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AIATSIS welcomes \$10.2m boost to digitisation project

Greater access to Australian Indigenous cultures and resources and preservation of at risk materials are just two of the benefits to come from an Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies funding boost in the Federal Budget.

AIATSIS Principal Steve Larkin said the Institute was pleased to gain an additional \$10.2 million funding, which will extend the AIATSIS Digitisation Project to 2011.

“This funding will allow us to continue preserving and documenting Australia’s largest collection of Indigenous cultural material,” Mr Larkin said.

“It keeps AIATSIS at the forefront of archival work, and helps to maintain our role as the world’s leading institution for research and information about Australian Indigenous cultures and lifestyles.”

While AIATSIS estimates that it will take more than 30 years to digitise the whole collection if it does not grow in size, the Institute aims to complete the digitisation of its extremely fragile ‘at risk’ collection material by 30 June 2011.

The AIATSIS Library will continue to develop online exhibitions based on the Institute’s collections, such as the exhibition of journals published by the Inland Mission of Australia, *Our Aim* and *Australian Evangel*, that are a valuable family history resource. The Library may also digitise materials out of copyright for online access.

The Audiovisual Archives’ highly successful ‘Giving It Back’ project will continue thanks to the new funding injection, enabling the Institute to return copies of collection material to the Indigenous communities where the material was created, sometimes more than 100 years ago.

“We will also work closely with these communities, providing advice and expertise to assist them in setting up and maintaining community controlled archives, cultural centres and keeping places,” Mr Larkin said.

The additional funds will also support the tertiary study and on-the-job training of six young Indigenous trainees in the areas of photograph, audio and information management.

Launched in June 2006, the Digitisation Project was set up to preserve priceless Indigenous cultural heritage materials. The initial \$12 million funding enabled AIATSIS to employ 20 extra staff, re-fit its building, and purchase new equipment including a \$1.3 million telecine machine for transferring films to digital video tape.

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