



AIATSIS at a glance

- AIATSIS operates under the *Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Act 1989* (the Act).
- 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 118 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 and promoting an array of books, CDs, film, 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.

About this report

This report continues the direction taken in the last three years' reports in reflecting outputs as they relate to our goals across the organisation, rather than by an 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 during the year under review.

Some of the appendices found in previous annual reports can now be accessed instead on the AIATSIS website, www.aiatsis.gov.au. We would welcome your feedback on this year's annual report. Please contact:

Rhonda Black
Director, Aboriginal Studies Press
AIATSIS
GPO Box 553
Canberra ACT 2601
Tel: (02) 6246 1183 (for all enquiries)
Email: asp@aiatsis.gov.au

Contact office

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies is located in Canberra at the following address:

Lawson Crescent
Acton ACT 2600

Requests for additional information to be made available to Members of Parliament and Senators should be forwarded to:

The Principal
AIATSIS
GPO Box 553
Canberra ACT 2601
T: (02) 6246 1111
F: (02) 6261 4285
W: www.aiatsis.gov.au



AIATSIS

Australian Institute of Aboriginal
and Torres Strait Islander Studies

Executive

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

18 September 2008

The Hon. Kim Carr
Minister
Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

In accordance with *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 2007–2008.

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.

Professor Michael Dodson, AM
Chairperson of Council



Highlights



- AIATSIS Steve Larkin (Principal) and Bronwyn Nimmo (Deputy-Principal), Mark Wenitong and Terri Janke (Council members), and Toni Bauman (Research Fellow) were invited to attend, and participated in, the 2020 discussions
- AIATSIS achieved eligibility for the Australian Research Council's competitive grants scheme
- AIATSIS published a handbook on Indigenous governance, providing guidance on achieving better outcomes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations
- Funding of nearly \$1 million over three years provided for a new Indigenous Fellowship program
- Aboriginal Studies Press was rewarded by several ASP authors winning or being short-listed for awards
- An on-site visit to review the AIATSIS collections, by a group of senior men from Arnhem Land communities, was among several key visits during the year.
- The Apology to the Stolen Generations was recorded and archived for posterity
- Strategic purchases completed the Library's holdings of the main First Fleet writers

Outcome and outputs structure

There was no change to the Institute’s outcome and output structure during 2007–08.

Outcome		
Promotion of knowledge and understanding of Australian Indigenous cultures, past and present		
Outputs		
Research	Dissemination of information	Collection development and management

Figure 1: Outcome and Outputs structure

Organisational Structure

Minister Senator The Hon. Kim Carr Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research		
Council AIATSIS members		
Principal Steve Larkin		
Deputy Principal (Collections) Bronwyn Nimmo		Deputy Principal (Research and Information) Luke Taylor
Director Corporate Services Jeff Hobson		Director Aboriginal Studies Press Rhonda Black
Director Audiovisual Archive Dianne Hosking	AVA Community Access AVA digitisation	Director Research programs Lisa Strelein
Director Library Rod Stroud	Library Family History Unit Library digitisation	

Figure 2: AIATSIS organisational chart

The Executive ensures the smooth transition of **Council** directives through to the business plans of the AIATSIS programs. The Council-appointed Principal is responsible for the organisation's performance and advises the Council on all operational matters. The Principal is assisted by the Deputy Principal, Collections, and the Deputy Principal, Research and Information. These senior executive staff are responsible for ensuring that all Council policy and budget directives are implemented. They are also responsible for maintaining high-level relationships with the Institute's stakeholders and for program directors' performance. Executive staff assist the 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 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 Australian Indigenous studies, teaching and trainee researchers, and publishes widely in print and on 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, interlibrary loans and reference services. The Family History Unit assist Indigenous Australians with family history research.

The **Audiovisual Archive** holds almost one million items comprising photographic images, works of art, artefacts, audio, film and video in many different formats. The role of the archive is to ensure the safety and longevity of the materials, and to constantly migrate the information onto the latest technologies so that the material remains accessible for future generations of Australians.

Aboriginal Studies Press (ASP) publishes up to eight new titles annually in the area of Indigenous studies. Academic books include history, anthropology, archaeology, land rights and native title, health, education, languages and art, while general books include biography, autobiography and community stories. ASP publishes in print, sometimes with CD-ROMs. Its move into electronic publishing was put on hold because of lack of funds but will recommence in 2008–09. ASP is the publisher of the best-selling *Aboriginal Australia* map and, with the Research Program, publishes the journal *Australian Aboriginal Studies*. ASP runs a small bookshop within AIATSIS and uses national and international trade distributors.



Professor Mick Dodson

Chairperson's message

The election of a new government, and a resulting change in portfolio for AIATSIS, was the most significant event of the year under review. I am pleased to report that together with other AIATSIS representatives I met with the new Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, Senator the Hon Kim Carr, very early in the life of the government. The Minister expressed a keen interest in the work of the Institute and was very supportive.

We have already built a good working relationship with the Minister and the Department, and will in due course be signing a public research agency charter with the Minister. The AIATSIS Council has approved the wording of the charter. There is already a sound foundation for a cooperative relationship between AIATSIS and the Minister, his office and the Department.

I welcome, as an important advance, the advent of charters between ministers and agencies, recognising the right, and indeed duty, of researchers to engage in communication and debate in their areas of research and expertise. The charter will spell out our right to comment publicly on issues within our expertise, without fear of retribution from the government of the day. This is a welcome development.

We are also exploring the possibility of concluding a memorandum of understanding with the Department indicating how we engage with each other.

It has been a highly productive year for AIATSIS, one in which partnerships with academia, industry, other government agencies and non-government organisations were a significant feature of our research endeavours. An important achievement was the publication of three reports on Indigenous governance, based on extensive research by AIATSIS for Australian Collaboration's project 'Successful Strategies in Aboriginal Organisations'.

This year's National Native Title Conference at the Perth Convention Centre attracted a record level of sponsorship. Our hosts were the Noongar people and our co-convenor was the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council (SWALSC). The conference theme was *Koorah, Yira, Boordah* (past, present, future). We believe the conference is now the largest Indigenous policy gathering in Australia.

Our dissemination efforts continued to promote worldwide knowledge and understanding of Australian Indigenous cultures. Aboriginal Studies Press took advantage of an opportunity for talks with international distributors at the London

Book Fair. Several of our publications again were shortlisted for important prizes. The AIATSIS Audiovisual Archive continued to return cultural property to communities under its community access and return of material to Indigenous communities (ROMTIC) programs, in particular through a visit to Fitzroy Crossing. AIATSIS also hosted visits by representatives of our far-flung communities, who travelled to Canberra to spend time reviewing the contributions of their own people to our irreplaceable collections of ethnographic material and audiovisual records. A visit by senior men from Arnhem Land was a particular highlight.

Returning our collections to the community is made possible by our ongoing digitisation program, and by the preservation activity undertaken by our skilled staff. During the year we saw work begin on preserving a significant collection of films and other materials donated by Rachel Perkins, and on the Herbert Read collection of missionary journals, diaries, teaching notes and photographs. The Audiovisual Archive completed digitisation of the Ronald Rose collection of photographic negatives in late 2007.

While donations of historic material are vital to the development of our collections, we have been proactive in recording important contemporary news and events. The participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in activity surrounding the National Apology delivered by the Prime Minister in February 2008 was recorded by AIATSIS staff to be held in perpetuity. Future generations will be able to experience this momentous historic event, and their forebears' participation in it, far into the future.

We will be striving in the coming year to conclude memorandums of understanding with other research institutions based in

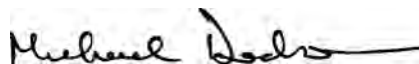
Canberra. These agreements, among other benefits, will help us manage the sharing of resources with these other institutions with which we have some common interests. Our MOU with the Australian National University, signed in the previous financial year, is developing well.

During the year AIATSIS became eligible for Australian Research Council grants. It is my hope that this will enhance our research capacity, particularly our opportunities to engage in research partnerships with universities and with other institutions, including those within our portfolio.

The passing of one of our Council members, Dr Marika, was a very sad event during the year. She made an enormous contribution to the work of the Council and of the Institute, and she will be very sadly missed. I extend my deep condolences to her family on behalf of AIATSIS.

We welcomed two new Council members, Ms Terri Janke and Dr Mark Wenitong. I express my appreciation to all members of Council for their commitment and contribution, and for their dedication to the work of the Institute.

I also deeply appreciate the professionalism, dedication and efficiency of all our AIATSIS staff, in ensuring the Institute remains the premier national Indigenous research and collecting institution. The contribution of the staff to our success is immeasurable.



Professor Mick Dodson, AM
Chairperson



Mr Steve Larkin

Principal's report

AIATSIS has further consolidated its position as Australia's pre-eminent research and conservation institution in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies. Every year our research program, our publishing activities and the management of our collections reveal striking truths and insights that illuminate Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. The past year was no exception.

It was a year that saw a remarkable increase in revenue for our research endeavours, thanks to our efforts to source funding from partner organisations. The income allowed us to increase our research expenditure to \$2.77 million.

Research under the heading of Indigenous social and cultural wellbeing ranged widely over many areas of considerable interest to scholars. A great deal of our research has immediate practical value to the Indigenous community. One example was the Yarrabah Family Violence Project, the final report of which was delivered in March 2008, and which focused on the formative stages of a violence prevention program. This project, a collaboration between several research institutions and Indigenous organisations, was funded by a grant from the AIATSIS Council.

Indigenous country and governance research projects also advanced our

knowledge in vital areas. The Living Country, Working Country project in the Kimberley region, for example, is aimed at distilling strategies for fostering sustainable practices for the benefit of local communities.

The Native Title Research Unit's work also gets down to the core concerns of communities, while assisting Indigenous Australians with the complexities of the legal and administrative systems which impinge on their traditional ownership. In June this year the NTRU completed the second year of a three-year research and services program. The National Native Title Conference, which this year again set new standards for Indigenous policy gatherings, is co-convened by NTRU.

The dissemination of our knowledge, the treasures in our collections and the outcomes of our research have high priority. Aboriginal Studies Press further enhanced its distinguished record of high-quality publishing, both in print and electronic media, in the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The National Apology to the Stolen Generations on 13 February this year provoked new interest in our Family History Unit, and we also used our expertise to record the impact on our community of that remarkable event. One of our highest priorities is to make the content of our collections available to communities, and further significant advances were made in that direction.

We broke new ground in the preservation and/or digitisation of those collections, which preserve vital ethnographic, photographic, print, moving image and ephemeral records of Indigenous Australia. We found innovative solutions to some of the challenges posed by that task.

In national policy terms it has been a momentous year. The 2020 Summit captured Australia's imagination. One

of its key recommendations was the establishment of a national Indigenous knowledge centre network, recognising that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians hold a great deal of traditional and practical knowledge that could be of immense value to the nation. AIATSIS is undoubtedly the best-placed organisation in the country to take a national leadership role in such a network, a role that would recognise our research expertise, our core priorities and our legacy of more than 40 years at the forefront of Indigenous studies and knowledge-gathering. We look forward to participating in the development of this exciting idea.

Within our new portfolio, the Review of the National Innovation System provided a valuable opportunity for AIATSIS to make a submission promoting the recognition of Indigenous cultural knowledge and practices as invaluable sources of innovation and inspiration in mainstream Australian society, and seeking greater public investment in Indigenous research and researchers in support of a national culture of innovation and education.

That review, together with the Northern Territory Emergency Response Review and the Government's clear intention to give priority to evidence-based policy approaches, has the potential to position the Institute as a major contributor to national policy, given its outstanding record of research in Indigenous studies. As a national statutory authority we have the credentials to make a significant research contribution to these developments.

Within AIATSIS, we have begun work on developing a framework for measuring the relationship between cultural continuity activities and quality of life outcomes. We believe that the links between cultural heritage, repatriation and cultural transmission have not been well understood

or recognised as a key determinant in quality of life outcomes. This is a very important project, and we believe we can demonstrate these links in ways that will encourage the Government to seriously consider investing more resources in this area.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the serious implications of the efficiency dividend for our operations. AIATSIS was not spared that two per cent reduction in our resources, with direct effects on our staffing and operations. In our submission to the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit inquiry into the effects of the efficiency dividend on smaller agencies, we argued for the recognition of a 'micro' sector of agencies, those with annual appropriations of less than \$20 million. We recommended that such agencies be fully exempted from such across-the-board efficiency measures, as should organisations whose key focus is in Indigenous affairs.

It remains to convey my thanks to the new Minister, Senator the Hon Kim Carr, and the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research for their cooperation and assistance during the latter part of the year. Thanks are also due to the former Minister, the Hon Julie Bishop MP, and the former Department of Education, Science and Training. I also express my earnest appreciation to the Council and the staff of the Institute for their support and their major contribution to the work of AIATSIS during the year.



Mr Steve Larkin
Principal

Contents

About this report	ii
Letter of transmittal	iii
Outcome and outputs structure	vi
Organisational structure	vi
Chairperson's message	viii
Principal's report	x
Chapter 1. Research	1
Chapter 2. Dissemination of information	20
Chapter 3. Collection development and management	38
Chapter 4. Corporate governance, management and accountability	50
Financial statements	61
The Council	96
Corporate goals	99
Social justice and equity	99
Commonwealth Disability Strategy	100
Appendices	
1. Publications and presentations	102
2. Research grants approved	108
3. Research partners and sponsors	110
4. Gifts and donations	112
5. Finding aids	116
6. Contracts and consultancies	123
7. Client Services group visits	124
Abbreviations and acronyms	125
Compliance Index	126
Index	127

Figures and tables

Figure 1. Outcome and output structure	vi
Figure 2. AIATSIS Organisational chart	vi
Figure 3. Comparison of ASP authors	24
Figure 4. Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff	55
Table 1. Library use statistics	29
Table 2. Family History Unit statistics	30
Table 3. Requestor type and number of requests	49
Table 4. Elected and appointed Council members and terms	51
Table 5. Staffing levels and numbers	54
Table 6. Salary ranges under Agency Agreement	55
Table 7. Attendance at Council meetings	98

Internationally renowned artist,
John Mawundjul, painting at
Milmilngkan near Maningrida,
Northern Territory, © Luke Taylor.

