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## **AIATSIS' researcher wins prestigious Australian Medical Journal award**

*Embargoed until 12 noon Sunday 15 May 2011*

**The Principal of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), Mr Russell Taylor, today congratulated AIATSIS Indigenous Research Fellow Lindy Moffatt on winning a prestigious Australian Medical Journal of Australia award.**

Ms Moffatt won the writing component of the 2011 Dr Ross Ingram Memorial Competition with her essay on the moving story of her son's battle with mental illness.

"I never in my wildest dreams thought I would win," Ms Moffatt said.

"However, my three month research fellowship with AIATSIS is to research Indigenous mental health and when I heard about the Dr Ingram awards I submitted my essay which is entitled "*Mental illness or spiritual illness: what should we call it?*"

Mr Taylor said the award reflected well upon the Institute and its relatively new Indigenous Research Fellowship program.

"The program has been in existence for less than four years and already more than 20 Indigenous researchers have succeeded in gaining fellowships. We are proud of Lindy's achievement".

Ms Moffatt is a Wakka Wakka woman from Queensland and her essay explored the hypothesis that the suffering of trauma and pain within Indigenous communities is passed down inter-generationally.

She said that as a consequence of his mental illness her son would hear voices and he would often respond speaking fluently in an Aboriginal language.

"When you experience this it reinforces the belief that Indigenous mental illness is also spiritual illness and is deeply connected to our spirituality and cultural beliefs".

Mr Taylor said Ms Moffatt had written her essay based on her own experiences of bringing up a son with a mental illness in the belief that by sharing her experiences it may help another family in similar circumstances cope and more readily understand and deal with issues that they may have to confront".

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