcased a range of practical projects and research activities across northern Australia.

Native Title Conference 2007

The annual national Native Title Conference remains the leading Indigenous policy conference in Australia and a flagship event for AIATSIS. This year the Native Title Conference took place on 6–8 June in Cairns, Queensland, and its theme was ‘Tides of Native Title’. The conference was co-convened by the North Queensland Land Council and hosted by the Gimuy Walubara Yidinji people. The conference focused on the ebb and flow of native title law, policy and practice since the High Court decision in *Mabo* fifteen years ago and the relationship between native title, Indigenous communities and the environment.

The conference attracted nearly 600 delegates attending sessions with more than 150 speakers. This year also saw the involvement of 350 delegates from native title representative bodies and native title groups, as well as all of the government institutions and programs involving native title and management of native title lands.

The conference attracted support from a diverse range of sponsors from both the public and private sector, including FaCSIA, Indigenous Land Corporation, Indigenous Business Australia, Attorney-General's Department, The Christensen Fund, Minerals Council of Australia, Newmont Mining, Reconciliation Australia, Plan B Trustees, National Museum of Australia, Wet Tropics Management Authority, Advanced Indigenous Business, Compass Resources and Mallesons Stephens Jaques.

Nationally significant presentations included the annual Mabo Lecture, which was introduced by Mrs Bonita Mabo and given by Professor Michael Dodson, and a keynote address by Ms Henriette Marrie, a local traditional owner and regional director of a global philanthropic group, The Christensen Fund. North Queensland Land Council Chairperson Mr Terry O'Shane gave plenary presentations at the conference. Mr Graeme Neate, President of the National Native Title Tribunal; Justice Robert French; the Registrars of the Federal Court and Tribunal; Aboriginal Social Justice Commissioner Mr Tom Calma; and Judge Layne Harvey from the Maori Land Court in Aotearoa/New Zealand were among the many nationally significant speakers.

The conference involved a diverse range of events and activities to reflect the dynamic array of delegates and themes. Events included pre-conference workshops for native title representative body delegates, Indigenous Talking Circles and performances by Gimuy, Torres Strait, Yalanji and Yarrabah dancers.

RESEARCH VISITORS PROGRAM

AIATSIS is a national leader in research in Indigenous studies, with internal expertise being augmented and invigorated by visitors to the program. The AIATSIS Research Visitors Program provides opportunities for visiting scholars and students to participate in the activities of the program and to exchange knowledge.

Council Honorary Fellows:

Adjunct Professor Colin Tatz

Dr Gordon Briscoe

Dr Les Hiatt

International visitors:	
Dr Manley Begay	Native Nations Institute, University of Arizona, USA (July 2006)
Dr Manuhua Barcham	Centre for Indigenous Governance and Development, Massey University, Aotearoa/ New Zealand (March 2007)
Visiting fellows:	
Dr Sujatha Kalimili	School of Education and Community Studies, University of Canberra (ongoing)
Mr David Nash	linguist (ongoing)
Mr Tony Lee	Indigenous facilitator and mediator, Indigenous Visiting Fellow (May–June 2007)
Mr Mark Crocombe	Kanamkek-Yile Ngala Museum, Wadeye (June–July 2007)
Ms Narelle Poroch	Prisoner Health Project (July 2006–2007)
Student interns:	
Ms Juliet Badics	Adelaide University (July–August 2006)
Ms Ally Foat	Griffith University (January–February 2007)
Ms Sarah Menz	University of Canberra (February–June 2007)
Ms Corina O’Dowd	Australian National University (June–July 2007)
Ms Thao Pham	La Trobe University (June–July 2007)

RESEARCH ADVISORY BODIES

The quality, independence and ethics of the research activities of AIATSIS and its grantees are subject to oversight by the statutory Research Advisory Committee, the Native Title Research Advisory Committee and the Research Ethics Committee, which make recommendations to the AIATSIS Council. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a major role to play as members of these and other committees (see also Publications Advisory Committee, page 32).

The **Research Advisory Committee** assesses applications made to the Institute for research grants, and makes recommendations to the Council in relation to research matters and applications for membership of the Institute. The committee comprises three members of the Council appointed by the Council; eight members of the Institute, elected by members of the Institute in accordance with the Institute’s rules; and the Principal.

During 2006–07, the eight elected members of the committee and their areas of expertise were:

Mr Kim Akerman	archaeology
Ms Jeannie Bell	linguistics
Dr Gaynor Macdonald	social anthropology
Dr Colin Pardoe	health and biological sciences
Dr Kaye Price	history
Associate Professor Lester-Irabinna Rigney	education and cultural transmission
Mr Russell Taylor	public policy, politics and law
Ms Christine Watson	arts

Council representatives on the committee were Mr Bedford, Ms Marika and Mr Williams.

The committee met twice in 2006–07, and its meetings were chaired by Principal and ex-officio member Mr Steve Larkin.

The **Native Title Research Advisory Committee** provides advice to the Principal on the NTRU’s research program. Committee members are appointed by the Council for terms of two years. The committee met twice in 2006–07.

A new committee was established in late 2006. The members of the committee at 30 June 2007 were:

Council members
Professor Michael Dodson, AM
Mr Michael Williams
Ex officio members
Mr Steve Larkin (Principal)
Dr Luke Taylor (Deputy Principal, Research and Information)
Experts in the field of native title
Dr Gaye Sculthorpe, AM (Member, National Native Title Tribunal)
Mr Wayne Bergmann (CEO, Kimberley Land Council)
Dr Kingsley Palmer (Consultant anthropologist)
Mr Robert Blowes (Barrister)
FaCSIA representative
Mr Greg Roche (Manager, Land Branch)

The **Research Ethics Committee** is concerned with the clearance of ethical aspects of community-based research proposed by the Institute’s staff and by grantees, as well as 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 categories established by the National Health and Medical Research Council. The committee met twice during the year.

The members of the committee were appointed for two-year terms in 2006–07:

Bishop George Browning	minister of religion, or Aboriginal Elder or equivalent
Ms Jennifer Clarke	lawyer
Mr Graeme Evans	layperson
Ms Christine Grant	Chair
Mr Mark McMillan	person with knowledge of, and current experience in, areas of research regularly considered by the committee
Dr John Thompson	person with knowledge of, and current experience in, the care, counselling or treatment of Indigenous people
Dr Laga Van Beek	layperson.

NATIONAL RESEARCH PRIORITIES

In 2002, the Prime Minister announced Australia's National Research Priorities (NRPs). These are An Environmentally Sustainable Australia, Promoting and Maintaining Good Health, Frontier Technologies for Building and Transforming Australian Industries, and Safeguarding Australia. The NRPs are designed to focus the Australian Government's research effort into those areas that can deliver significant economic, social and environmental benefits to Australia.

All Australian Government research agencies and funding bodies are expected to enhance the scale and focus of research effort in the priority areas by increasing the level of inter-institutional and inter-disciplinary collaboration and by fostering networks of research activities.

As set out in this chapter, and summarised in Appendix 3, AIATSIS has continued to commit substantial resources to meeting the NRPs. Further information will be published on the AIATSIS website.