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Goal 6

Foster an  
effective  
organisation  
where people  
want to work



In 2013–14, AIATSIS has focused on developing leadership, internal communication, change management and risk management. The aim was to help us capitalise on the opportunities offered by the 50th anniversary, to reshape AIATSIS for the future, and to deal with uncertainty associated with the review. Available data on staff engagement is from early in the year, so it provides a baseline rather than a measure of our success. Early staff feedback suggests improvements can be expected in results for 2014–15.

There were changes in AIATSIS governance during 2013–14, with elections for four positions on the Council and for the eight positions on the Research Advisory Committee.

## Goal 6 performance measurement

### Key performance indicator: improved performance against measures of staff engagement

#### Rates of voluntary departure

(% of employees who resigned, retired or volunteered for redundancy, including ongoing and non-ongoing employees)

10.38%

Data will be available for comparison in 2014–15.

#### Rate of unscheduled absence

(total days of unscheduled absence divided by average full-time equivalent (FTE) employees)

11.99 days

This is an increase of 1.19 days from 2012–13, but still very close to the average Australian Public Service (APS) rate of 11.6 days.

#### 2013 APS Employee Census results

(rating out of 10 using APS employee engagement model)

Job: 7.6

Team: 7.0

Supervisor: 7.5

Agency: 5.8

As the survey is carried out in May/June, these results represent sentiment at the start of 2013–14. AIATSIS levels of engagement are slightly higher than or on par with the APS for all drivers of engagement (job, team, supervisor, agency).

## AIATSIS workforce snapshot

	2012–13	2013–14
Number of employees (headcount)	136	124 <sup>^</sup>
Total employee expenditure	11,409,625	13,640,000
<b>Workforce diversity</b>		
Indigenous	26%	23%
Women	58%	54%
People with a disability	5%	4%
Non-English-speaking background	4%	6%
<b>Staff health and wellbeing</b>		
Work health and safety (WHS) incident reports*	Nil	1
Number of health and safety representatives	4	4
<b>Training and education</b>		
Percentage of employees undertaking supported studies	6%	7%

<sup>^</sup> Excludes the 17 participants in the Step-Up program.

\* No investigations took place in 2013–14.

## Work culture and environment

AIATSIS has delivered initiatives that place a greater focus on mental health awareness and promoting a healthy work environment in recognition of the challenges facing our workforce and in response to needs identified in previous staff surveys. These initiatives included:

- resilience information sessions and stress-reduction activities

- the opportunity for staff to request a sit-stand desk to reduce problems caused by static and sedentary postures
- briefings for the executive, board and staff on the importance of mental health in the workplace and a series of seminars on mental health awareness.

During 2013–14 AIATSIS became the first federal government agency to be recognised by the ACT Government for its commitment to create a healthier workplace. AIATSIS also updated its work health and safety policies during the year.

Each year the Shirley Ann Williams award is made to a female AIATSIS staff member for outstanding work and contribution in AIATSIS. Shirley Ann Williams was a highly respected Aboriginal woman in Queanbeyan and Canberra, as well as a long-serving AIATSIS employee. The 2014 winner was Grace Koch, AIATSIS' Native Title Research and Access Officer, who received her award at a special International Women's Day ceremony.

## Skills and career development

### Step-Up: an accelerated career development program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

AIATSIS has designed and implemented a program to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to improve their career prospects through further education. Participants undertake formal tertiary studies and receive professional and personal development opportunities to

Below: Step-Up participants visit the National Museum of Australia Mitchell Repository in June, 2014.



Above: (L–R) PJ and Teletha Williams; Grace Koch; the AIATSIS Deputy Principal, Michelle Patterson; and AIATSIS Council member Neva Collings.  
Photo credit – Andrew Babington

enhance their capability. The program has been funded by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet for three years (July 2013 to December 2016). The first group of participants were selected during late 2013 and started the program in early 2014.

Step-Up is progressing well in its first year, meeting agreed milestones and noticeably enriching lives. Seventeen individuals are involved in the program, undertaking study that includes vocational education and training, degree and higher degree programs. They are also undertaking work

Below: Step-Up participant Bhiemie Williamson working alongside local Aboriginal rangers during controlled burn-offs to test research findings in Borroloola, NT.



## AIATSIS family barbecue

One of the actions under our Reconciliation Action Plan and to support the Step-Up program was to hold an AIATSIS family barbecue. Local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations were invited to join us to enable staff to build relationships with the local communities. The event was held in May and despite poor weather it was a success, with more than 75 staff, family and friends attending. Activities included behind-the-scenes tours of AIATSIS, presentations by the family history section, screening of rare films from the AIATSIS Collection, making Indigenous fibre sculptures and the barbecue.



Above: Staff, family and friends attend the AIATSIS family barbecue. *Photo credits – Andrew Babington*

# AIATSIS Elevate Reconciliation Action Plan



In February 2014, Reconciliation Australia granted Elevate RAP status to our Reconciliation Action Plan 2014–16. AIATSIS was the first government organisation of any kind in Australia, and just the fourth in total, to develop an Elevate RAP. AIATSIS joined a select group of organisations (KPMG, Transfield Services and National Australia Bank) with a track record of excellence and ongoing commitment to leadership in all areas of the RAP program.

Top: Senator the Hon Scott Ryan, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education, launches the AIATSIS Elevate RAP. *Photo credit – Andrew Babington*

and gaining experience in the workplace as their studies allow. All are progressing remarkably well, with the majority achieving a distinction average.

These outstanding results can be attributed to the participants' commitment, support from their workplace supervisor and the support provided by the Tertiary Indigenous Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Support Centres at their learning institutions, a partnership established by AIATSIS to support this program. The centres, along with tutoring assistance, provide areas of cultural safety on campus that enable participants to have academic, social, cultural and emotional support as they progress through their study.

### **In-house learning and development**

AIATSIS delivered a series of development sessions using in-house expertise and guest presenters to ensure learning and development continued despite resource constraints. These included workshops on project management and ethics.

### **Cultural proficiency**

AIATSIS continued to provide leadership in cultural proficiency through the Towards Cultural Proficiency Strategy. Activity to develop cultural proficiency within AIATSIS included staff focus groups, the process of developing the AIATSIS Elevate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), and the development of a supervisors' guide for the supervisors of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. AIATSIS also provided advice to a range of other agencies on the development and implementation of their RAPs and other cultural matters.

### **Integrated activities and projects**

A goal for AIATSIS during 2013–14 was to increase the integration of activities across different business areas. New informal coordination forums were established and bedded down, and an increasing number of projects involved cross-program project boards and project teams. The activities supporting the 50th anniversary celebrations, including events and the new website, were a focus for building and strengthening collaborative and integrated approaches.

### **Knowledge management**

AIATSIS has recognised that knowledge management is a vital tool to support efficient and effective integration and knowledge sharing across areas such as our research, collection and corporate knowledge. Capacity and capability were enhanced through the creation of a new role, Director of Knowledge Management, and the delivery of training to more than 60 staff in database development and use.

Achievements during the year included the development and implementation of an information and records management strategy, framework and policy. AIATSIS also completed its baseline survey as part of the National Archives of Australia Digital Transition Strategy and has developed and is in the process of implementing a plan to improve our performance before the 2014 survey.

At the end of the financial year, work had started on an information and knowledge management architecture that will shape specifications for upcoming investments in systems and technology.



## Efficient corporate services

In early 2014 AIATSIS participated in a comparison of corporate overheads among five similar specialist agencies instigated by the Office of National Assessments. The results demonstrated that AIATSIS runs a very efficient corporate service. AIATSIS' expenditure on corporate services as a percentage of revenue was the lowest of all five agencies at 21.16%. Similarly, AIATSIS corporate expenditure per FTE employee was the lowest of all five agencies and the percentage of corporate FTE to total FTE was also low at 17.23%.

## AIATSIS continues to be an ACTSmart business

For the second year in a row AIATSIS has been recognised by the ACT Government for its contribution to the environment. The Smart Office recognition honours employee and agency commitment to reducing waste and diverting waste from landfill.

## Governance

Governance matters related to the AIATSIS Council and the Research Advisory Committee, both established under the *Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Act 1989* (the Act), are outlined below. For the full AIATSIS governance and organisational structure and Council membership and biographies, see 'About AIATSIS' at the beginning of this report. The roles, responsibilities and membership of all other AIATSIS governance and advisory committees are set out in Appendix B.

## AIATSIS Council

Under the Act, four councillors are elected by AIATSIS members and five councillors, who must be Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, are appointed by the Minister. Members are remunerated in accordance with the Remuneration Tribunal determination for part-time statutory office holders.

Elections for four positions on the AIATSIS Council were held in 2014. The four candidates elected were Professor Michael Dodson, Professor Emeritus Robert Tonkinson, Professor John Maynard and Mr Kado Muir. Professor Dodson and Professor Tonkinson, respectively, were appointed as interim Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson by the Minister for Education. Final appointments of Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson were outstanding at 30 June 2014. The appointments of Council members Mr Dana Ober and Ms Neva Collings expired on 19 June 2014. These positions were vacant as at 30 June 2014.

Appendix A provides details of the terms of Council members serving during 2013–14 and details of Council meetings and members' attendance.

Following an independent review of Council performance in 2012–13, a professional development plan for 2013–14 was prepared to address identified risks and gaps. High-priority training in finance and risk management was delivered for Council members with these responsibilities. As the terms of all elected and appointed positions on the Council expire during 2014, other development activities have been deferred

so that training delivered is appropriate to Council membership over the next two to three years and the benefits are sustained.

The Council made no decisions during 2013–14 where:

- a. it approved payment for goods or services, or provided a grant to an entity; and
- b. a Council member was also a director of the other entity that provided the goods or services or received the grant; and
- c. the value exceeded \$10,000 (GST inclusive).

### Research Advisory Committee

The Research Advisory Committee (RAC) comprises three members of the Council appointed by the Council; eight members of the institute elected by AIATSIS members in accordance with the AIATSIS rules; and the Principal. Members are remunerated in accordance with the Remuneration Tribunal determination for part-time statutory office holders.

The RAC's functions are to:

- advise the Council in relation to research matters
- advise the Council in relation to applications for membership of the institute.

The RAC has historically overseen research project management, but during 2013–14 a new committee of senior research officers within AIATSIS took over this role to allow the RAC to focus on strategic issues and priority setting.

RAC elections took place during 2013–14. Fifteen nominations were received across eight multidisciplinary categories. This was the first election using these categories, which were adopted by AIATSIS in June 2013 to reflect the nature of contemporary research.

The new committee met for the first time on 30 April 2014 with the following membership:

- Health and Wellbeing – Professor Len Collard
- Education and Socio Economic Institutions – Dr Peter Radoll
- Arts and Creative Expression – Associate Professor Maryrose Casey
- Native Title and Traditional Ownership – Dr Sally Babidge
- Economics, Industry and Development – Professor Dennis Foley
- Language and Cultural Transmission – Professor Regina Ganter
- Land, Water and Environment – Dr Fiona Walsh
- Governance, Law and Justice – Professor Larissa Behrendt
- Council representative – Mr Dana Ober
- Council representative – Professor Emeritus Robert Tonkinson
- Council representative – Mr Kado Muir.

## Membership

Under the Act, AIATSIS may have members with a demonstrated interest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies. Members are appointed by the Council for terms of five years, which are renewable. The RAC provides advice to the Council on applications for membership, assessed against criteria set by the Council in the AIATSIS rules.

AIATSIS used the occasion of its 50th anniversary to build engagement, including through membership. Forty-nine new members were appointed during 2013–14, nearly double the growth in membership during 2012–13. Of these new members, 23 are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. This brings total membership to 609.

## Conflicts of interest

Council and committee members must disclose any financial or other interests they have that may relate to their functions both prior to appointment and whenever such an interest arises during their term of membership. Disclosures of interest are made to the Chairperson at the start of each meeting and are recorded in the minutes. A member must not take part in any deliberations or decisions in which they have an interest.

## Risk management

AIATSIS' risk management, including business continuity planning and fraud control, is monitored by the Audit and Risk Committee. The committee reports to each meeting of the AIATSIS Council so that the Council can consider significant issues that may affect AIATSIS' operations or reputation.

AIATSIS' corporate risk management framework is based on AS/NZS ISO 31000 and has been in place since 2013. The framework processes are progressively being embedded in planning, project management and fraud control plans, and the corporate risk register is reviewed twice a year. The last review, conducted in March 2014, recommended a revision of the risk register to incorporate significant changes in the strategic and operational risk environment.

The AIATSIS Business Continuity Plan was implemented in 2013 and is updated annually to incorporate operational changes. The plan identifies essential business activities and guides the allocation of resources and establishment of alternative arrangements to ensure effective functioning following a disaster. It incorporates information and communications technology disaster recovery and pandemic plans.

AIATSIS updated its 2011 fraud control plan in late 2013 following an organisation-wide fraud risk assessment workshop. The fraud control plan, prepared in accordance with the Commonwealth Fraud Control Guidelines, sets out AIATSIS' approach to fraud risk assessment and control and strategies for fraud minimisation.

## Ethics

AIATSIS abides by and promotes the Australian Public Service Values and Code of Conduct and complements these with its shared behaviours of respect, cooperation, effective leadership, good communication, responsibility and fairness.

AIATSIS provides leadership in ethical research and collection management through development and dissemination of the Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies and the development and demonstration of the AIATSIS Collection access and use policy.

Staff training during 2013–14 that supported ethical conduct and professionalism included information sessions on the public interest disclosure scheme and privacy reforms.

### **Ministerial directions, general policies and other reviews and reports**

During 2013–14:

- no new directions were issued to AIATSIS by ministers
- no general policies of the Australian Government applied to AIATSIS
- there were no judicial decisions, reviews or reports by the Auditor-General, any parliamentary committee, the Commonwealth Ombudsman or the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner that affected AIATSIS.

### **Indemnities and insurance premiums for officers**

During the reporting period there were no liabilities to any current or former officers. No premium was paid (or agreed to be paid) against a current or former officer's liability for legal costs. AIATSIS paid premiums for Directors and Officers insurances as required under the *Commonwealth Authorities and Corporations Act 1997*.

## **Financial outcome 2013–14**

The financial statements show a deficit of \$1.187 million. The decision to make redundancy payments to a number of individuals contributed to this loss, incurring an initial expense, but this action will save the cost of salaries in the long term. Other contributing factors were post balance date corrections to depreciation expenses and the need to carry forward unearned revenue for incomplete projects.