



RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

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Our Vision for Reconciliation

Reconciliation requires a genuine appreciation of the diversity and richness of Australian Indigenous societies, cultures and histories, and recognition of the importance of continuing relationship to country and to cultural and ancestral inheritance in Indigenous life.

Reconciliation requires acknowledgement of the differing aspirations held by Indigenous Australians living in remote, regional and urban locations and a commitment to work in partnership with Indigenous Australians in the development of Indigenous policy, programs and services.

Reconciliation requires that practical measures which aim to close the gap on continued disadvantage experienced by Indigenous Australians be informed by quality, evidence-based research conducted in partnership with Indigenous communities and individuals.

With more than 45 years' experience as the premier centre for Indigenous research and keeping house of Indigenous materials, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) is uniquely positioned to promote an appreciation of and respect for knowledge and understanding of Australian Indigenous cultures, past and present. Knowledge and understanding is an important bridge to reconciliation for all Australians.

The Institute contributes to 'closing the gap' on continued disadvantage experienced by Indigenous Australians through scholarly, ethical community-based research which focuses on improving the lives of Indigenous people and which informs practical, culturally-appropriate Indigenous health and policy initiatives. This requires the involvement of Indigenous communities, a commitment to community development and improvement to the well-being of Indigenous people.

The AIATSIS collections enable valuable research for Native Title claims and for members of the Stolen Generations to trace and make connections with families previously lost to them. Our collections enable many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to hear languages spoken by past generations and to revitalise their cultural heritage. Through our publishing arm, Aboriginal Studies Press, and various information activities, we raise awareness of the rich and diverse fabric of Indigenous Australia to benefit all Australians.

Our Business

AIATSIS is the world's leading centre for information and research about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and lifestyles – past and present. In addition to research facilities, the Institute houses community outreach and family history services, major archival collections, an extensive public library and a publishing arm, Aboriginal Studies Press. The goals of AIATSIS are:

- to provide leadership and excellence in promoting, facilitating and undertaking high-quality research in Australian Indigenous Studies;
- to maximise the role of Australian Indigenous peoples in the activities and services of the Institute;
- to develop, maintain and preserve well-documented archives and collections, and seeks to maximise access to these, particularly Indigenous peoples, in keeping with appropriate cultural and ethical practices;
- to create, develop and disseminate a diverse range of publications and services about Australian Indigenous cultures;
- to develop and maintain strategic alliances that add value to the work of the Institute;
- to manage efficiently and effectively in a transparent, accountable and supportive manner; and
- to promote and market the products, services and capacity of AIATSIS.

Our Approach to Reconciliation

Our Approach to developing the Reconciliation Action Plan

The AIATSIS Reconciliation Action Plan was developed with the participation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff and was endorsed by the Institute's executive management. The Action Plan will be available on the AIATSIS website (www.aiatsis.gov.au). The Plan is a living document and suggestions from internal and external stakeholders both Indigenous and non-Indigenous will be considered as the Plan is reviewed and revised.

AIATSIS will review and update the Action Plan each financial year and report on progress to Reconciliation Australia. This Plan covers the 2008-2009 financial year. In March 2009, AIATSIS will commence a review and update of the existing Plan, incorporating the learnings from this RAP, for the coming 2009-2010 financial year.

Our Approach to Reconciliation within AIATSIS

AIATSIS is a Commonwealth Indigenous organisation that actively promotes employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians and provides ongoing personal and career development opportunities for Indigenous employees. This is undertaken through the AIATSIS Agency Agreement 2007 – 2011, the AIATSIS Indigenous Recruitment, Retention and Career Development Strategy and the promotion and, where possible, the participation in programs such as those offered through the *APS Employment and Capability Strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders*.

All staff positions at AIATSIS are advertised and recruited against selection criteria that include specific reference to an understanding and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, societies and issues. AIATSIS is currently reviewing its recruitment and retention strategy for Indigenous staff with the aim of a strengthened long-term strategy and action plan for increasing the number of identified positions. AIATSIS is also reviewing its provision of limited cadetships for Indigenous students through programs such as the National Indigenous Cadetship Project and, where possible, the annual PS Graduate Program. AIATSIS is committed to increasing opportunities for Indigenous researchers, one of the latest recruitment programs being the *AIATSIS Indigenous Researchers Fund*.

AIATSIS aspires to be a workplace of choice for Indigenous Australians to contribute to the organisation's important role in promoting knowledge and understanding of Australia's Indigenous cultures, societies and histories. The AIATSIS Agency Agreement 2007-2011 promotes Indigenous employment opportunities and cultural diversity. The Agreement provides for an Indigenous Caucus, additional study leave for Indigenous employees through the AIATSIS Study Assistance Guidelines, leave entitlements in recognition of the additional obligations placed upon Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to participate in ceremonial activities and to meet cultural obligations, and a commitment by all staff to promote cultural diversity and non-discrimination.

Activities of Benefit to Indigenous Australians within AIATSIS

All of the activities undertaken by AIATSIS aim to be of particular benefit to Indigenous Australians and more generally to all Australians:

Research – The Research Program undertakes multi-disciplinary research in diverse areas of Australian Indigenous studies and contributes to Indigenous policy formulation in priority areas, including in Indigenous social and cultural well-being and Indigenous country and governance. AIATSIS provides evidence-based research to assist policy makers and to empower Indigenous people to inform culturally appropriate Indigenous policy, programs and services. The Research Program supports Australian Indigenous studies through teaching and training researchers, particularly Indigenous researchers, and publishes its research findings widely. It holds seminars, workshops and conferences, including the National Native Title Conference which is the largest Indigenous policy gathering in Australia, and has established a

comprehensive set of ethical research protocols. The Native Title Research Unit assists Indigenous Australians on native title claims and other parties, addressing specific needs arising from the recognition of native title. The Research Program administers the Institute's research grants program and supports the Institute in providing training, facilities and support for Indigenous trainee researchers and visiting and honorary scholars.

Collections – The Library contains one of the most comprehensive collections of print materials on Australian Indigenous studies in the world. Through the AIATSIS website, remote users can access the Library's catalogue, online exhibitions and electronic documents. The Library also provides document delivery, interlibrary loans and reference services. The Family History Unit assists Indigenous Australians with family history research. The Audiovisual Archive holds around one million items comprising photographic images, works of art, artefacts, audio, film and video in many different formats. This collection is unique and is preserved and handled according to strict protocols to safeguard the intellectual and cultural property of its owners. AIATSIS is undertaking a comprehensive digitisation program to ensure the safety and longevity of the collection. This assists in facilitating the repatriation of cultural materials to Indigenous communities and ensuring that the collection remains accessible for future generations.

Information – AIATSIS promotes Australian Indigenous cultures through a diverse range of publications and materials. Aboriginal Studies Press (ASP) publishes up to eight new titles annually in the area of Indigenous studies, including academic books with a focus on history, anthropology, archaeology, land rights and native title, health, education, languages and art as well as general books including biography, autobiography and community stories. It publishes the best-selling *Aboriginal Australia* map, the *Little Red Yellow Black Book*, and in partnership with the Research Program the journal *Australian Aboriginal Studies*. ASP promotes its books and authors on Indigenous studies at book launches, writers' festivals, academic conferences and various marketing initiatives. AIATSIS also conducts a range of public information activities at cultural events and through its corporate publications and media program to promote understanding of and respect for Australian Indigenous cultures.

Full details of AIATSIS activities and their benefit to Indigenous Australians and to the broader public are contained in the *AIATSIS Business Plan 2008-2009*, the *AIATSIS Corporate Plan 2008-2010* and the *2007-2008 AIATSIS Annual Report*, which are all available at www.aiatsis.gov.au.

1. Relationships

AIATSIS promotes and advances relationships built on mutual respect with all stakeholders to advance a genuine appreciation of the diversity and richness of Australian Indigenous cultures and societies, and to effectively inform and empower our stakeholders to make culturally appropriate, evidence-based decisions affecting Indigenous Australians now and in the future. Such relationships are fundamental to the role of AIATSIS as a leading centre for information and research about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and lifestyles – past and present.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
1.1 Promote positive stories on Indigenous Australians' cultures, societies, and histories through AIATSIS publications and information activities.	Public Affairs Program/Aboriginal Studies Press	Issue 1 of 2009 Newsletter issued March. 6-8 ASP Publications per year.	Production of positive stories in two - three issues of AIATSIS Newsletter and other information and publishing activities
1.2 Promote awareness of ethical research and collection management protocols	Executive Management Team	June 2009	Evidence of increased adoption by grantees, partner organisations and others of AIATSIS ethical guidelines and protocols, including protection of and respect for Indigenous cultural and intellectual property rights.
1.3 Inform and share findings of research in priority areas of Indigenous studies	Research Program	Twice-yearly issue of 'journal 'Australian Aboriginal Studies' Occasional research discussion papers.	Increased distribution of and subscription to <i>Australian Aboriginal Studies</i> journal. Increased requests by government agencies and other bodies for evidence-based research to inform and guide development of Indigenous policy, programs and services.
1.4 Promote awareness of and applications for AIATSIS Indigenous Researchers Fund	Research Program/Public Affairs Program	Annual call for applications. At time of announcing successful applications.	Increased applications to Indigenous Researchers Fund. Measurable increase in new partnerships created between Indigenous researchers and policy makers that lead to better policy outcomes for Indigenous people.
1.5 Improve access to and knowledge of AIATSIS	Public Affairs Program	December 2008 – May 2009	Increased demand for the services and programs provided by AIATSIS to Indigenous Australians and other stakeholder groups. Increased subscription to AIATSIS corporate materials.
1.6 Promote awareness of AIATSIS RAP	Exec Management Team	December 08	RAP placed on AIATSIS and RA websites. RAP promoted to AIATSIS members via AIATSIS

			newsletter in first quarter 2009. Measure web hits for visits to RAP web page.
1.7 Promote access to AIATSIS collections, programs and services to Indigenous organisations and communities	Exec Management Team	June 2009	Evidence of increased awareness through increased requests made by Indigenous communities and organisations.
2. Respect AIATSIS promotes understanding of and respect for Australian Indigenous peoples, cultures and histories and safeguards and promotes the intellectual and cultural property rights of Indigenous Australians as part of its core business of fostering and disseminating information and research about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and lifestyles – past and present.			
Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
2.1 Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners/Welcome to Country at all AIATSIS official events	Exec Management Team	At all official events	100% recognition of Traditional Owners at all events.
2.2 Provide advice and assistance to external agencies and organisations on Protocols for Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners/Welcome to Country	Exec Management Team	As requested	100% requests actioned and recorded.
2.3 Promote awareness of Australian Indigenous cultures and societies and role of AIATSIS	Public Affairs program/Aboriginal Studies Press	Quarterly	<p>At least six articles published per year in stakeholder publications.</p> <p>Up to eight publications produced by Aboriginal Studies Press.</p> <p>Participate in and co-organise cultural events including NAIDOC each year.</p>
2.4 Leave for Ceremonial Activities and Cultural Obligations	Corporate Services/Human Resources	As required	Leave entitlements recognised as provided for in the AIATSIS Agency Agreement 2007-2011.
2.5 Cultural awareness training provided to all staff	Corporate Services/Human Resources	June 2009	Training made available to all staff at induction and as required.

3. Opportunities

AIATSIS, a Commonwealth Indigenous organisation, is the world's leading centre for information and research about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and lifestyles and as such places great value on the recruitment, retention and professional development of Indigenous staff.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
3.1 Attract Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to pursue employment opportunities at AIATSIS and provide ongoing personal and career development opportunities for Indigenous employees, including promotion of Indigenous Programs	Corporate Services/Human Resources	December 2008 – June 2009	Recruitment practices follow Indigenous Recruitment, Retention and Career Development Strategy. Aim of at least one Indigenous staff member on all panels. Promote the National Indigenous Cadetship Program to all staff minimum twice yearly.
3.2 AIATSIS Agency Agreement and provisions relating to Indigenous employees understood by all staff	Exec Management Team	Upon employment at AIATSIS	100% new employees receive briefing on the AIATSIS Agency Agreement as part of induction.
3.3 Introduction to Indigenous Caucus	Corporate Services/Human Resources	Upon employment at AIATSIS	100% new Indigenous employees introduced to representatives on the Indigenous Caucus
3.4 Promote AIATSIS Study Assistance Guidelines to new Indigenous employees	Corporate Services/Human Resources	On appointment	100% new Indigenous employees informed on guidelines.
3.5 All staff promote cultural diversity and non-discrimination and put into practice appropriate AIATSIS policies and relevant legislation	All staff	December 2008 – June 2009	No complaints received by staff.

4. Tracking progress and reporting

AIATSIS is committed to tracking progress and reporting on its RAP in a timely and consultative manner.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
4.1 Periodic review of RAP progress	Exec Management Team	Half yearly	Review progress and completion of RAP actions.
4.2 Submit report to Reconciliation Australia	Exec Management Team	Annual basis on anniversary of Launch date of the RAP.	AIATSIS report uploaded on AIATSIS and RA websites.
4.3 Review and prepare updated RAP	Exec Management Team/Working Group	March 2009	Complete RAP for July 2009 – June 2010 by end June 2009 in consultation with RA. Approved and final RAP uploaded on RA and AIATSIS websites.