

## AIATSIS Research Seminars

12.30pm, Monday 29<sup>th</sup> August 2011

The Mabo Room, AIATSIS, Lawson Crescent, Canberra ACT 2601

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### **Categories of Australian Indigenous 'Homeless' people and good practice responses to their needs**

#### **Professor Paul Memmott, Director of Aboriginal Environments Research Centre (University of Queensland)**

##### **Abstract**

During the last 20 years in Australia, governments have imposed the mainstream categories of homelessness (e.g. as utilized by ABS & SAAP) on Indigenous people. A key point of Professor Memmott's presentation is that the definition of mainstream homelessness does not easily fit over the profiles of many Indigenous people to whom it is applied. His presentation starts with a non-biased min set, using the term 'public place dwellers' for those Indigenous people visible on the streets. Any given public place dwelling group may include individuals with different profiles, different problems and different needs. He will argue that service provision must therefore have multiple coordinated Indigenous-driven strategies e.g. concerning country affiliations, cultural protocols, health, transport, substance abuse treatment and public education as well as accommodation options.

Professor Memmott will argue that holistic healing and service approaches are needed rather than simple one-type service delivery. He will also discuss the needed rather than simple one-type service delivery. He will also discuss the category of 'homelessness inside houses', which corresponds to the mainstream category of homelessness that draws from SAAP's secondary and tertiary homelessness definitions. He argues that this approach also needs to be suspended and re-evaluated, being in certain ways culturally appropriate, and to be reformed by Aboriginal concepts and cultural protocols to do with households, household lifestyles, residential mobility, constructs of crowding and privacy and extended family values.

**Paul Memmott** is a multi-disciplinary researcher (architect/anthropologist) and the Director of the Aboriginal Environments Research Centre (AERC). His early studies were in architecture and painting. His dual research interests during the 1970s, centred on the emerging discipline of person-environment relations and the use of space and place by Aboriginal people, and led him into the social anthropology of Aboriginal Australia. His doctorate examined the Properties of Place of the Lardil people of the Wellesley Islands in the Gulf of Carpentaria. By the early 1980s Paul was professionally qualified and practicing as both an architect and anthropologist, and diverging into allied areas such as settlement planning, social planning, strategic and management planning, social issue analysis, Aboriginal social organisation and land tenure.

Throughout his professional career, Dr Memmott has reapplied his knowledge into teaching and publishing papers and books. By the early 1990s, he held Honorary Reader status at the Departments of Architecture in both Queensland and Sydney Universities. The nature and success of the consulting practice is based on the key role Aboriginal people play as consultants and fieldwork operatives.

Dr Memmott's interests encompass Aboriginal housing and settlement design, Aboriginal access to institutional architecture, Indigenous constructs of place and cultural heritage, vernacular architecture and Native Title, social planning in Indigenous communities, sustainable remote-area buildings and villages.

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