

AIATSIS

ANNUAL REPORT

2013-2014



AIATSIS

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF
ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT
ISLANDER STUDIES





Indigenous creative agency Gilimbaa was commissioned to design our 50th anniversary brand, incorporating the existing AIATSIS logo, that represents our place in Australia today. The design was inspired by traditional songlines – lines that travel across the country carrying the knowledge of country, culture and belief systems – and the multitude of colours represented in our diverse land: desert, bush, rainforest, freshwater and saltwater. This new look was applied to the 50th anniversary website and many other pieces of collateral during the year, increasing AIATSIS' visibility in the community.



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ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report is made against the AIATSIS 2013–14 Portfolio Budget Statement's Outcomes and Planned Performance, and the AIATSIS Statement of Strategic Intent 2013–2016.

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

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Front cover images (clockwise from left):

Natasha Nadji hands the film of Big Bill Neidje's funerary rite to AIATSIS for safekeeping. L to R: Senator Scott Ryan, Mick Dodson, Senator Nova Peris, Justin Cooper, Ronald Lamilami, Natasha Nadji and Solomon Cooper.

The Governor-General of Australia, the Hon Sir Peter Cosgrove, enjoying a tour of AIATSIS with staff.

The Wagga Torres Strait Islander Dance Company prepare to perform at the 2014 National Native Title Conference.

The Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon Tony Abbott MP, with the AIATSIS Chairperson, Professor Mick Dodson.

Year 1 student Noah Harvey from Weetangera Primary School planting hands at the Sea of Hands, AIATSIS, to commemorate the anniversary of the National Apology.

Photo credits – Andrew Babington and Brigitte Russell

Back cover images (clockwise from left):

The Yirri Dancers perform for the crowd at the 2013 NAIDOC on the Peninsula event.

Living legend Henry Gibson 'Seaman' Dan from the Torres Strait Islands performs at the 2013 NAIDOC on the Peninsula event.

Jessica Bangu, AIATSIS researcher Claire Stacey, Sylvia Shovellor and Frederick Shovellor discuss the role of the Karajarri Rangers in Bidyadanga, WA.

Photo credits – Andrew Babington and Andrew Turner

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This report is also accessible from the Institute's website at www.aiatsis.gov.au

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The Hon Christopher Pyne MP
Minister for Education
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2602

Dear Minister

I am pleased to present to you on behalf of the AIATSIS Council, the annual report of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies for the year ended 30 June 2014.

The report is forwarded in accordance with Section 9 of the Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997 (CAC Act) and provides a report of operations, including a financial report and audited financial statements in accordance with Section 9 and Schedule 1 of the Act.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Michael Dodson'.

Professor Michael Dodson, AM
Chairperson

22 September 2014



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Foster an effective organisation where people want to work	87

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The AIATSIS logo is derived from the boomerang totem of the Gu:na:ni (Kunjen) people from the Mitchell River region, Gulf of Carpentaria, North Queensland. The design is painted on a softwood shield.

Building knowledge pathways



A IATSI

Chairperson's message



Fifty years is a long time in the life of an institution. It carries weight – in milestones, achievements, change and the accumulation of history. In 2014 AIATSIS celebrates its 50th anniversary, which we are recognising through a series of events and activities. (You can read more about these in the Goal 5 section of this report.)

In some ways, I marvel at what AIATSIS has become and the enormous distance it has travelled to survive and prosper into its 50th year. It was originally a non-Indigenous vision to ensure that Aboriginal language, culture, worldview and values survived into the future but it had no Aboriginal involvement in its leadership or administration. Today it is led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and many of its staff and research fellows are also Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. AIATSIS has the largest multimedia collection recording and transmitting our heritage and culture. We conduct Indigenous research, we publish Indigenous studies, and we nurture and train developing Indigenous researchers and scholars. We also provide advice to government on Indigenous studies and on the situation for Indigenous people more generally. AIATSIS is a national cultural treasure.

So my message to you in our 50th year is one of pride in our achievements and operations of the past year. We have settled smoothly after the change of government at the federal level, where we have been transferred to the Department of Education portfolio under Minister the Honourable Christopher Pyne. We have met several times with department officials, who are supportive of AIATSIS' work, and we are building a strong rapport and relationship. We have also met with Minister Pyne and pledged to have regular meetings with him. We have taken up opportunities to meet with the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Senator Nigel Scullion, and officials from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

AIATSIS does an amazing job with the resources it is allocated by government to undertake its statutory functions; we believe the Australian community receives great value for money. Yet the demand for our services among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continues to grow; our priceless collection has reached the point where we are close to running out of space; and some vital elements of our work, such as our grants program and now community access visits, have ended

because of financial constraints. We face great challenges in meeting the statutory demands and expectations placed on us as we begin the first year of what I hope will be our next 50 years of service.

The independent review of AIATSIS was completed in June 2014 and, although the report has not been publicly released, it is likely to play a strong part in shaping our priorities for the future.

AIATSIS finishes 2013–14 halfway through its 50th anniversary celebrations, which have been an invigorating reminder of how far we have come. I thank AIATSIS' executive and staff for another year of great professional commitment and dedication to our work. Thank you to all our many supporters and all those wonderful people over the past 50 years who have been there for AIATSIS and given it great service to ensure it survived and prospered. What we are today has been built on the intellect, dedication, passion and commitment of thousands of people directly, and the trust and hard work of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and successive Australian governments of all persuasions who committed to building its prominence, expertise and legacy.



Professor Michael Dodson, AM
Chairperson

Principal's report



As Principal, I have the honour of reporting to you on AIATSIS' operating environment, achievements and challenges faced in 2013–14, a period during which we also celebrated the 50th anniversary of our creation.

Our operating environment was influenced by the change of federal government in September and the ongoing work and eventual completion of an independent review of our organisation. After the abolition of the Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education, AIATSIS was transferred initially to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and then in December into the Department of Education portfolio under Minister the Honourable Christopher Pyne.

AIATSIS successfully negotiated the budget process and we were very happy to retain our core funding and to secure an extra year's funding for the program that is digitising our collection. Restrictions on recruitment have presented some challenges, particularly in filling specialist technical roles where the skills are not readily available. AIATSIS staff members have nevertheless worked hard to achieve as much as possible with the available resources in the face of many competing priorities.

The review of AIATSIS ran for most of the year and involved much time and effort in gathering information and responding to questions and the requirements of the review members. The final report of the review was lodged with our Minister in June but had not been made public as at the end of June (the end of this reporting period).

Our 50th anniversary celebrations were a major highlight. We opened the celebrations as part of the National Indigenous Studies Conference in Canberra in March. The official launch event was an ancient, sacred and rare Lorrkkon ceremony from the Northern Territory, performed by thirty people and witnessed by more than 3000 people in Reconciliation Place in Canberra. Another highlight was the launch in June of two commemorative 50-cent coins by the Prime Minister, the Honourable Tony Abbott – one circulating coin and the other a collectors' edition that features a colour-printed AIATSIS logo.

AIATSIS was honoured to host a visit and tour for the new Governor-General, His Excellency General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove, and Lady Cosgrove in April. Because of what it represents, AIATSIS is a popular destination for Australian and international dignitaries. During the year we hosted 40 special

tours, including a delegation from Vietnam, diplomatic representatives from Taiwan and Switzerland, Australian actor Jack Thompson, and the Chair of the Prime Minister's Indigenous Advisory Committee Warren Mundine. The number of requests for visiting delegations, both domestic and international, continues to increase.

Other highlights that I bring to your attention are:

- The launch of our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), which was awarded 'Elevate' status by Reconciliation Australia. We are one of only four organisations in Australia, and the only government organisation of any kind, to achieve this gold standard. The RAP forms part of our cultural proficiency framework, which is now well underway.
- The formal amalgamation of our library and audiovisual archive into one overall AIATSIS Collection was completed during 2013–14. The collection continues to grow and to attract increasing offers of material each year. The collections staff are under considerable pressure to keep pace with the growth and the demand for information and access.
- Notable additions to the collection this year were more than 5000 colour slides taken by Dr Michael Smith during archaeological fieldwork between 1971 and 2004; significant oral history materials from Professor John Maynard and Mr Noel Pearson; and a photo collection that shows the important contribution of Aboriginal people to the pastoral industry around Gilgandra, Bourke, Wanaaring and Wilcannia between the 1930s and 1950s.

- Our publishing arm, Aboriginal Studies Press, published six new book titles in print, with most also published as ebooks. *Our stories are our survival*, by Lawrence Bamblett, was shortlisted in the Queensland Literary Awards. Two issues of *Australian Aboriginal Studies* journal were published.
- The Step-Up accelerated career development program is enabling 17 Indigenous students to advance their careers through further study at the vocational, degree and postgraduate levels, with supporting professional and personal development and on-the-job experience.

There are many people to thank for another excellent year at AIATSIS. First and foremost, I am very appreciative of the hard work, commitment and loyalty of my staff. Thank you to you all, and especially to my deputy Michelle Patterson. I thank my Council Chairperson, Professor Mick Dodson, and all other Council members and committee members for their unstinting work and support. Finally, thanks go to our new Minister, the Honourable Christopher Pyne, for his support of AIATSIS.



Mr Russell Taylor
Principal



Key achievements

Revitalised online and social media presence (p. 32)

Three new online exhibitions of material from the AIATSIS Collection (p. 33)

Publication of six new book titles by Aboriginal Studies Press in print and ebook formats (p. 37)

Publication of *Living with native title: the experiences of registered native title corporations*, the culmination of a six-year research project on the aspirations, challenges and policy reform needs of prescribed bodies corporate (p. 38)

Dynamic public program to celebrate AIATSIS' 50th anniversary, including historical Lorrkkon ceremony (p. 40)

Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages for the Australian Curriculum (p. 43)

National Indigenous Studies Conference – 50 Years On: Breaking Barriers in Indigenous Research and Thinking (p. 47)

National Native Title Conference and prescribed bodies corporate meeting (pp. 48–49)

Cooperative research agreement with the Ngaiyurija Ngunawal Language Group to revitalise the Ngunawal language of south-east NSW (p. 52)

Ethical leadership – promotion of Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies, provision of ethics assessment on a fee-for-service basis and evaluation of NHMRC guidelines (p. 61)

Collaborative research priority setting, particularly with land and water and governance sectors (p. 63)

Publication of the National Indigenous Languages Survey 2 (NILS2) (p. 63)

Successful amalgamation of former library and audiovisual archive into amalgamated AIATSIS Collection (p. 70)

New AIATSIS Collection access and use policy to manage legal and cultural rights and maximise accessibility (p. 76)

Contribution and support to the independent review of AIATSIS (p. 85)

Step-Up accelerated career development program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people implemented (p. 90)

AIATSIS' Reconciliation Action Plan launched and recognised by Reconciliation Australia with 'Elevate' status (p. 92)





Lorrkkon ceremony launches AIATSIS 50th anniversary

AIATSIS launched its 50th anniversary celebrations at Reconciliation Place, Canberra, with an ancient and sacred Lorrkkon ceremony performed by 30 dancers, singers and ceremonial elders from Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory. Australian film icon Jack Thompson was the guest speaker at the event.

celebrating

Commemorative 50-cent coin released

The Prime Minister of Australia, the Honourable Tony Abbott, launched the AIATSIS commemorative 50-cent circulating coin and collectors' coin at Parliament House in June as part of anniversary celebrations.





Telling our 50-year story

AIATSIS: the great keeping place is a DVD produced in 2013–14 to tell the story of AIATSIS as a unique and significant cultural resource and treasure.

Exhibition at Australian Parliament House

AIATSIS partnered with Australian Parliament House to exhibit photographs from the 1988 bicentenary project *After 200 Years*. The striking photographs received a lot of interest and were the backdrop for the launch of AIATSIS' commemorative 50-cent coins.

Opposite top: *See p. ii.*

Opposite bottom: The launch of the AIATSIS 50 cent coin: (L-R) Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer, the Hon Steven Ciobo MP; the Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon Tony Abbott MP; the AIATSIS Chairperson, Professor Mick Dodson; and the AIATSIS Principal, Russell Taylor.

Photo credit – Andrew Babington

Top: Australian film icon Jack Thompson records an introduction for the AIATSIS corporate DVD. *Photo credit – Andrew Turner*

Below left: Arthur 'Hookey' Watts in the kiosk of the Leeton swimming pool, taken as part of the *After 200 Years* photographic project in 1988. *Photo credit – Alana Harris*

Below right: Kevin Warusam wearing a cassowary feather headdress, Saibai. Photo taken for *After 200 Years*.

Photo credit – Emmanuel Angelicas

