

10 September, 2008

## ***New AIATSIS fund boosts Indigenous researchers***

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people now have a greater opportunity to influence public policy and programs for Indigenous communities with the new *AIATSIS Indigenous Researchers Fund* launched today.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can apply to AIATSIS to become visiting researchers in any field of interest, supported through the \$1 million Fund.

“Australia needs more Indigenous researchers to influence public policy in order to provide the best possible outcomes for Indigenous Australians,” AIATSIS Chairperson Professor Mick Dodson said at the launch of the Fund.

“We need to transfer Indigenous knowledge from the community-based researchers and thinkers - where people know what works and what doesn’t – to the area of public policy development and implementation. Indigenous involvement in decision making is a key indicator of success in Indigenous policy,” Professor Dodson said.

AIATSIS Principal Steve Larkin said the Institute wants to build bridges between the community, academia and government on Indigenous issues, and is therefore interested in Indigenous people with a good balance between relevant work experience and potential research ability.

“We want to provide opportunities for Indigenous people to contribute to knowledge about Indigenous societies and inform public policy, particularly those interested in moving into a research career,” Mr Larkin said.

The Fund was established in partnership with the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs has already provided additional funding. The Fund is open to contributions from other agencies and the private sector.

“This Fund has the potential to create new partnerships between policy makers, Indigenous researchers and Indigenous knowledge systems that will lead to better policy outcomes for Indigenous people,” Mr Larkin said.

*Ends...*

*Testimonies from Indigenous researchers follow and photos are available.* For further information about the positions, contact Mr Tony Boxall, phone 02 6246 1145, email [tony.boxall@aiatsis.gov.au](mailto:tony.boxall@aiatsis.gov.au), or visit our web site at [http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/news/job\\_vacancies](http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/news/job_vacancies).

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

## Testimonies from Indigenous researchers

*I have often had to do things on the run, or at a pace determined by the political expediencies, or funding deadlines, or in reaction to crises. Learning things in an institution that allows the time and space to integrate this learning is such a blessing, especially to be funded to do so!*

**– Torres Strait Islander AIATSIS Visiting Research Fellow, Ms Kerry Arabena.**

*If you want serious Indigenous research, you have to pay for it. It's good that AIATSIS has realised this through the Indigenous Researchers' Fund. I had to wait until my kids had grown up before I could afford to do the research and study I am doing now.*

*Everything I do is from an Indigenous perspective. In my current research, I have a 37 page bibliography and out of that probably only two are Indigenous authors. Unless there are more Indigenous people writing and publishing, there's not a lot for other scholars to hang their theory on.*

*You've got to get more Indigenous people doing post-graduate studies.*

**-Valerie Cooms, Murri researcher and PhD student at Queensland University of Technology.**

*The research environment at AIATSIS is much more relaxed and friendly compared with my experiences at University. As AIATSIS is a much smaller institution, dealing with fewer students it was able to provide greater support; a work space (and place) to further research, writing and thinking; and the Visiting Research Fellows were always available to provide valuable advice when needed*

**- Donna Oxenham, former Indigenous Visiting Research Scholar at AIATSIS.**

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