



AIATSIS

Australian Institute of Aboriginal
and Torres Strait Islander Studies

MEDIA RELEASE

Further understanding of Australian Indigenous cultures, past and present through undertaking and publishing research, and providing access to print and audiovisual collections

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AIATSIS fights to save Indigenous audiovisual materials

Audiovisual recordings of the songs, language and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples must be urgently preserved before 2025 or they will be lost forever AIATSIS Principal Russell Taylor said on World Day for Audiovisual Heritage today (27 October).

“AIATSIS has over 100,000 hours of recorded materials and hosts the world’s premier collection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander audiovisual materials. Most of these recordings were collected during the 20th Century on magnetic tape,” Mr Taylor said.

“By 2025, no amount of money will preserve the remaining magnetic material yet to be digitised and we have an ethical imperative to save these endangered recordings to digital forms while it is still possible.”

Audiovisual documents, such as films, audio and video recordings, contain the primary records of the 20th and 21st centuries. UNESCO declared the *World Day for Audiovisual Heritage* to raise general awareness of the need for urgent measures to save audiovisual documents as an integral part of national identity.

With Digitisation funding from the Australian Government to the end of 2011, AIATSIS has already preserved 13,000 audio objects, 42,000 pictorial objects, 2100 films and 1200 videos. The Institute has also returned more than 20,000 digitised AV items to Indigenous communities.

“Every picture, every story, every song, enriches us. Without this preservation, productions such as award-winning documentary *The First Australians* (SBS TV) which was exhaustively researched at the AIATSIS archives couldn’t have contained such remarkable footage,” Mr Taylor said.

“Indigenous Australians are the overwhelming majority of people accessing the photographs, film and audio material at AIATSIS to reclaim their language, trace family history, revive cultural practices, enhance Native Title claims, create Indigenous documentaries and establish local archives or keeping places in remote communities.

“I join the global community in sending a strong and urgent plea for all of us to recognise that our future generations have a right to this resource and unless we work together now to restore and preserve it, it could be lost forever,” Mr Taylor said.

Ends

Archival video footage, audio recordings and photographs are available for use by media through links at: <http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/ava/avheritage.html>

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