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## **New research fellowships enhance Institute's reputation as world leader**

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**The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) has appointed an additional five researchers under its innovative and successful Indigenous Visiting Research Fellowship (IVRF) Program.**

Alisa Duff, Ray Lovett, Greg Lehman, Samia Goudie and Mikala Sedgwick will undertake a diverse range of research projects at the Canberra based Institute ranging from substance abuse, Indigenous dance, historical and mythological construction of Tasmanian Aboriginal culture and identity, impacts of digital storytelling projects and the influences of Government employment projects.

The Research Fellowships range from 6 to 12 month appointments.

AIATSIS Chairperson, Professor Mick Dodson AM, said that the Indigenous Visiting Research Fellowship (IVRF) Program was an important initiative established by the Institute to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Fellows and Scholars.

“AIATSIS had the vision to begin this initiative more than five years ago to adequately support Researchers and Scholars to undertake research in their respective fields of interest and work with relevant government departments to discuss policy and practice,” Professor Dodson said.

“Through conducting and encouraging research relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, AIATSIS proudly contributes to the development of understanding of Indigenous peoples, cultures and societies in contemporary and historical contexts.”

The five additional research fellows and their field of research are:

- Torres Strait Islander, **Alisa Duff** who will spend a six month appointment as part of her Masters identifying the issues and gaps in the production of dance by Indigenous Australians.

- **Ray Lovett**, a Wongaiban man from NSW, who has been engaged for 11 months as part of his PhD which aims to understand problematic alcohol use amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including looking at cultural aspects of this through attachment or dislocation from country.
- **Greg Lehman**, a descendant of the Trawlwuy people of north east Tasmania, who will spend 12 months exploring the historical and mythological construction of Tasmanian Aboriginal culture and identity on the part of both observers and observed. The scope of this study will include the visual art of Late Pleistocene stencils and petroglyphs in Tasmania, as well as early European visual records of Tasmanian Aborigines by French and British expeditions.
- **Samia Goudie**, a Bundjalung woman from NSW, who will spend her six months fellowship to explore one of the emergent themes from her PhD research, a co-creative digital storytelling project designed as an activity embedded within an annual camp held by the Elders of the Bama people of Hopevale in Cape York. The research will contribute to the growing understanding of the role that digital storytelling has in facilitating and contributing to the ‘wellness’ of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; and
- **Mikala Sedgwick**, a Gamilaraay/Kamilaroi woman from NSW, who will undertake a six month research fellowship to investigate how Australian Government employment programs can better influence career aspirations of Indigenous youth across education and employment outcomes.

The IVRF program was formally established as a three year initiative in 2008 through additional funding secured from the Federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

The Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research (DIISR) has provided \$500,000 to continue the IVRF program in 2010–11.

AIATSIS Principal, Russell Taylor, said the IVRF program had proved to be particularly successful.

“The latest appointments bring to 21 the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers who have been able to complete – or are working towards completing – valuable projects,” Mr Taylor said.

“These included Dr Kerry Arabena (former co-Chair of Australia’s first National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples), Dr Megan Davis (Director of the Indigenous Law Centre at the University of New South Wales and the first Australian Indigenous woman appointed to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues) and Jeanine Leane, Unaipon Award winning author and winner of the Scanlon prize for indigenous poetry.

“We are grateful to the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research for the additional funding to maintain this unique and innovative program.”

“We are keen to see the program continue,” Mr Taylor concluded.