



**AIATSIS**

Australian Institute of Aboriginal  
and Torres Strait Islander Studies

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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

# **Nyoongar leader's contribution forever etched in the history of this nation**

*14 January 2010*

**Australia's leading research, collecting and publishing institution in the field of Indigenous Studies has paid tribute its former Chairperson, Nyoongar leader and elder Mr. Ken Colbung, who passed away yesterday.**

Russell Taylor, the Principal of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), said that Mr. Colbung rose from humble beginnings on WA's Moore River Native Settlement to become one of Aboriginal Australia's most respected and great political leaders.

"It is a true measure that he rose from abject poverty to become a great and respected leader and one who's name will be forever etched into the Aboriginal history of this nation."

"During his illustrious career, Mr Colbung lobbied for Aboriginal land rights, conservation, education, and the preservation of Indigenous cultures.

"Mr. Colbung had been a member of the Institute since 1974 and was the first Indigenous Chairperson of AIATSIS from 1984-1990. In 1988, he delivered the prestigious Wentworth Lecture, *'Not land rights, but land rites'* and deposited historical and personal materials to our collections."

Mr Taylor noted that Mr. Colbung's passion for Aboriginal rights and equality over the last five decades saw him hold prominent positions with the Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs, the Aboriginal Advancement Council of WA, the Aboriginal Rights League, the WA Legal Service, the Aboriginal Arts Board of the Australia Council, the Nyoongah Community College, the Aboriginal Lands Trust and the WA Aboriginal Advisory Council.

"Mr. Colbung was also instrumental in the development of the WA's *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972* for the protection and preservation of material of cultural significance and is well known for his dedication and resolute determination in the repatriation of the remains of Aboriginal warrior Yagan from England in September 1997."

"He was appropriately awarded an MBE and an AM for services to the Australian Indigenous community and last year was appointed a Fellow of the Western Australian Museum.

"His memory will continue to inspire all who knew him."