

Friday, 16 June 2006

## **Indigenous Knowledge and Intellectual Property Project Launch**

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) will today launch a research project on intellectual property problems facing Indigenous people and communities in Australia.

*Indigenous knowledge and Intellectual property: Access, ownership and control of cultural materials* was jointly developed three years ago by Dr Jane Anderson at AIATSIS and the Intellectual Property Research Institute of Australia (IPRIA).

**The launch will be held in the Mabo Room at AIATSIS (next to the National Museum of Australia) on Acton Peninsula in Canberra from 2.30-4.30pm today. Media are welcome.**

AIATSIS Principal, Steve Larkin, said the project was designed to address the increasing ownership claims and copyright problems being experienced at AIATSIS and within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are amongst the most documented and recorded peoples in the world,” Mr Larkin said.

“Consequently there is an extensive amount of cultural material that documents the lives and experiences of Indigenous people held within cultural and collecting institutions in Australia and overseas.

“The value to Indigenous people of this material is immeasurable but, ironically, Indigenous people are generally **not** owners of their cultural material.

“Instead, it is often owned by the non-Indigenous people who made the actual documentation and recordings, by the cultural institution that now holds the material or the funding agency that employed the researcher working with Indigenous people or communities.”

“This affects cultural institutions that hold the material and individual families and community capacity to access the material and make connections with the past.”

Dr Anderson said “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interests in intellectual property are not just about protecting rights in art”.

“They include complex interests in owning and controlling knowledge contained in films, photographs and sound-recordings about country, land, family histories, and natural resource management,” she said.

“This project seeks to develop some practical solutions to the problems being experienced, as well as recommend future strategies so that the mistakes of the past are not repeated.”

There are three main outcomes from the project:

- Legal Primer on the management of Australian Indigenous collections;
- framework for developing community protocols; and
- major report on related intellectual property issues.

The project is the first of its kind to work with Aboriginal communities, cultural institutions, governmental departments, and Aboriginal organisations about the implications of owning knowledge and identifying the key intellectual property problems being experienced across these diverse contexts.

Other speakers at the launch will include Professor Martin Nakata of the University of Technology Sydney and Lester-Irabinna Rigney of Flinders University in Adelaide.

**Further information or interviews:**

Kirstie Parker on 0412 646 926 or (02) 6261 4225