

About the Family History Unit

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

Background

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) has had an Aboriginal Family History Unit since the late 1970's. The Unit began as an Aboriginal Biographical Index (ABI) of names. Its aim was to provide a brief biographical entry of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people referred to, or depicted in published or unpublished material held in the Institute's collections. Following the handing down of the Bringing Them Home Report in 1997, the Institute received continued funding from ATSIC for the Family History Unit to assist members of the Stolen Generations and those interested in their Indigenous heritage to trace their roots. The Unit is now funded by the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (OATSIH) and continues to assist people with their research.

What we do

The Unit specifically assists Link-Up Caseworkers in family tracing and reunion for Indigenous people who are members of the Stolen Generations. We also assist and refer anyone of Indigenous heritage with their family history research. There is no charge for this service.

What we don't do

Unit Staff do not undertake the compilation of family trees, nor can they provide opinions on whether individuals will be deemed eligible for benefits such as Abstudy by virtue of Aboriginality.

Research resources

Unit Staff search the following resources as standard for all requests:

- **Birth, Death and Marriage indexes** for all states and territories of Australia.
- **ABI – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Biographical Index**
The ABI presently has approximately 65,000 name entries and is fully searchable online through the AIATSIS Library catalogue, Mura® <http://mura.aiatsis.gov.au>. For more information see Fact Sheet 7.
- **Archive Indexes** - The Family History Unit holds Aboriginal Welfare Board/Aboriginal Protection Board indexes, Colonial Secretary Blanket return lists and Protector's reports. Clients who require access to personal Welfare Board documents are referred to the relevant State Archives.
- **Other people searching** – with permission Unit staff may be able to put you in touch with others who are researching the same family as yourself.
- **Pictures Access** – A database of select images from the AIATSIS Audio Visual Archive.
- **Other resources** are searched and referrals made as appropriate. These resources include language material, autobiographies, genealogies, cemetery indexes, histories of missions, stations and reserves as well as mission magazines and unpublished materials.

To make a research request or to obtain advice you can:

Write to: AIATSIS Family History Unit,
GPO Box 553, Canberra ACT 2601

Email: family@aiatsis.gov.au

Phone: 1800 730 129

Visit: AIATSIS, Acton Peninsula, Lawson Crescent, Acton ACT 2601
(please phone for an appointment)