



AIATSIS
Australian Institute of Aboriginal
and Torres Strait Islander Studies

MEDIA RELEASE

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

Monday, 12 May 2008

Institute mourns passing of Ms Marika: a brilliant Indigenous colleague and friend

The Chairperson, Board, Principal and staff of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) today send their condolences to the family of well loved and respected AIATSIS Council member, Ms Marika after her passing last night.

“Ms Marika’s contribution to the Institute, to her community and to Australian society throughout her life goes beyond what most of us ever hope to achieve,” AIATSIS Chairperson, Professor Mick Dodson said today.

“A Yolngu woman of the Rirratjingu clan, Ms Marika was an exceptional Indigenous Australian. She was committed to improving the education outcomes for Indigenous children and always fought to keep culture and language strong for her people and more broadly for all Indigenous Australians,” Professor Dodson said.

AIATSIS Principal Steve Larkin said Ms Marika’s work for the Institute over the past seven years was carried out with high distinction and unrivalled depth and breadth of expertise about remote Indigenous Australia.

“As a representative of Council on the AIATSIS Research Advisory Committee, in particular, her critique of applications for research grants brought an important perspective and unique scholarly contribution to the Committee’s work,” Mr Larkin said.

“We all feel her loss terribly and wish to express our sadness at losing Ms Marika and deepest condolences to her children and her extended family and community,” Mr Larkin said.

Ms Marika’s contribution was acknowledged in 2006 through her appointment by the Northern Territory Government as ‘Territorian of the Year’ and, in 2007, by the Northern Territory Government’s nomination of her as the 2007 Australian of the Year.

Ms Marika had been a member of numerous committees relating to Aboriginal education in the Northern Territory and is a past member of the Northern Territory Board of Studies, Aboriginal Education Standing Committee Working Party, which was charged with developing NT policy in line with the National

Aboriginal Languages Framework. She held the position of Research Fellow at the Mulka Centre, Yirrkala. Her previous positions have included an appointment as Research Fellow and Lecturer at the Centre for Indigenous Natural and Cultural Resource Management, Northern Territory University; working for Alcan Gove Ltd as a translator and running Indigenous culture induction courses for new employees; and Coordinator of the Bilingual Appraisal Review at Yirrkala Community Education Centre.

Charles Darwin University granted Ms Marika a Doctor of Education, Honoris Causa, in October last year for her contribution to education, especially to the education of Aboriginal people in the NT, and her services to reconciliation and inter-cultural understanding.

Yolngu country is in Arnhem Land in the North-East of the Northern Territory.

Media: Chris Ryan, AIATSIS Media and Communications 0408 688 026

Ms Marika presented the biennial Wentworth Lecture in 1998 titled, *Valuing Yolngu Knowledge in the Education System*, reflected her long involvement with, and her ground-breaking work in, Indigenous education, particularly the concept of two way education. The lecture can be read at: http://www1.aiatsis.gov.au/exhibitions/wentworth/a318678_a.pdf