CHAPTER 4

Corporate governance, management and accountability

Highlights 2006–07

- Completed migration of network from Novel to Microsoft
- Implemented risk management procedures and training
- Implemented a Continuous Improvement Plan
- Transferred selected finance processes from manual to electronic
- Developed the Business Continuity approach

OVERVIEW

Enabling legislation

AIATSIS operates under the *Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Act 1989* (the Act).

Responsible Minister

The responsible Minister is the Minister for Education, Science and Training, the Hon. Julie Bishop, MP.

Council

Under section 43(1) of the Act, the Minister may ask the Council of the Institute to provide advice on aspects of the culture, history and society of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders. The Council consists of

- four people elected by the members of the Institute in accordance with the Institute's rules, being people who are themselves members of the Institute
- one person appointed by the Minister, being a person who is a Torres Strait Islander
- four other people appointed by the Minister, being people who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders.

All Councillors are non-executive members and hold office on a part-time basis.

Membership of the Council during 2006–07 and the term of each appointment are set out in Table 6.

Table 6: Elected and appointed Council members and terms

Elected members	
Professor Michael Dodson, AM	16 May 2006–15 May 2008
Professor John Maynard	16 May 2006–15 May 2008
Emeritus Professor Robert Tonkinson	16 May 2006–15 May 2008
Mr Michael Williams	16 May 2006–15 May 2008
Appointed members	
Mr Eric Bedford	9 May 2005–8 May 2007
Dr Jackie Huggins, AM	9 May 2005–8 May 2007
Ms Natascha McNamara, AM, MBE	9 May 2005–8 May 2007
Ms Raymattja Marika	9 May 2005–8 May 2007
Mr Dana Ober	5 February 2007–4 February 2009

Professor Dodson and Emeritus Professor Tonkinson were appointed Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson, respectively, from 9 May 2005 until 8 May 2007. In 2006–07, the Council held three meetings in Canberra and one meeting in Hobart.

Council members are provided with an indemnity for claims against them while performing their duties as Councillors. The indemnity is in the form of a standard insurance policy with Comcover, the Australian Government's self-insurance agency. The value of the indemnity is $100 million per claim. The premium in 2006–07 was $5,093.

Profiles of all Council members at 30 June 2007 are provided on pages xii–xv.

Members

Applicants for membership in AIATSIS must demonstrate an interest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies. Applications are considered by the Research Advisory Committee (see pages 23, 24), which makes recommendations to the Council. Membership is awarded for five years and is renewable. During the financial year, eight new members were appointed by the Council, bringing the total membership of the Institute to 506 at 30 June 2007.

Corporate governance

Under the Act (s. 13) it is the responsibility of the **Council** to ensure 'the proper and efficient performance of the functions of the Institute and to determine the policy of the Institute with respect to any matter'. The **Principal** is responsible for day-to-day administration of the Institute.

In 2003 the Australian Government engaged Mr John Uhrig, AC, to report on the most suitable governance arrangements for Australian government bodies, including AIATSIS. His conclusion was that either a governing board (or council) or executive management (a chief executive who reports directly to government) could be suitable, depending on the functions to be performed. During the year, the Minister advised the Institute that she had reached a position that retaining a governing council best met the Uhrig conclusions for AIATSIS. She subsequently forwarded a Statement of Expectations for the organisation. The Council responded with a Statement of Intent that formally addressed the Minister's expectations.

The Council is supported by a Finance Committee and an Audit Committee.

The **Finance Committee** consists of two Council members; the Principal; the Deputy Principal, Collections; and the Director of Corporate Services. During the year, Council representatives on the Finance Committee were Mr Williams and Ms McNamara.

The **Audit Committee** consists of the Finance Committee plus representatives from internal audit and the Australian National Audit Office. In 2006–07 there were no reports on the Institute's operations by parliamentary committees and there were no judicial decisions that are expected to have a material impact on operations.

The Principal is supported by the **Executive Board of Management** (EBM), which comprises the senior managers and other officers. The EBM

meets monthly to discuss matters affecting the Institute. Meeting minutes are published on the Institute's internal intranet.

The **Information Technology Advisory Committee** provides advice to the EBM on information technology and information management matters. The **Consultative Committee** is a joint management and staff forum that deals with workplace relations issues. The **Occupational Health and Safety Committee** deals with health and safety issues for all employees. Minutes for these committees are also published on the Institute's intranet.

The **AIATSIS Corporate Plan for 2005–07** was published following endorsement by the Council in 2005. Copies of the corporate plan are available from the Communications Manager and online at <www.aiatsis.gov.au/about_ us/corporate publications>. A business plan for 2007–08, which includes specific projects to be undertaken, was endorsed by the Council in May 2007.

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

Staff employed

A breakdown of staff employed at 30 June 2007 is shown in Table 7. During the year, four ongoing positions were filled. At 30 June 2007, three staff members were on leave without pay. There were eighty-six new or extended appointments and twenty-three separations during the year. Separations comprised ten resignations, four transfers, eight contracts expired and one retirement.

Workplace diversity

The Institute's program for workplace diversity, set out in the AIATSIS Workplace Diversity Program, continued in operation during the year.

Indigenous staff

The Agency Agreement 2005–06 includes a number of specific provisions to facilitate the employment and retention of Indigenous staff within the Institute.

The Institute attracts Indigenous people to vacant positions through advertising in Indigenous newspapers and networks in addition to advertising in the mainstream press. The Institute provides Indigenous cadetships and training positions to provide paid work experience and enhance future employment opportunities for Indigenous peoples. Two Indigenous cadets were employed during 2006–07.

Table 7: Staffing levels and numbers, 30 June 2007

Level	Male	Female	Ongoing	Non-ongoing	Indigenous	Full-time	Part-time	PWD	NESB
PEO	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0
SES	1	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	0
Executive 2	3	4	6	1	1	7	0	0	0
Executive 1	14	12	14	12	5	26	0	0	0
APS 6	4	12	10	6	5	12	4	0	1
APS 5	10	15	8	17	6	23	2	0	1
APS 4	3	8	5	6	1	8	3	0	0
APS 3	2	16	5	13	9	13	5	1	1
APS 2	0	4	0	4	2	2	2	0	0
Cadets/ trainees	2	6	0	8	8	8	0	0	0
Total	40	78	51	67	39	102	16	2	3
% of staff	34	66	43	57	33	86	14	2	3

Abbreviations: PWD, people with a disability; NESB, non-English speaking background; PEO, Principal Executive Officer; SES, Senior Executive Service; APS, Australian Public Service.
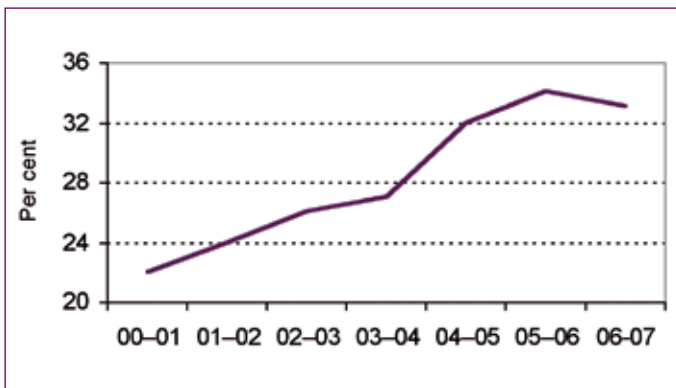

Figure 5: Percentage of total staff identifying as Indigenous, 2001–02 to 2006–07

Six Indigenous trainees continue to be employed as part of the AIATSIS Digitisation Program. Staff from the Audiovisual Archive are working with the Canberra Institute of Technology and the Yurauna Indigenous Centre to support the trainees and tailor courses to their needs. One Indigenous staff member is completing a marketing certificate course at the Canberra Institute of Technology.

At 30 June 2007, the Institute employed a total of 118 staff, 33 per cent of whom identified as Indigenous (see Figure 5).

The **Indigenous Caucus** is an internal working group supported by management, which provides Indigenous staff with a forum to discuss various issues affecting them. The caucus has assisted management in reviewing policies such as the studies assistance guidelines, and is consulted when employment policies are reviewed or training courses developed. The caucus is represented at the Consultative Committee. This committee is the forum which brings staff and management together to discuss employment issues.

Indigenous staff members are also eligible to join the **Indigenous APS Employees Network** (IAPSEN), which supports and advocates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interests, values and perspectives in the Australian Public Service. Staff members are encouraged to join the network and participate in discussion groups. New Indigenous staff are advised about the network when they join AIATSIS. At an organisational level, the Institute was also involved in IAPSEN: the Principal was a member of the steering committee for this network.

Staff remuneration

All staff except those covered by Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs) are covered by the AIATSIS Agency Agreement 2005–06. AIATSIS provides a range of non-salary benefits, details of which are set out in the agreement. The agreement is available online at <www.aiatsis.gov.au/about_us/corporate_publications>.

Table 8: Salary ranges under Agency Agreement 2005–06

Level	Minimum, $	Maximum, $
Executive 2	78,966	89,545
Executive 1	68,495	73,969
APS 6	53,504	61,461
APS 5	49,538	52,528
APS 4	44,414	48,224
APS 3	39,850	43,010
APS 2	34,986	38,797
APS 1	18,549	34,167
Cadet/Trainee	10,496	30,788

Eight AIATSIS staff were covered by AWAs (two Senior Executive Service (SES) staff and six non-SES staff). Except for remuneration, the employment conditions in these AWAs were identical to those in the Agency Agreement and other AIATSIS employment policies.

Three employees received performance bonuses in 2006–07, totalling $45,631.52. Further information on AWAs and performance bonuses is not provided for confidentiality reasons.

Staff training and career development

AIATSIS is committed to the continued development of its staff through the provision of training and career advancement opportunities. This recognises the Institute's need to retain and develop high-quality staff in a tight job market, and the needs of staff to improve their skills and job satisfaction. The Institute spent $107,397 on staff development activity during 2006–07.

The AIATSIS Agency Agreement requires that the Institute's Performance Feedback Scheme (PFS) be linked to remuneration. The PFS provides an arrangement for discussing an individual's performance, sets forth the basis for the provision of training and development opportunities, and assists with workforce planning. Training in more effective use of the PFS was provided to supervisors and staff during 2006–07.

Cooperative workplace relations

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 cooperative workplace relations provides all staff with an opportunity to participate in decisions that impact directly on them.

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 obligations were met while maintaining a cooperative workplace environment.

Occupational health and safety

AIATSIS has a policy of providing and maintaining the highest degree of health and safety for all employees. It aims to:
- prevent all accidents and ill health caused by working conditions
- protect all employees from any health hazard that 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.

To demonstrate the Institute's commitment, the Principal signed an employer 'statement of commitment' with Comcare for the period 2002 to 2012. The statement covers the following four targets:

- reduce the incidence of workplace injuries and diseases
- eliminate all fatalities due to workplace injury
- reduce the average lost-time rate
- reduce the average time taken for rehabilitation intervention.

Measures taken during the year to protect the health, safety and welfare at work of employees included:

- testing of emergency evacuation procedures
- staff training in workplace practices, including the responsibilities of fire wardens
- provision of equipment needed by staff to deal with occupational health and safety concerns
- holding a health week, including influenza vaccinations and individual health checks for staff who wished to participate.

The Agency Agreement now includes a formal statement of the Institute's policy on the use of drugs in the workplace, and provides for access to counselling services by staff.

No accidents requiring notification under section 68 of the *Occupational Health and Safety (Commonwealth Employment) Act 1991* were reported during 2006–07. No notices were received by AIATSIS during the year under section 30, 46 or 47 of that Act, nor were any directions given under section 45.

Strategic alliances to support corporate activities

As a small agency, AIATSIS has limited resources available to handle the many 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 2005–06, the Institute maintained membership of the Cultural Managers Forum — a group comprising the Canberra-based cultural agencies — to discuss common issues on information technology.

Staff in Corporate Services maintained and built on the Institute's strategic alliance with the Indigenous Employment Strategy team at the Australian Public Service Commission.

Financial management

The financial result for the year — a profit of $21,000 — is down on the expected $95,000 profit. This cannot be contributed to one particular item, but to a number of unplanned system improvements that will contribute to productivity. Detailed information is provided in the financial statements at pages 71–106.

During the reporting period the Finance department changed from a manual system of booking travel and transportation to an electronic process for Qantas and Cabcharge bookings. This has enabled reconciliation of the accounts within one day rather than several days, as previously.

Finance implemented a Continuous Improvement Plan for the Institute from which a Risk Management Policy and Plan were produced, with training conducted across the Institute. The Institute participated in the review of Comcover against the risk management strategy, which resulted in a decrease in the cost of the premium. A number of recommendations have been approved for implementation in 2007–08.

A business continuity approach to the Institute's business has been developed and implemented as part of the Continuous Improvement Plan. Training has commenced and individual area plans are under development.

A fraud review was conducted and approved recommendations will be implemented in 2007–08.

Human resources

A new Director of Corporate Services was appointed in November 2006 and the program was restructured with input from the Human Resource Manager appointed during the period.

Corporate Services introduced a 'We're here to help' motto which was embraced by all Corporate Services staff. Feedback from other Institute staff indicated they welcomed the new approach.

As part of the Continuous Improvement Plan, an initial plan was prepared with a schedule to begin reviewing all human resources policies, procedures and systems.

Information technology

Information Technology Services continued to engage outsourced support services from ASG Group Pty Ltd (formerly Exceed Systems Integration Pty Ltd). A revised contract was negotiated that resulted in reduced costs and an increased service level.

With the approval of the AIATSIS Information Technology Advisory Committee, and with the aim of reducing administrative and maintenance costs, all infrastructure services, including network, file, print and mail services, were successfully migrated from Novell Netware and GroupWise to Microsoft Windows Server and Exchange.

Significant work was undertaken to improve the Institute's network security, including the use of an Internet security appliance and more comprehensive threat protection at the desktop level, both for internal and remote users. Internet access management was further augmented by the inclusion of a Microsoft ISA

firewall, enabling the Institute to provide free, publicly available wireless access to AIATSIS websites from an isolated network. Further improvements in 2007–08 will include e-mail security and classification and secure VPN access to the AIATSIS network by remote users.

The highly successful resurrection of the Institute's video-conferencing equipment for the recent AIATSIS seminar series, involving a live link to participants in Darwin and Broome (see Chapter 1 for more information), highlighted a need to improve audiovisual facilities at AIATSIS. Preliminary assessments have been made and 2007–08 will see a major upgrade of these facilities.

AIATSIS website

In 2006–07, the Institute commenced a review of the AIATSIS website to identify opportunities for improvement to meet the needs of clients and the general public. The review is expected to be completed in the first half of 2007–08, and approved recommendations will be implemented by the end of 2007–08. See Chapters 1, 2 and 3 for more information about material added to the AIATSIS website by the Institute's program areas.

Building management and environmental performance

AIATSIS experienced no major problems with building operations during 2006–07.

Minor changes were made to office layouts, particularly in the Audiovisual Archive.

The Institute's rolling preventive maintenance program was continued. The program encourages a proactive approach to identifying problems before they occur.

AIATSIS occupies a relatively new building with modern controls for energy management that 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, for example, through the use of dual-flush toilets and by not irrigating lawns around the building. Used office paper is recycled where possible and toner cartridges are collected for recycling.

The Institute has commenced a review of environmental management for the building which will include input from all staff and program areas to ensure a holistic approach to managing the AIATSIS work environment in the longer term. The review is due for completion in the first half of 2007–08, with approved recommendations to be implemented by the end of 2007–08.

A security review was conducted that resulted in the relocation of the reception counter to the front of the foyer and engagement of a security firm to

staff the reception desk during business hours. A new initiative was the issuance of photo ID cards to all staff and posting of staff photographs on the Institute's intranet.

Freedom of information

No requests for information were received under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* during the year.

Advertising and market research

The Institute spent $28,029 during the year on recruitment advertising. In addition, $32,120 was spent on marketing AIATSIS publications and activities. No expenditure was made to fund advertising campaigns (i.e. market research; outdoor, television, radio or cinema advertising; or direct mail advertising).

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. The Service Charter is available online at <www.aiatsis.gov.au/about_us/corporate_publications>.

Consultants and contracts over $10,000

The Institute let six consultancies during the year with a total estimated value of $207,971. In addition, 27 contracts totalling $1,022,972 were let. The majority of these contracts were for the supply of equipment. For details of consultancies and major contracts, see Appendix 6.

Competitive tendering and contracting

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

Exempt contracts

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