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## **‘Father of Australian archaeology’ leads symposium to mark unique anniversary**

*7 June 2011*

**Emeritus Professor John Mulvaney - often referred to as the ‘father of Australian archaeology - will deliver the keynote address at a special symposium in Canberra tomorrow to mark the 50th anniversary of a ground breaking 1961 Conference on Aboriginal Studies.**

In May 1961, fifty five scholars representing every State and most of the institutions directly concerned with research amongst Aborigines assembled at University House in Canberra’s Australian National University to review the state of Australia’s scientific knowledge in all fields of research among the Aborigines.

That Conference convened by the late Australian anthropologist Professor W. E. H (Bill) Stanner led to the establishment of one of this countries oldest Indigenous organisations - the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS).

AIATSIS is now the world’s leading research, collecting and publishing institution in the field of Australian Indigenous studies and will host the symposium at ANU’s University House – the same location as the 1961 conference.

AIATSIS Chairperson, Professor Mick Dodson AM, said that in addition to Emeritus Professor Mulvaney the symposium will bring together many other prominent Australian academics to discuss both the past – and the future – of AIATSIS.

“The symposium comes at an opportune time – when a cultural institution legislatively charged with safeguarding a precious part of Australia’s collective memory – sees that memory imperilled by funding constraints.

“In fact the title of Professor Mulvaney’s keynote address, *A fight against time: the 1961 conference* is particularly appropriate,” Professor Dodson added.

The 1961 conference was the culmination of suggestions by Menzies government minister, the Honourable WC Wentworth, that Australia needed a national effort in scientific research “amongst the Aborigines”. It was considered by a Cabinet sub-committee in July, 1960 and sent to the Vice Chancellor of the National University for Technical Study.

That committee met and concluded there was need for such a national research effort but said there needed to be a conference to review the state of scientific knowledge in all fields of research amongst Aborigines.

Professor Stanner lost no time in convening the conference which recommended that 'a Centre for Aboriginal Studies' be established. That finally occurred with the establishment of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies in 1964.

"We have come a long way since then," Professor Dodson said.

Other acclaimed speakers at the one day symposium will also include Professor Colin Tatz, Dr Ruth Latukefu and Emeritus Professor Isabel McBryde who will also speak about the 1961 Conference.

Other speakers are the ANU's Professor Nicholas Peterson whose address is entitled *The Ucko Years -* , Dr Lachlan Clohesy – Wentworth – and AIATSIS Researcher Dr Geoffrey Gray.

Mr Michael Davis, author/academic, will also speak about heritage, intellectual and cultural property with the closing session being a panel discussion entitled *Where we have been, we are here now, where will we be in 10-20 years time.*

"AIATSIS is a vital part of Australia's cultural institutions. It is appropriate that we recognise its history and contribution to Australian well-being and Indigenous history and research," Professor Dodson said.

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Further information: Peter Windsor 0400 554 603

(Symposium will be held at University House in Canberra's Australian National University commencing at 9.30am. Professor Mulvaney's keynote address will commence at 9.50am)