ACIL ALLEN CONSULTING

FINAL REPORT TO
THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

MAY 2014

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STUDIES

INDEPENDENT REVIEW

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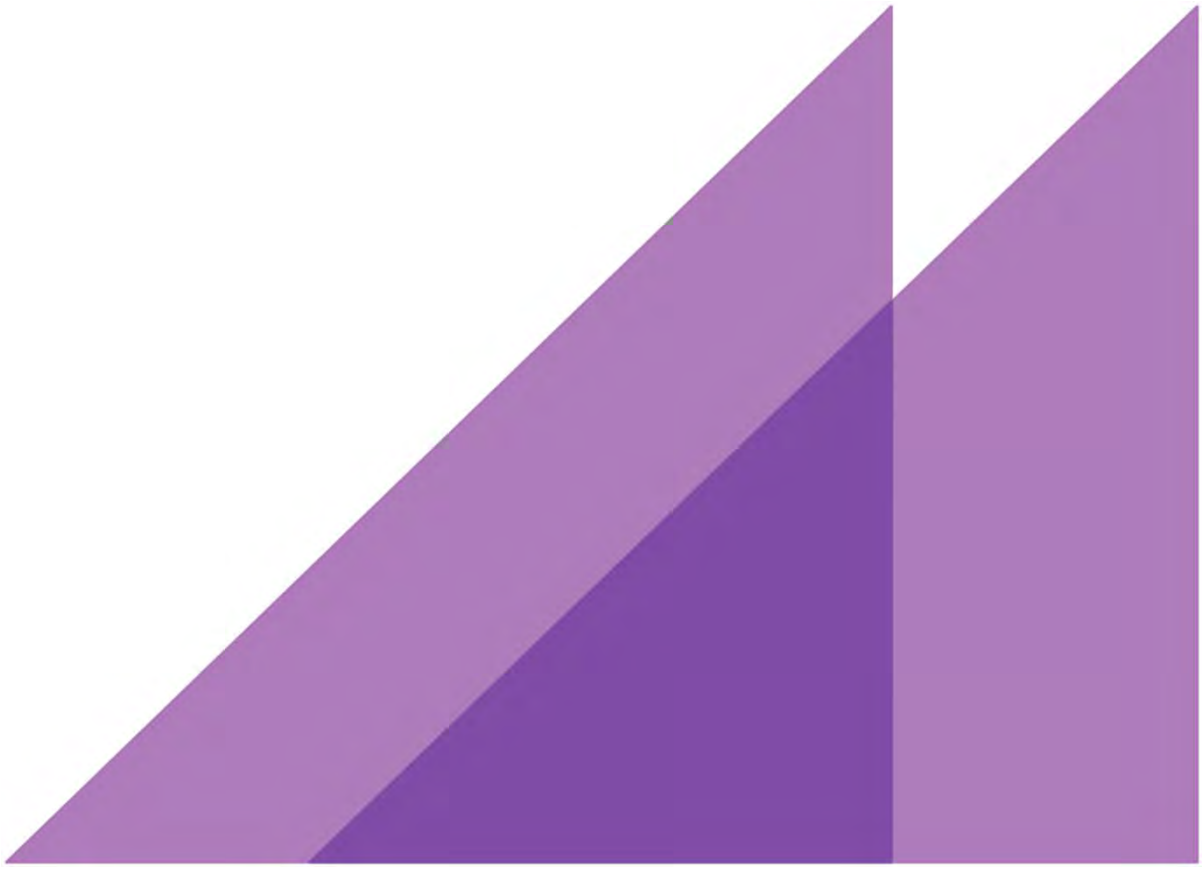

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Executive summary

About AIATSIS

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS)—formerly the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (AIAS)—was created in 1961 and legislated under Commonwealth statute in 1964. The Institute was established to focus on the work of collecting, processing and preserving information about Aboriginal languages, cultures and other traditions for later academic research purposes (Commonwealth of Australia, 1964). Its primary areas of research were anthropology, archaeology (prehistory), human biology and linguistics, with most field research taking place in remote areas of Australia.

In 1989, revised legislation extended the role of the AIAS and changed its name to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. The legislation mandated majority representation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on the AIATSIS Council, including a Torres Strait Island appointee. The legislation promoted a more active role by AIATSIS in both leading and facilitating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies research and related activities than the 1964 legislation. It explicitly referenced new functions to establish and maintain a cultural resource collection, train research workers and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies in the general community.

As a statutory authority, AIATSIS reports directly through the Minister for Education to the Government and Parliament. AIATSIS is governed by a nine member Council, four of whom are elected by AIATSIS members and five of whom are appointed by the Minister, with a majority Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation. It also has advisory committees for its key streams of work, including research, ethics, native title and publishing. Executive leadership of AIATSIS is through the Principal and Deputy Principal, supported by an Executive Board of Management. AIATSIS had some 128 full time equivalent (FTE) staff members as at September 2013. AIATSIS is funded primarily through appropriations and grants from the Australian Government, amounting to some $14.8 million in 2012-13. Additional revenue is generated from activities such as sales of goods, consultancy services and competitive research grants. The total revenue generated by AIATSIS in 2012-13, including appropriations, was approximately $17.5 million.

Background to the Review

Over recent years, the role and focus of AIATSIS has been considered through several national reviews, including: *Venturous Australia – Building Strength in Innovation* (the *Cutler Review*); *Our Land, Our Languages* (Report by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs); and the *Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People* (the *Behrendt Review*).

The *Behrendt Review* included several recommendations relating to AIATSIS:

- That the Australian government continue to support AIATSIS to digitise in order to preserve its collection for future generations and for use across the higher education sector, and that AIATSIS consider a national approach to digitisation with states, territories and community groups

- That AIATSIS provide more formal guidance to publicly funded research agencies (PFRAs), universities and researchers on ethical research practice
- That AIATSIS be reviewed to consider how best to maintain AIATSIS unique place in developing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academic and research activities and the relationship it has with universities.

In response, the former Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DIICCSRTE) commissioned an independent review ('Review') into AIATSIS performance and strategic directions. The Review was undertaken by ACIL Allen Consulting, in collaboration with Professor Mark Rose and Dr Mark McMillan.

The Review seeks advice on how:

- AIATSIS has been performing against its legislated functions (established in Section 5 of the *Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Act* 1989)
- its role as a national research institution could be strengthened to further support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research, higher education and training
- AIATSIS contributes to broader Australian Government policy objectives and how this might be strengthened, including in:
  - cultural diversity and social inclusion
  - closing the gap in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage
  - harnessing the resource of Indigenous knowledge to build our nation, economy and society
- to assist Government in considering its response to the recommendations of recent inquiries in the scope of the review.

These objectives are formalised through 11 Terms of Reference (TORs) that seek to gauge AIATSIS current performance and identify any changes to its structure, governance and funding to equip AIATSIS to deliver on its strategic directions.

How the Review was conducted

The Review was conducted between July 2013 and April 2014. It was supported by an expert reference group comprising Professor Ian Anderson, Assistant Vice Chancellor (Indigenous Higher Education Policy) at the University of Melbourne, and Ms Patricia Turner AM. The Review team has collaborated throughout with representatives from AIATSIS and the Department of Education (which now has portfolio responsibility for AIATSIS).

The Review drew on inputs from a range of sources:

- interviews and focus groups with key informants (approximately 40)
- survey of AIATSIS members (131 responses received from 530 invitations)
- community visits to Cairns, Broome and Perth involving discussions about regional and remote involvement with AIATSIS, along with telephone discussions with stakeholders from the Torres Strait Islands and Kempsey
- public submissions (39 received – see www.acilallen.com.au/aiatsisreview)
- review of documentation provided by AIATSIS and government, as well as information identified through a broader review of relevant literature.

The Review TORs did not seek a detailed assessment of AIATSIS activities and costs, so this report does not include detailed performance measurement or benchmarking. Rather, the Review focuses on the role and functions of AIATSIS, synthesising the weight of

stakeholder perspectives with data provided by AIATSIS to develop recommendations on future positioning that will reinforce its strengths and addresses its major challenges.

Review findings

A wide range of stakeholders interact with AIATSIS, with few experiencing the full range of AIATSIS activities. Given this, the nature of stakeholder needs and expectations are varied. As such, the Review findings reflect areas where there was broad, rather than universal, consensus among stakeholders. They also take into account the views of Review team members, drawing on their observations and insights from analysis of information provided, together with evidence presented through interviews, community visits and surveys of members.

AIATSIS has played an instrumental role in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies

A clear overall finding is that for the past fifty years AIATSIS has played an instrumental role in establishing a focus for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies. AIATSIS legislative functions have enabled it to shape a set of programs and services that build knowledge about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies, and help to develop the capacity of researchers in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies. Stakeholders strongly emphasised the importance of the AIATSIS collection of unique cultural materials, generated through research activities facilitated by AIATSIS, strategic acquisitions and deposits from community members and researchers.

AIATSIS is facing difficulties undertaking its range of services within funding levels

Notwithstanding this, in recent years AIATSIS has faced difficulty in delivering its range of services within available resources. There was a strong view among stakeholders that AIATSIS is trying to do too much with too little, thereby limiting its overall effectiveness. Though AIATSIS has sought additional appropriations funding from the Australian Government on numerous occasions, bids have been largely unsuccessful in recent years, resulting in uncertainty regarding its overall resource base. This uncertainty extends to the additional funding secured for digitisation of the collection, which is due to expire in mid-2014.

Systematic prioritisation of activities is required

A systematic and strategic review of activities is required by AIATSIS to establish priorities and identify what can be achieved within available funding. The Review was able to access only limited monitoring and evaluation information regarding the impacts of the range of activities undertaken, including the allocation of resources and the outcomes achieved. As a result, while the Review indicates broad areas of future focus, it is not able to make detailed judgments regarding the overall impact of various AIATSIS activity streams or appropriate future funding levels.

The research sector has evolved over the past fifty years

The position of AIATSIS in the Indigenous knowledges research sector has changed throughout its fifty year history. In its early years, AIATSIS promoted research growth across universities by both facilitating and undertaking research in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies. Over time, the number of researchers in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies has grown, often with support from AIATSIS through research fellowships, direct employment, grants and other capacity building activities. Today, there are over 40 universities across Australia, each with divisions to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Most universities also undertake Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies research, including through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics.

From establishing to supporting and sustaining the research sector

Having helped to establish and foster a much stronger research sector, universities expressed the need for AIATSIS to work collaboratively with them to help further improve research practices. While AIATSIS already does this through many research partnerships, it has sought more recently to compete at times for research funding. Universities and

researchers identified that the sector would benefit from AIATSIS acting as a collaborator and facilitator, rather than as a direct competitor.

Maintaining and managing the cultural collection is considered by many the most important role for AIATSIS

The use, maintenance and development of the AIATSIS cultural collection is seen by many stakeholders as AIATSIS most important role. There is a critical and ongoing need to preserve materials that are in decay and to promote improved access to the collection. The management of the collection is essential to supporting its usage, with continued priority required in order to match the importance placed on it by stakeholders. AIATSIS can advance this by closely linking its research program to studies that draw on resources held in the collection, and by providing services that draw on its unique collection of materials.

Access to and promotion of the collection is also important

There is high unmet demand from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and non-Indigenous people for improved access to the cultural collection, including materials that are rich in knowleges, cultures and histories. There is also a significant role for AIATSIS in drawing on materials within the collection to improve knowledge about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies across the general community.

Community outreach is valued, but expensive and hence limited

The work of AIATSIS with communities, through outreach activities and managing visits to the collection, is considered highly valuable where it occurs, but is expensive and therefore limited in its scale. The direct involvement of communities with AIATSIS is constrained due to its Canberra location. The accessibility of the collection is also limited by sometimes restrictive depositor conditions that are placed on many materials.

Strong strategic direction and guidance is required

Given the stakeholder needs and challenges identified in the Review, the AIATSIS Council and Executive will be required to provide strong strategic direction and guidance to enable the organisation to prioritise and deliver a practicable set of services that address stakeholder requirements as far as possible within available resources. This Review highlights several areas where AIATSIS activities are considered to be of highest value, and delivering effectively on these will require careful prioritisation.

An opportune time to evolve the role of AIATSIS

By adopting a role oriented more towards leadership, coordination and facilitation, rather than directly undertaking all its current activities itself, there are opportunities for AIATSIS to increase its impact without necessarily having significant resource implications. Having helped to establish a national network of researchers in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies, it is opportune for AIATSIS to reprioritise its own activities towards facilitating and supporting further growth of, and practice within, the national network.

Priorities should build on clear principles confirmed through stakeholder feedback

In determining its priorities, it will be important that AIATSIS responds to stakeholder feedback to:

- *improve accessibility*: to the collection, to AIATSIS research priorities, to capacity building support, to publications and to opportunities for knowledge exchange.
- *work collaboratively*: with national, state, local, community and other partners.
- *enable rather than do*: serve as a national facilitator for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies, supported by its own work where AIATSIS is best placed.
- *build researcher capacity*: provide support for researchers in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, for priority projects across Australia.
- *support collections infrastructure*: manage its collection and acknowledge the contents of related collections across Australia.

Recommendations

The Review TORs focus primarily on assessing AIATSIS performance in relation to its legislated functions and current activities. While the Review findings have identified specific areas of activity that require attention, they collectively indicate that a shift is required in the positioning of AIATSIS within the changing national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges research environment.

The three major existing AIATSIS activity streams remain broadly appropriate and should continue, though with some change in emphasis:

- *research:* setting clear research priorities that direct activities around the AIATSIS collection, and playing a collaborative role in research partnerships.
- *dissemination:* leading and promoting awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' knowledges and cultures, with an emphasis on developing resources to improve understanding across the general community.
- *collections:* supporting accessibility and digitising materials to remain a custodian of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' knowledge and cultural materials.

Within these streams, activities will need to be critically reviewed by AIATSIS, with increased priority given to some existing activities, while ongoing efforts in areas of limited impact will require reconsideration.

Given the already discussed limitations of the Review to gauge explicit funding needs, the following recommendations have been drafted under the assumption that AIATSIS funding will be maintained at least at current levels while more detailed reprioritisation and strategic realignment of activities is undertaken.

Maintaining funding at current levels is in itself likely to require a degree of service rationalisation to focus on areas of strength and adapt or discontinue activities of limited or lesser benefit to stakeholders. The Review notes that any further reduction in funding levels would place many of AIATSIS most core activities at severe risk, and forestall the benefits of the transition outlined.

Table ES 1 **Summary of Review findings and recommendations**

Findings	Recommendations
Term of reference 1: AIATSIS current role and functions and future strategic directions, against its legislated objectives	
▪ The *Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Act 1989* provides AIATSIS with the ability to undertake the functions considered important by its stakeholders. ▪ Clarification of expectations by the responsible Minister, when undertaken, has proved helpful to AIATSIS in prioritising and targeting its activities.	*Recommendation: Establish clear expectations and priorities* That the Australian Government: 1. Affirm and maintain AIATSIS role as the key national and collecting research agency focused on preserving and raising awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identities, knowledges and cultures. 2. Coordinate whole-of-government priorities for AIATSIS through the established mechanism of a Statement of Expectations from the Minister for Education. The Statement should take a three year perspective, with AIATSIS to respond with a Statement of Intent.
Term of reference 2: How AIATSIS meets the needs and expectations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and researchers and whether there is an unmet need	
▪ Stakeholder expectations of AIATSIS vary, with few clear about all of its legislative functions or capabilities. Many stakeholders identified that AIATSIS is currently spread across many activity streams. ▪ There are opportunities for AIATSIS to play an enhanced national leadership role by focusing its efforts on supporting and collaborating with other institutions and individuals involved in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies.	*Recommendation: Communicate and engage with stakeholders* That AIATSIS: 3. Develop and implement a stakeholder and community engagement strategy to build awareness of AIATSIS role, priorities and programs among key stakeholders.

Findings	Recommendations
Term of reference 3: AIATSIS role in supporting the Australian research sector, promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies and developing the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers	
▪ The field of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies is multi-disciplinary, complex and difficult to define. ▪ AIATSIS has been instrumental in building capabilities across the field of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies over the past fifty years, but there would be merit in it reconsidering how its services can best meet the requirements of the evolving research sector.	*Recommendation: Review research strategy* That AIATSIS: 4. Research and prepare a report on the current state of Indigenous studies and research across the Australian higher education and research community, and review its strategy in that context.
Term of reference 4: The nature of its current relationships with universities and a framework for possible future roles in supporting researchers, higher degree by research students, research supervisors and career researchers in areas of Indigenous studies	
▪ AIATSIS has played a key role in helping to develop a cohort of leading and influential Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, but there remain significant unmet needs across the university sector to support students and early career researchers. ▪ AIATSIS provides a valuable collaborative role with universities through research partnership and networks, but the level of and nature of its current involvement is variable across universities. ▪ The relative roles and responsibilities between universities, the National Indigenous Researchers and Knowledges Network (NIRAKN) and AIATSIS in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have some overlap and require further clarification.	*Recommendation: Strengthen research relationships and collaborations* That the Department of Education: 5. Work with AIATSIS, universities, NHMRC, ARC and NIRAKN to consider their roles and opportunities for effective collaboration. That AIATSIS: 6. Promote more collaborative research involvement between AIATSIS and universities, including increasing the use of the AIATSIS cultural collection. Consider developing a business and funding case for establishing part-time Adjunct Chair positions within AIATSIS for leading university academics in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies.
Term of reference 5: The role of AIATSIS in maintaining and promoting the highest standards in ethical research with Indigenous peoples and Indigenous collections management	
▪ AIATSIS has played a lead role in developing and supporting ethical research practice, and its Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies are respected nationally and internationally. ▪ There remains potential for wider application of the Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies by publicly funded research agencies, universities and researchers.	*Recommendation: Promote wider application of the Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies* That the Australian Government: 7. Endorse the wider application of the AIATSIS Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies, for example through the ARC Discovery Indigenous grants program and for research undertaken by the Australian Government agencies with or relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. That AIATSIS: 8. Work with universities and NIRAKN to encourage adoption of the Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies as a standard for ethical research in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies. Develop, and make available, guidance materials and support services for human research ethics committees and researchers in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies to support application of the Guidelines.
Term of reference 6: The impact and cost effectiveness of the AIATSIS managed grant program (and the Research Grants) and the Indigenous Visiting Research Fellowships employment program	
▪ From 1964 until its suspension in 2012, the AIATSIS research grants program was an important enabler of research in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies, and played a key role in building the AIATSIS collection. ▪ Prior to its suspension, the limited proportion of grant funding able to be allocated relative to administration costs reduced the overall cost-effectiveness of the program. ▪ The suspension of the grants program continues to be felt strongly by community researchers/academics, who consider that there are few alternative avenues to attract small-scale research funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies. ▪ The Indigenous Visiting Research Fellowship (IVRF) program provides intensive supervisory and financial support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to complete their studies. While the reach and scope of the IVRF program is limited to a small proportion of the growing number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and early career researchers, it has had a positive influence and should be studied for the broader lessons it contains.	*Recommendation: Identify community based research needs* That the Australian Government : 9. Consider whether current research grants in the major funding streams (i.e. ARC and NHMRC) are being made available, as appropriate, to community based research, and whether there is a role for AIATSIS in the prioritisation and distribution of funding to support community research. *Recommendation: Review the IVRF program* That AIATSIS: 10. Subject to funding, continue the IVRF program in the short term and review the ongoing need for the IVRF program relative to the other capacity building services across the tertiary education sector that should be supporting successful degree outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers.

Findings	Recommendations
Term of reference 7: The place of AIATSIS in conducting and facilitating research in Indigenous knowledge and community based research	
▪ There is a general lack of awareness and understanding among stakeholders about the purpose, focus and priorities for AIATSIS research program. ▪ While there are many demands on AIATSIS to contribute to emerging areas of research, AIATSIS' unique collection provides it with a point of difference from other Australian research organisations. ▪ There is potential in the medium to long term for AIATSIS to play a stronger role in helping to guide or advise on national research priorities in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies.	*Recommendation: Undertake research that draws on or develops the AIATSIS cultural collection* That AIATSIS: 11. Develop and publicise strategic research directions informed by the continued use, targeted research, growth and development of its unique collection.
Term of reference 8: The promotional role of AIATSIS in encouraging a greater understanding in the general community of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (including through the provision of information, publications and outreach activities)	
▪ AIATSIS provides valued options and channels for disseminating research and publications that may not otherwise be published, although limited in scale and reach. ▪ Many stakeholders identified a need for AIATSIS to continue seeking cost effective ways to encourage understanding, in the general community, of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies, including through preparing educational resources. ▪ Current AIATSIS community outreach activities are valued where they occur, but their extent and scope is limited largely by their relatively high cost.	*Recommendation: Emphasise broad understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures* That AIATSIS: 12. More fully develop materials that strengthen online communications and identify community engagement opportunities to build general community understanding of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and knowledges. This may include collating, indexing, repackaging and presenting information about languages, cultures, histories and societies, drawing on materials held within the AIATSIS collection. *Recommendation: Review community outreach models* That AIATSIS: 13. Consider models to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, for example through community access visits, sharing materials through local collections agencies or supporting community visits to AIATSIS. Develop detailed costing proposals where required (e.g. community visits).
Term of reference 9: AIATSIS role in preserving and disseminating information and knowledge about its cultural collection and how the collection can be best utilised and preserved including through digitisation	
▪ The AIATSIS cultural collection is widely valued as critical to the preservation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' knowledges and cultural materials. ▪ The resources currently applied to managing the AIATSIS collection are insufficient to promote the level of accessibility desired by users. Access is restricted by factors including AIATSIS Canberra location, limited library opening hours and sometimes lengthy document retrieval times. ▪ AIATSIS depositor and access protocols help to manage the cultural collection in ways that acknowledge the cultural significance of items, but can impact the perceived accessibility of the collection.	*Recommendation: Expand access to the AIATSIS cultural collection* That AIATSIS: 14. Expand user access to the AIATSIS collection, through reducing waiting times, assisting collections navigation, extending the AIATSIS library hours and strengthening online access. Undertake work to identify best practice, including international best practice, for the management and accessibility of research collections.
Term of reference 10: Strategies for the expansion, maintenance and management of the digitisation of the cultural resource collection in order to preserve it and make it available to Indigenous communities and individuals and students and researchers	
▪ Digitisation is critical for the preservation of aging materials within the AIATSIS cultural collection. This requires continuation of intensive efforts to digitise high priority materials, and ongoing efforts to manage the digitisation of AIATSIS growing collection. ▪ Users expect that digitised materials will play a role in improving accessibility of the AIATSIS collection, including remote access. ▪ The expiry of digitisation funding presents a risk that some cultural materials and records will be lost or inaccessible to future generations.	*Recommendation: Continue and fast-track the digitisation program* That the Australian Government: 15. In the short term, continue funding digitisation of the cultural collection at current levels ($3.2 million per annum) to address the most vulnerable materials, and seek from AIATSIS a more detailed analysis of the annual appropriations funding required for ongoing digitisation activities. That AIATSIS: 16. Continue to identify and implement digitisation activities for the most vulnerable materials within the cultural collection. Determine the urgency, timing, needs and expected outcomes of digitisation and work with the Australian Government to establish an appropriate longer term annual appropriation for the task.

Findings	Recommendations
Term of reference 11: Whether current circumstances and demands warrant any changes in structure, governance and/or funding to equip AIATSIS to effectively undertake its mission	
▪ AIATSIS has well-established corporate governance processes and practices to support its decision making and operations, but its committee structures need to adapt to match organisational priorities. ▪ AIATSIS membership represents the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies research community, though many members are unclear about the benefits of membership or opportunities for engagement. ▪ AIATSIS funding comprises a number of non-recurrent grants, from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, resulting in uncertainty regarding AIATSIS long term resource base. ▪ AIATSIS has faced increasing difficulty in delivering its current programs at expected levels of service within current funding. ▪ Monitoring of organisational outputs and outcomes in relation to investment is at a high level and limited, rendering it difficult to assess and communicate return on effort and to support additional funding for program investment.	*Recommendation: Adapt committees and membership* That AIATSIS: 17. Review its Committee Structures and consider the ongoing need for the Native Title and Publishing Advisory Committees of Council. 18. Review AIATSIS membership composition with a view to increasing involvement by younger researchers and other parties with an interest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies. *Recommendation: Attract additional or co-funding* That AIATSIS: 19. Establish a clear organisation strategy to meet statutory obligations within the context of changed technology and stakeholder requirements and identify any funding requirements for later government consideration. 20. Where appropriate, continue to investigate and implement mechanisms to attract additional funding through fee-for-service activities, partnerships and philanthropy. *Recommendation: Enhance performance monitoring* That AIATSIS: 21. Identify and track a set of key performance indicators to measure and report on progress against organisational priorities, along with processes to elicit user feedback across AIATSIS service streams. This will further position AIATSIS for the pending *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability (PGPA) Act*, scheduled for introduction in July 2014.

Source*: ACIL Allen Consulting 2014*

1 Introduction to the Review

1.1 About AIATSIS

History

Formerly the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (AIAS), the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) was created in 1961 and legislated under Commonwealth statute in 1964. Its establishment was significant insofar as it preceded the 1967 referendum, which provided the Australian Government with powers to legislate with respect to Indigenous peoples.

AIATSIS was originally established to focus on the work of collecting, processing and preserving information about Aboriginal languages, cultures and other traditions for later academic research purposes (Senate Hansard, 1964). Its primary areas of research were anthropology, archaeology (prehistory), human biology and linguistics, with most field research work taking place in remote Australia.

The AIAS was Canberra-based with a Council comprising 22 representatives. It also had 89 members, who were all eminent in their knowledge of, or research in, or services to, Aboriginal studies. It was funded by the Australian Government, led by the Minister in Charge of Commonwealth Activities in Education and Research, and its staff included a librarian, bibliographers, sound technicians and a cameraman.

There were significant changes in the policy and cultural landscape in the twenty five years between 1964 and 1989. Major events included the 1967 Constitutional Referendum, the tent embassy land rights protest in 1972, the policy of self-determination by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in 1972, and the introduction of the *Racial Discrimination Act* 1975 and the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act* 1976.

In 1989, revised legislation—*The AIATSIS Act*—extended the role of the AIAS and changed its name to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. The legislation mandated majority representation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on the AIATSIS Council, including a Torres Strait Island appointee. The legislation promoted a more active role by AIATSIS in both leading and facilitating Indigenous studies research and related activities than the 1964 legislation. It included new functions to establish and maintain a cultural resource collection, train research workers, and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies in the general community. It also formally transferred AIATSIS staff into the Australian Public Service.

The *AIATSIS Act* 1989, which remains in place, sets out the functions for AIATSIS:

- to undertake and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies
- to publish the results of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies and to assist in the publication of the results of such studies
- to conduct research in fields relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies and to encourage other persons or bodies to conduct such research
- to assist in training persons, particularly Aboriginal persons and Torres Strait Islanders, as research workers in fields relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies

- to establish and maintain a cultural resource collection consisting of materials relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies
- to encourage understanding, in the general community, of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies
- such other functions as are conferred on the Institute by this Act
- to do anything else that is incidental or conducive to the performance of any of the preceding functions.

Since 1989, the policy and cultural landscape has changed further. Important landmarks include the release of the *Deaths in Custody Royal Commission* report in 1991, land rights decisions in 1992 (Mabo) and 1996 (Wik), the release of the *Bringing Them Home* report in 1997, the Reconciliation process, the Close the Gap campaign and policies, and the apology to Stolen Generations in 2008. The services provided by AIATSIS have also changed during this period to support national policy directions.

Today, AIATSIS is one of Australia's publicly funded research agencies and the only national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led Australian Government body. AIATSIS maintains a national cultural resource collection of over one million items. It undertakes a multi-disciplinary research program and disseminates findings through seminars, journals, submissions and other publications. AIATSIS runs a printing press, supporting mostly non-fiction works by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors. It also assists in training researchers, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. AIATSIS seeks to encourage understanding in the general community of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies and provides thought leadership through submissions and research papers to exert influence over policy directions.

Significant features of the current environment in which AIATSIS engages recognise that:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are central to Australian identity and to the way foreigners view Australia
- there is desire among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to control, maintain and revitalise their languages, cultures and societies
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges are a living heritage held by diverse communities of different sizes and needs across urban, regional and remote Australia
- communities have relationships with a diverse set of cultural institutions at the local, state and national levels for maintenance of cultural materials
- there has been significant growth in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies research sector, contributors to which include a large number of universities and collecting institutions as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous researchers
- there is a need to transition to digital information sources as the preferred mode of accessing knowledge via digital repositories, including via platforms which allow knowledge creators to link and add to knowledge
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives have been embedded across the Australian Curriculum, including the development of a languages framework.

Organisational functions

AIATSIS promotes research across the multidisciplinary field of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies. Its legislation describes this field as "research and study in relation to aspects of the culture, history and society of Aboriginal persons or Torres Strait Islanders". The role of AIATSIS in supporting the field falls into three broad areas of activity, which have been elaborated in corporate and business planning documentation over recent years as:

- *research:* conducting and facilitating research in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies.
- *dissemination:* publishing results of studies and improving general community understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and cultures
- *collections:* establishing and maintaining a cultural resource collection.

These three areas of activity are closely inter-related, with each reinforcing and supporting the other. AIATSIS also undertakes capability building activities, in particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers. The Corporate Services function provides organisational support to enable the delivery of programs, including through managing involvement by Council, Committees and members.

AIATSIS is involved in a wide variety of activities with a large number of stakeholders across the country and internationally. It works with government agencies, collections organisations, higher education institutions and community level researchers. AIATSIS also hosts international visitors to Australia through visiting delegations. It makes a contribution internationally, primarily through sharing research papers at conferences and symposia relating to Indigenous peoples.

1.2 Review scope

Rationale for the review

The role and focus of AIATSIS has been considered through several recent national reviews, including *Venturous Australia – Building Strength in Innovation* (the Cutler Review), *Our Land, Our Languages* (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Report), and the *Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People* (the *Behrendt Review*). In particular, the *Behrendt Review* called for a study of AIATSIS by the Australian Government to consider how best to "maintain AIATSIS unique place in developing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academic and research activities and the relationship it has with universities" (Behrendt, Larkin, Griew & Kelly, 2012).

On the verge of the 50th anniversary since AIATSIS was established through legislation, the former Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DIICCSRTE) engaged ACIL Allen Consulting, in collaboration with Professor Mark Rose and Dr Mark McMillan, to undertake a review of AIATSIS. Portfolio responsibility for AIATSIS has since shifted to the Department of Education.

The Review team was supported by an expert reference group comprising Professor Ian Anderson from the University of Melbourne and Ms Patricia Turner, the former CEO of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission.

The Department of Education sought an independent examination and advice to the Australian Government on how:

- AIATSIS has been performing against its legislated functions

- its role as a national research institution could be strengthened to further support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research, higher education and training
- AIATSIS contributes to broader Australian Government policy objectives and how this might be strengthened, including in:
  - cultural diversity and social inclusion
  - Closing the Gap in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage
  - harnessing the resource of Indigenous knowledge to build our nation, economy and society
- to assist Government in considering its response to the recommendations of recent inquiries in the scope of the Review.

Terms of reference

The former DIICCSRTE established eleven Terms of Reference (TOR) to assess AIATSIS performance against its legislated functions. These form the focus of this Review.

1. AIATSIS current role and functions and future strategic directions, against its legislated objectives
2. How AIATSIS meets the needs and expectations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and researchers and whether there is an unmet need
3. AIATSIS role in supporting the Australian research sector, promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies and developing the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers
4. The nature of its current relationships with universities and a framework for possible future roles in supporting researchers, higher degree by research students, research supervisors and career researchers in areas of Indigenous studies
5. The role of AIATSIS in maintaining and promoting the highest standards in ethical research with Indigenous peoples and Indigenous collections management
6. The impact and cost effectiveness of the AIATSIS managed grant program (and the Research Grants) and the Indigenous Visiting Research Fellowships employment program
7. The place of AIATSIS in conducting and facilitating research in Indigenous knowledge and community based research
8. The promotional role of AIATSIS in encouraging a greater understanding in the general community of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (including through the provision of information, publications and outreach activities)
9. AIATSIS role in preserving and disseminating information and knowledge about its cultural collection and how the collection can be best utilised and preserved including through digitisation
10. Strategies for the expansion, maintenance and management of the digitisation of the cultural resource collection in order to preserve it and make it available to Indigenous communities and individuals and students and researchers
11. Whether current circumstances and demands warrant any changes in structure, governance and/or funding to equip AIATSIS to effectively undertake its mission.

1.3 Review approach

Engagement with stakeholders

The Review sought input from a wide variety of stakeholders involved with AIATSIS. Combined with a review of relevant documents and significant direct engagement with AIATSIS, stakeholders provided valuable insights into the operations and expectations of AIATSIS. A targeted interview process provided an opportunity for deeper exploration of emerging themes. The Review team also liaised regularly with Australian Government departmental representatives on all aspects of the Review.

The key stakeholder groups who interact with AIATSIS are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1 **AIATSIS key stakeholders**

Stakeholder category	Major stakeholder groups
Government agencies	Primary funding agency (Department of Education) Other departments and statutory agencies, including publicly funded research agencies State and territory and local governments
Collections agencies	National, state and local agencies with a role in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge collection, preservation or exhibition
University sector	Faculties within universities Indigenous education units Academics Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and researchers
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities	Community members Land Councils and Prescribed Bodies Corporate Linguists, researchers, academics, authors Community-based grant applicants or recipients
General public	People across Australia
International	First Peoples' bodies Academics and researchers

Source: ACIL Allen Consulting 2014

Data collection activities

Evidence to inform the review findings was collected through:

- interviews and focus groups with key informants (approximately 40)
- a survey of AIATSIS members (131 responses received from 530 invitations)
- community visits to Cairns, Broome and Perth involving discussions about regional and remote involvement with AIATSIS, along with telephone discussions with stakeholders from the Torres Strait Islands and Kempsey
- public submissions (39 submissions received – see www.acilallen.com.au/aiatsisreview)
- review of documentation provided by AIATSIS and government, as well as information identified through a broader review of relevant literature.

Further detail about the Review approach is available at Appendix A.

Assessment approach

The focus of the Review is on assessing AIATSIS against the TORs, noting its legislated functions. The Review TORs did not seek a detailed assessment of AIATSIS activities and costs and hence this report does not include detailed performance measurement or

benchmarking. Rather, the Review focusses on the role and functions of AIATSIS, synthesising the weight of stakeholder perspectives with data provided by AIATSIS to develop recommendations on future positioning that will reinforce its strengths and addresses its major challenges.

The Review has drawn largely on AIATSIS *Corporate Plan 2010-11 to 2012-13* in understanding and assessing the recent activities of AIATSIS, including through budgets, organisational structures and reporting. The Review therefore focuses on the key areas of research, collections and dissemination, acknowledging that achievement of outputs in these areas requires cross-AIATSIS effort. The Review also considers governance and corporate support. In July 2013, AIATSIS finalised a revised *Statement of Strategic Intent 2013-2016*, which is detailed further in Chapter 5.

The *Corporate Plan 2010-11 to 2012-13* outlines the outcomes and outputs which have been the core focus of AIATSIS over recent years. It identifies a single organisational outcome, with four major goals as outlined in Figure 1.

Figure 1 **AIATSIS Corporate Plan 2010-11 to 2012-13**

Source: AIATSIS, 2010e

Reporting approach and structure

There are many ways in which this report could have been ordered—such as by organisational functions, stakeholder groups, or themes emerging from the Review. For ease of reference, the approach adopted has been to organise findings according to the Review TORs. Where findings potentially relate to multiple TORs, they have been located within the area of strongest alignment and cross-referenced in the other TORs.

The sequencing of the report begins with consideration of activities and outcomes and moves progressively to address organisational planning and strategy. As such, the TORs are not considered in strict numerical order. Chapters 2 to 4 of the report are largely diagnostic, discussing the major activity areas of AIATSIS in turn—research, dissemination and collections (TORs 3-10). This provides the foundation for broader discussions in Chapter 5 about AIATSIS organisational structure, governance and funding, and ultimately

about the overall role of AIATSIS and stakeholders needs (TORs 11, 1 and 2). Chapter 6 details future directions for AIATSIS, taking into account findings about its existing performance, along with stakeholder views about how the role of AIATSIS can be strengthened. This chapter includes a summary of findings, linked to recommendations for the Australian Government and AIATSIS.

The appendices contain additional relevant information:

- the review method, stakeholders interviewed and key questions (Appendix A)
- a detailed list of AIATSIS activities (Appendix B)
- a summary of recent national reviews referencing AIATSIS (Appendix C)
- the results of the survey of AIATSIS members (Appendix D)
- a summary of public submissions received through the Review (Appendix E).

2 Research

This chapter discusses AIATSIS role in the research sector, including through supporting the development of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies sector, engaging with universities, leading ethical research practice, supporting research grants, providing capacity building support and delivering its own research program. It responds to TORs 3 to 7.

2.1 Background

The Australian research sector overall is significant in scale, with total government support for research and innovation in 2011-12 estimated at $9.4 billion (DIISR, 2011). Research involves elements of basic and applied research, with government funding allocated through a balance of competitive (e.g. grants) and non-competitive funding channels (e.g. direct allocations).

AIATSIS is one of Australia's Publicly Funded Research Agencies (PFRA), which are responsible for conducting:

> …long term basic, strategic and applied research across many priority areas for government and the economy. This research is often in areas of public good, where investment by the private sector is low due to uncertain or insufficient commercial outcomes, commercially unacceptable risks or long time-frames. Some PFRAs also play an important role in training and developing researchers.
>
> *DIISR, 2011, p.14*

Other PFRAs include the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation, the Australian Institute of Marine Science, the Defence Science and Technology Organisation, Geosciences Australia, and the Australian Antarctic Division. In contrast to the technical science emphasis of the other research agencies, AIATSIS is the only PFRA that focuses primarily on research in areas of social science.

AIATSIS serves as both a supporter of research by other bodies and as a research delivery agency in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies. Its research aims, as outlined in the AIATSIS Business Plan 2012-13 (AIATSIS 2012c), were to:

- deliver quality research outcomes
- establish AIATSIS as a respected and known Indigenous critical voice in policy by developing a stronger role for AIATSIS in the provision of a rigorous evidence base for policy development
- reflect Indigenous knowledge in its research outputs and foster Indigenous researchers
- position AIATSIS as a hub for collaborative research in Indigenous studies
- maintain existing partnerships and develop new linkages with key stakeholders
- communicate and make accessible the results of research.

AIATSIS also supports research by maintaining a cultural collection of items, many from field research activities. AIATSIS considers that the complementary nature of its contribution to research establishes it as a PFRA that is "uniquely placed in the nexus between Indigenous communities, research sector and public policy" (Treasury, 2013, p.146). In addition, AIATSIS provides resources and publication avenues for researchers in Aboriginal

and Torres Strait Islander studies. AIATSIS dissemination mechanisms and collections role are discussed further in Chapters 3 and 4 respectively.

At September 2013, the AIATSIS research division comprised 37.2 full time equivalent staff.

2.2 Supporting the research sector

Term of Reference 3

AIATSIS role in supporting the Australian research sector, promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies and developing the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers

This section discusses the role played by AIATSIS in advancing research capabilities, the challenge in defining the field of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies, and the evolution of this field over the past fifty years. As such it considers AIATSIS research role against TOR 3.

The field of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies

The *Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Act* 1989, asks AIATSIS 'to undertake and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies'. This is defined under the Act as 'research and study in relation to aspects of the culture, history and society of Aboriginal persons or Torres Strait Islanders'. This field of research is therefore concerned with better understanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's cultures, histories and knowledge systems, both in the past and as they exist and are evolving today.

The definition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (or Indigenous) studies is important—it impacts on the materials AIATSIS acquires for the cultural collection and influences the boundaries of its own research program. It shapes, to some extent, the partnerships to which AIATSIS contributes and the projects it undertakes and facilitates.

Indigenous studies as a term has many different meanings and interpretations. It can variously refer to:

- research led by an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander researcher about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures, histories, knowledges, lands and waters
- research into an area relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories, cultures, lands and waters that is led by a non-Indigenous researcher
- the study of Indigenous populations in or across other countries
- the field of qualifications able to be studied regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures, connection to lands and waters, and knowledge systems.

As illustrated by Nakata (2006) in 'Australian Indigenous Studies: a question of discipline',

> In the 21st century, Indigenous Studies is now cross-disciplinary in its specialisation. It draws concepts, analysis, theories and methodologies from the disciplines established by the Academy, other cross-disciplines, and also from Maori Studies, Native American Studies and other international Indigenous studies contexts. It also inserts back into established disciplines knowledge about Indigenous people and their realities drawn from a range of other disciplines.
>
> *Nakata, 2006*

Nakata also notes that there is an inherent commitment by researchers in Indigenous studies to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples first and foremost. Tensions can arise between research that is forged in the Western academic sense relative to research with the aim of promoting knowledge amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The underlying challenge for AIATSIS associated with providing research leadership in this multi-disciplinary area relates to the open nature of the Indigenous studies research field. Many stakeholders reflected that it was difficult to draw boundaries around the definition, with any research relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples considered to be potentially relevant. AIATSIS therefore has a broad suite of potential research topics to draw

from, and in doing so, is faced with promoting seemingly disconnected research activities as part of a cohesive agenda.

While there remains desire among stakeholders for AIATSIS to play a key role in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies, there is an acknowledged need for AIATSIS to more clearly define what the term means and the key areas it will focus on within the field. This will provide greater clarity about AIATSIS role and research program, while serving to limit the breadth of potential projects and research studies on which AIATSIS focuses within its available budget.

The evolution of AIATSIS role

The Australian research sector has evolved significantly over the fifty years since the AIAS was legislated in 1964. At that time, there were only 11 registered universities and a comparatively small amount of publicly funded research was undertaken. A national research grants program open to universities led by the Australian Research Grants Committee conducted its first funding round in 1966, allocating $3.99 million across 406 projects (ARC 2014a).

Research in the field of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies was also very limited at this time. However, the Australian Government recognised a clear rationale and sense of urgency to establish an agency to research and preserve Aboriginal artefacts. As stated by Minister Gorton (the Minister for Works) during the second reading speech for *The Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies Act 1964*:

> In 1960 it was put to us that unless some urgent action was taken to further aboriginal studies, the source material for many aspects of study in this field would disappear, to the great detriment of the work of scholars in the future. In the fields of music and linguistics the need was particularly urgent because a great deal of information was to be found only in the minds and memories of Aborigines who were nearing the end of their life span. On their death whole languages would disappear and so, of course, would all possibility of studying such languages.
>
> The same situation applied, and still applies, to many ancient tribal ceremonies, many Aboriginal legends, and much material of this sort which would be of world interest to, for example, anthropologists. As a result of these representations, the Government agreed to finance a conference of scholars who were active in aboriginal studies and related fields and to ask this conference to review the state of our knowledge of aboriginal studies and to advise on the gaps this survey revealed.
>
> The conference… met in May, 1961, under the auspices of the Social Science Research Council. It furnished a report on its deliberations which the Government considered at that time. Following its examination of this report, and after consultations with the Australian National University, the Government established an Interim Council of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies and asked this council to arrange a modest programme of urgent research work and to advise the Government on the structure, scope and functions of a permanent institute. This permanent institute is the subject of the bill before the Senate.
>
> *Commonwealth of Australia, 1964, pp.1026-1027*

The establishment of AIAS as a central body provided a focus for research and collections in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies. A brief history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies research credited AIATSIS with supporting the development across this field of research:

> *A major watershed event in the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies was the establishment of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies… The Institute's activities resulted in increasing interaction between scholars in different fields, and the trans-disciplinary field 'Aboriginal studies' began to take shape.*
>
> *Bennett, 1998, p.1*

AIATSIS helped to grow the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies research sector through supporting anthropology, archaeology (prehistory), human biology and linguistics, with most field research work taking place in remote Australia. In doing so, it helped build

the capacity of researchers across the country through promoting research outside AIATSIS, at the same time maintaining a collection of materials gathered through field work. As stated by Minister Gorton:

> … It is not the Government's intention that the institute should become a super-department of anthropology with a large research programme in its own right and conducted by its own professional staff. It is not intended that the new institute should rival existing institutions, or do work which properly and conveniently lies within the appropriate departments of universities and similar institutions. It will exist to complement the work of these institutions, to work through them, and to strengthen them by its activity….
>
> …Its programme will be designed to ensure that important material now available is not lost forever. Collection is its prime role; the study of materials at leisure is largely for the future and for other institutions…
>
> *Commonwealth of Australia, 1964, pp.1026-1028*

Its founding legislation—*The Australian Institute for Aboriginal Studies Act* 1964—outlined four functions for the Institute to facilitate growth across the research sector:

- to promote Aboriginal studies
- to publish, or assist in the publication of, the results of Aboriginal studies
- to encourage and assist co-operation among universities, museums and other institutions concerned with Aboriginal studies
- to assist universities, museums and other institutions in training research workers in fields relevant to Aboriginal studies.

From the outset, AIAS was not intended to operate like a university department. Its aim was to support research, through such activities as research grants and providing capacity building support for researchers in the field of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies. Many activities that are continued today by AIATSIS were introduced in the early periods of AIATSIS, as outlined by the first Principal of the AIAS, F.D. McCarthy:

> The Institute's grants provide for salary allowance, fares, field expenses, transport, photographic and tape recording gear, and, when necessary, the opportunity to write up field results. Grants are made to both professional and non-professional anthropologists and to postgraduate scholars, in Australia, and to anthropologists abroad with special interest in the Aborigines. Grants are also made to universities and museums…
>
> The Institute is financing the appointment in the universities of research fellows and post-graduate scholars in linguistics… and is sponsoring independent fieldworkers… involved in the study of Aboriginal languages…
>
> As an aid to research workers, the institutions, and others interested in these studies, the Institute is developing various facilities. Its library consists of over 3,000 volumes, papers and manuscripts. Its bibliography comprises over 10,000 author entries… A catalogue of sixteen categories of Aboriginal relics in situ-rock engravings and paintings, stone arrangements, quarries and campsites, ceremonial grounds, carved trees and others—all over Australia is being compiled, and information collated on the holdings of Aboriginal materials in institutions throughout the world…
>
> The publications of the Institute comprise a newsletter, an Annual Report, and Occasional Papers in which major studies are published as separate memoirs (and) manuals.
>
> *F.D.McCarthy, 1965*

AIATSIS establishing legislation and funding evolved and adapted to significant changes in the policy and cultural landscape in the twenty five years between 1964 and 1989. After 1964, major events included the successful 1967 Constitutional Referendum, the tent embassy land rights protest, the Whitlam government's policy of self-determination by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the introduction of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*.

In 1989, revised legislation extended the role of the AIAS and changed its name to AIATSIS. The *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act* 1989 mandated majority representation by

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on the AIATSIS Council, including a Torres Strait Island appointee. It also promoted a more active role by AIATSIS in both leading and facilitating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies research and related activities than the 1964 legislation. It included new functions to establish and maintain a cultural resource collection, train research workers, and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies in the general community. It also formally transferred AIATSIS staff into the Australian Public Service.

The second reading speech by Mr Hand, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, is illustrative of the changes introduced through AIATSIS revised legislation:

> In large measures, the legislation enables the new Institute to operate very much as the AIAS currently operates, but with a new emphasis on the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons with an interest and involvement in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies... The Council will henceforth comprise a majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members… The Government is confident that the new Institute will remain an internationally recognised focus for study and research related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies.
>
> Commonwealth of Australia, 1989, pp.1026-1027

This Review provides more detail about the breadth of activities delivered by AIATSIS today under the *AIATSIS Act* 1989 as the only remaining national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led Australian Government body. A full list of AIATSIS activities is outlined in Appendix B.

The changing research sector

Changes in the research environment are of relevance in considering the role played by AIATSIS over the past 50 years, and the role that AIATSIS should play in future. As a national body, AIATSIS has played a key role in supporting the broader research sector to effectively and ethically undertake Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies and to undertake critical research itself. The sections that follow detail AIATSIS research role from 1964 to today, with a view to defining its future role.

The research sector as a whole now faces increasing complexity, as acknowledged in a review of Australia's Publicly Funded Research in 2011:

> Research is conducted in a complex environment and this complexity will only increase as more multidisciplinary research is undertaken to address the large scale challenges that confront Australia. The scale of these issues exceeds the capability of any one institution to address. The complex and interactive nature of research…[This] has led to researchers and innovators partnering to share costs, find complementary expertise, gain access to different technologies and knowledge quickly, and collaborate as part of networks… In particular, role clarity is important so that institutions and organisations can focus on their core competencies.
>
> *DIISR 2011, p.13*

Stakeholders widely acknowledge that AIATSIS has played a critical role in supporting the growth and evolution of the discipline of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies over the past fifty years.

During the early years of the AIAS:

- research focused largely on anthropology in remote community settings, and was largely undertaken by non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers
- few universities focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies or on building the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and researchers
- there were limited numbers of projects across multidisciplinary fields of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies.

Indeed, former Chair of AIATSIS, Professor Marcia Langton, reflected on this period and more recent changes:

> Since the AIATSIS Act was passed back in the 1960s, there have been radical changes in research practices, ethics, technologies and archiving practices. In particular, it should be noted that the Institute was established ostensibly because of the jeopardy in which Aboriginal languages and cultures were placed at the time, and established precisely to record these languages and cultures for posterity, in a 'before it is too late' paradigm. Indeed, rates of language extinction in Australia exceed the rates on all other continents. But the approach to preservation and maintenance has changed markedly and the primary focus is no longer on the authoritative and godlike researcher but on community capacity building.
>
> *Public submission from Professor Marcia Langton*

Stakeholders also noted that there are now also a series of nationally connected Indigenous advisory and leadership bodies operating across Australia. As one survey respondent reflected:

> In the 1970s-80s AIATSIS played a critical role in linking up the community of those interested in Indigenous Studies, many of whom formerly had tenuous or even no connection with each other. Many alternative links are now active, and the Indigenous Studies world has greatly diversified.
>
> *AIATSIS member (survey response)*

Research activities in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies are now undertaken by a mix of public, private and not-for-profit organisations, community researchers and universities, through both competitive funding (grants and contracts) and direct funding. There are also a series of nationally connected Indigenous advisory and leadership bodies operating across Australia to support research by and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Due largely to the growth in scale, complexity and capability across the university and research sectors, the critical establishment role initially played by AIATSIS in encouraging and facilitating research in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies has been largely achieved with the required focus now more on building and sustaining the researcher network capacity.

The changing nature of the research environment was recognised by AIATSIS through the Chairpersons' Message in the *Annual Report 2012-13*.

> AIATSIS' achievements in 2012−13 must be considered in the context of the changes in the Indigenous affairs landscape. Since its establishment almost 50 years ago, our recognised community of stakeholders has grown tremendously. Fifty years ago, Indigenous people were not counted in the Census at all, but in 2011, 548,370 people who identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin were counted in the Census, and this is estimated to be an undercount of more than 100,000.
>
> Research into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and culture was a niche pursuit, but there are now Indigenous−focused research centres in most universities and research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is being performed in mainstream faculties, schools and centres across many disciplines. The need for leadership on matters such as ethics and culturally proficient practice is clear and growing.
>
> *AIATSIS 2013a, p.7*

While the Chairman's Message recognises growth in the field of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies, it also identifies a critical central leadership role to be played by AIATSIS in influencing practice across the sector.

AIATSIS has played a key role in supporting many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers through capacity building activities and employment with AIATSIS. This has helped to develop a leading cohort of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, who lead research activities, largely within universities across Australia. AIATSIS capacity building role is discussed further in Sections 2.3 and 2.5.

Notwithstanding its lengthy history of involvement and achievements in establishing an improved national capability in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies, AIATSIS faces risks to its relevance if it does not adapt its future role to support the diversity of current needs across this sector. These needs are discussed further in the sections that follow.

AIATSIS recognises the increasingly competitive research environment in which it operates, and the need to better communicate its role.

> Looking to our next 50 years, we need to communicate our continued relevance in an increasingly competitive environment. We need to overcome the challenges of our small size, to ensure the impact of our activities is visible and invest in our capacity to attract funds from a diversity of sources.
>
> *AIATSIS budget statement in Treasury, 2013*

Associated with the need for improved communications, AIATSIS faces the more complex task of defining the best way to focus its role and efforts across the enlarged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies research sector.

Key Findings

The field of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies is multi-disciplinary, complex and difficult to define.

AIATSIS has been instrumental in building capabilities across the field of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies over the past fifty years, but there would be merit in it reconsidering how its services can best meet the requirements of the evolving research sector.

2.3 Relationship with universities

Term of reference 4

The nature of its current relationships with universities and a framework for possible future roles in supporting researchers, higher degree by research students, research supervisors and career researchers in areas of Indigenous studies

This section discusses the role currently played by AIATSIS in relation to the university sector, the needs of the higher education sector as identified through the Behrendt Review, its connections with universities, its contribution to research partnerships and networks, and its capacity building role. This section responds to TOR 4.

Introduction

Many activities undertaken by AIATSIS are designed to support the research and capacity development work by universities. The role of AIATSIS across the university sector is multifaceted and as such falls within a number of the TORs. This section focuses on its contribution to research partnerships and networks more broadly while subsequent sections deal more specifically with its other roles:

- contributing to research partnerships and networks (discussed in this section)
- bidding for ARC grants and undertaking research (discussed in this section)
- providing ethical research guidance (discussed in Section 2.4, TOR 5)
- providing research grants prior to program suspension (discussed in Section 2.5, TOR 6)

- providing capacity building activities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (discussed briefly in this section and continued in Section 2.5, TOR 6)
- disseminating findings of research through publications, conferences and seminars (discussed in Chapter 3, TOR 8)
- providing support for researchers to access the AIATSIS collection (discussed in Chapter 4, TORs 9 & 10)
- engaging eminent researchers through Council, Committees and Membership structures (discussed in Chapter 5, TOR 11).

As discussed in Section 2.2, there has been substantial growth of Indigenous research capability across the university sector since the establishment of AIATSIS. While there were only 11 institutions with university status in Australia in 1964, by 2014 there will be a total of 41, many with campuses in regional areas. The *Behrendt Review*, quoting Pechenkina and Anderson, stated that "all Australian universities have a dedicated Indigenous Education Unit" (2011). These units may serve as academic or support centres for students, with some also conducting research. Examples of these centres are outlined in Table 2. Individual faculties within universities may also be involved in research in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies.

Table 2 **Examples of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander university research centres**

Research/Support Centres	University	Role
Research Centres		
The Wollotuka Institute	The University of Newcastle	A national leader in Aboriginal higher education, staffed entirely by Indigenous people.
Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning	University of Technology, Sydney	Supporting students and providing research.
National Centre for Indigenous Studies (since 2005)	Australian National University	Academic institute for inter-disciplinary research in fields that are of relevance to Indigenous Australians, especially in relation to the enrichment of scholarly and public understandings of Australian Indigenous cultures and histories.
Nulungu Centre for Indigenous Studies (since 2007)	University of Notre Dame Australia	To provide excellence in teaching, research and in the valuing of community based Indigenous knowledge.
Murrup Barak: The Melbourne Institute for Indigenous Development (since 2009)	University of Melbourne	Established in 2009 to increase the impact of Indigenous programs and maximise the University's contribution to Indigenous development.
School of Indigenous Studies (since 1997)	University of Western Australia	Aims to achieve excellence and equity in all aspects of higher education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
School of Indigenous Australian Studies	James Cook University	Research vision is to be a leader in excellence in Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research and to work with others towards achieving the same for International Indigenous research.
David Unaipon College of Indigenous Education and Research	University of South Australia	Study programs, students support, research and policy advisory work.

Research/Support Centres	University	Role
Support Centres		
Ngara Willim Centre	RMIT University	Guidance for students to engage and re-engage with education offering study, living and cultural needs support.
Office of Indigenous Academic Support	Charles Darwin University	To help students adapt to the university environment, meet their academic requirements or find tutors.
Wirltu Yarlu Aboriginal Education (dedicated centre since 1996)	The University of Adelaide	Responsible for recruiting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as well as providing support.

Source: University websites (various), 2014

A number of AIATSIS researchers hold adjunct positions within universities and contribute to informal research partnerships, collaborations and publications through these networks (AIATSIS, 2013, p.29).

University sector needs – findings from the *Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes (Behrendt Review)*

The 2012 *Behrendt Review* investigated the role of universities in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. It provides a detailed summation of existing challenges to achieve parity between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students over the coming decades, and identifies areas of need across the university sector. It includes 35 recommendations for improvement, some of which relate to AIATSIS.

The *Behrendt Review* highlighted areas of positive changes across the university sector, including modest increases in enrolments in higher degree by research courses by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. In confirming that each university has an Indigenous support or research unit, the *Behrendt Review* noted that the:

> structure, function, status and size (of Indigenous Education Units) vary across the sector… Indigenous Education Units also vary in whether they are tasked solely with student support or whether they combine teaching and/or research as part of their core activities….
>
> The role of the centres in delivering academic programs and undertaking research is more complex. Some centres do this well and can lead across the university. Some struggle to deliver programs and engage in research. Others leave those activities to the faculties and concentrate solely on student support.
>
> *Behrendt et al, 2012, pp.48 & 50*

Therefore, while some universities are advanced in their research and support functions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, there are some universities that may need to further extend their practice. The *Behrendt Review* contends that academic support is best provided by faculty experts, rather than through Indigenous study support units.

The *Behrendt Review* noted that some institutions are taking a whole-of-university approach to education and capacity building for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and researchers. Whole-of-university strategies generally exhibit:

> a commitment to reconciliation, cultural competency, embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content and perspectives in university curriculum, objectives to improve the institution's recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, Indigenous research objectives and key performance indicators to monitor the implementation of the strategy
>
> *Behrendt et al, 2012, p. 112*

Notwithstanding the developments in this sector, there remain significant challenges to attract, support and retain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, academic teaching staff and researchers, noting that:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students made up 1.4% of all enrolments in university in 2010
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are more likely to use an external mode of attendance compared to non-Indigenous students
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student retention rates are lower compared to non-Indigenous students
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have lower completion rates over a five-year period compared to non-Indigenous students
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander full-time equivalent (FTE) staff made up 1.0% of all FTE staff in universities in 2010, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander FTE academic staff made up 0.8% of all FTE academic staff in universities in 2010
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students made up 1.1% of higher degree by research students at university, and 0.8% of all HDR completions in 2010 (Behrendt, 2012)

There also remains a significant need across the university sector to increase the numbers of students enrolled in higher degree studies. At present, the demand for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers and vocational professionals across many disciplines and sectors outstrips the supply of qualified graduates. The *Behrendt Review* identified a critical need to:

> Grow the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people successfully completing higher degree by research study and moving into careers in academia, [which] is critical to supporting future generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to access and succeed in higher education and in professional pursuits
>
> *Behrendt et al, 2012, p. 81*

The limited number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers impacts all fields of study:

> There is considerable research undertaken in Australia that affects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across many fields, such as health, education, history, anthropology and the spectrum of sciences. However, comparatively little of this research is undertaken by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people themselves.
>
> This means Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are not directing and guiding research to most benefit their communities. It means loss of opportunity in terms of the creation of new knowledge that may emerge from the interface between Indigenous and Western knowledge systems
>
> *Behrendt et al, 2012, p. 90*

The relatively small number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers has also resulted in research gaps:

> While there is a great deal of research undertaken on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the footprint of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on the world of research in Australia is small, except in small isolated programs such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander fellowships. Individual researchers with research interests that intersect with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities occur across the system; however, these interests are ad hoc and relatively few outside of priority areas such as health and education.
>
> At the university level, strategies to build Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research capability vary considerably. Currently there are only a few Indigenous research units at universities that are led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers. This situation further exacerbates the current low levels of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research capacity.
>
> *Behrendt et al, 2012, p. 117.*

A key emphasis of the *Behrendt Review* is that the research sector, while improving in its focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and researchers, can be further

extended, in particular by attracting, supporting and retaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and researchers.

Behrendt Review recommendations

In response, the *Behrendt Review* suggests that attracting and assisting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the higher education sector requires universities and governments to provide support across the system. This includes supporting students through:

- promoting student pathways from either school, vocational education and training, and work into higher education
- encouraging students to undertake studies across a broad field of disciplines, particularly to address areas of under-representation
- continuing providing social, financial and academic support to students at university
- continuing to offer tutoring support for students, potentially through a national tutor database
- extending housing support for students from regional and remote areas.

The *Behrendt Review* also identifies areas requiring attention in relation to governance and staffing at universities, including:

- developing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teaching and Learning Frameworks that reflect the inclusion of Indigenous knowledges within curriculums, graduate attributes and teaching practices
- devolving the focus of academic support from Indigenous Education Units to faculties to build whole-of-university capability
- attracting support from employers, universities and professional bodies to support students to study, for example through cadetships, scholarships or bursaries
- continuing to build the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in general and academic positions
- increasing representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in senior governance positions within universities.

Behrendt Review implications for AIATSIS

The *Behrendt Review* specifically references the role of AIATSIS in helping to build the capacity of a high-quality cadre of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers through its research grants programs and fellowships such as the Indigenous Visiting Research Fellowship (IVRF) program. It identifies needs across the university sector that could be supported by AIATSIS in the future, including:

- continuing to digitise and preserve its collection (Recommendation 19)
- providing more formal guidance to PFRAs, universities and researchers on ethical research practice (Recommendation 24)
- providing support for postgraduate and higher degree by research students, including through:
    - academic peer support to students
    - supervision guidance to the university sector
    - providing capability building courses for students to improve their research practice.

The *Behrendt Review* was also a key prompt for this Review of AIATSIS, seeking to help maintain AIATSIS unique place in developing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academic and research activities, along with its relationships with universities.

The nature of AIATSIS relationships with universities

AIATSIS is generally well regarded for its work with university sector stakeholders through research partnerships and involvement in national research activities. In relation to the manner of its engagement, however, many stakeholders noted that AIATSIS does not have a formal systemic relationship with universities. As a result, its involvement varies in both nature and intensity, with many universities unclear whether, when and how AIATSIS can support their research activities. As stated in the submission from the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Consortium (NATSIHEC):

> The relationship AIATSIS has with universities is largely informal, through individual membership and individual Indigenous Studies program connections. There is considerable scope for more formal relationships whether through training…or perhaps taking the seminar series 'on the road' to various institutions.
>
> *Public submission from NATSIHEC*

Some universities raised the importance of AIATSIS developing a deeper understanding of the needs of each university and tailoring its methods of engagement to best support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and research. The University of Newcastle considered that AIATSIS could formalise partnerships to clarify and meet the needs of different universities.

> AIATSIS has a strong and positive relationship with many universities; however this relationship could be strengthened by developing partnerships that define the unique needs of each institution.
>
> *Public submission from the University of Newcastle*

Similarly, a number of university staff interviewed reflected a perception of variable intensity in the interaction between AIATSIS and universities. Some considered that it worked much more closely and regularly with universities in Canberra, most notably the Australian National University. This is has resulted in ANU being involved in a relatively large number of AIATSIS research collaborations and capacity building initiatives in comparison to other universities.

Some more geographically distant universities would welcome greater involvement by AIATSIS to help support their research projects. For example, the submission from the University of Notre Dame Australia noted that:

> AIATSIS needs to enter into partnerships with regional universities across specific portfolios to create two-way support as part of generating research projects and accessing funds for communities and community based organisations.
>
> *Public submission from the University of Notre Dame Australia*

One way in which AIATSIS does work with universities is through grants. In particular, AIATSIS serves as a partner on national research grants, which are provided to universities and other research consortia through the ARC.

The ARC supports fundamental and applied research and research training through national competition across all disciplines, with the exception of clinical medicine and dentistry. It promotes research that seeks to deliver outcomes that provide cultural, economic, social and environmental benefits to all Australians (ARC 2014b).

The ARC provides competitive grant funding to universities through the National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP), which funds "a range of complementary schemes to support researchers at different stages of their careers, build Australia's research capability, expand

and enhance research networks and collaborations, and develop centres of research excellence" (ARC 2014b). NCGP funding includes:

- *discovery programs*, which fund individual researchers and projects
- *linkage programs*, which help to broker partnerships between researchers and industry, government, community organisations, and the international community.

As part of the NCGP, the ARC also runs a Discovery Indigenous grants scheme, which allocated $4.8 million to 10 research projects due to commence in 2014, following receipt of 26 submissions. Discovery Indigenous seeks to:

- develop the research expertise of Indigenous Australian researchers
- support fundamental research and research training by Indigenous Australian researchers as individuals and as teams
- support and retain established Indigenous Australian researchers in Australian higher education institutions
- expand Australia's knowledge base and research capability.

The ARC also leads programs to support the research sector more generally, including:

- *centres programs*, which build research scale and focus and strengthen major research partnerships and networks
- *Excellence in Research for Australia*, which monitors and promotes excellence in research across Australia's higher education research institutions.

In November 2013, the Australian Government announced $522 million in ARC research projects for 976 NCGP projects.

Summary of research partnerships involving AIATSIS

One of the key ways that AIATSIS presently engages with universities is through contributing to national research projects. Through these projects, AIATSIS most often contributes as a project partner, in some cases in a chief researcher role. Current projects funded through the ARC and other sources are outlined in Table 3.

Table 3 **Research collaborations involving AIATSIS**

Project name	Description and/or lead	Role of AIATSIS	Funding implications for AIATSIS
ARC funded projects			
ARC Strategic Research Initiative 2012: The National Indigenous Research and Knowledges Network	A collaboration between 21 partner universities involving over 40 leading Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers	AIATSIS is a network partner and node leader in history, politics and culture	Revenue of $40,000 over four years
Reducing Indigenous Incarceration using Justice Reinvestment	Led by the Australian National University	AIATSIS is both chief investigator and partner institution	Nil
ARC Linkage Infrastructure and Equipment Facility 2012 Project: AustLit (Blackwords)	A multi-university collaboration led by University of Queensland	AIATSIS is chief investigator (cultural custodian) and partner organisation	Revenue of $20,000
ARC Linkage Project 2012 - Serving Our Country Project: a history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the defence of Australia	Led by Australian National University involving Australian Government bodies and universities	AIATSIS serves as a partner organisation	AIATSIS is contributing $20,000 over two years
ARC Linkage Project 2013 - Return, Reconcile, Renew: understanding the history, effects and opportunities of repatriation and building an evidence base for the future	A multi-institutional study led by the Australian National University	AIATSIS is a chief investigator and partner organisation	Nil
ARC Linkage Project – Poverty in the midst of Plenty: the Agreements, Treaties and Negotiated Settlements project	A multi-institutional study administered by the University of Melbourne and led by Australian National University	AIATSIS is a chief investigator and partner organisation	AIATSIS is contributing $30,000 over three years
Other research projects			
NHMRC - Indigenous offender health and health care delivery	Led by Curtin University	Not available	Revenue of $49,000
The Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health	A multi-institutional partnership led by the Lowitja Institute involving seven universities, three health services/institutes, the Australian Government Department of Health, and the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress	AIATSIS is a Board member and participant	Revenue of $150,000
The Cooperative Research Centre for Remote Economic Participation	A partnership of more than 50 organisations, hosted by Ninti One	AIATSIS is a project participant	Nil
The Humanities Networked Infrastructure Project	Led by Deakin University, involving 13 institutions, to improve the accessibility of humanities and creative arts datasets	AIATSIS is a project partner	AIATSIS contributed $20,000 at the inception of the project to demonstrate commitment and to help initiate works, though it can seek reimbursement for work on the project up to this amount
Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility Grant - Changes to Country and Culture, Changes to Climate: strengthening institutions for Indigenous resilience and adaptation	Led by AIATSIS and including a research partnership with the University of Notre Dame Australia	Project lead	Revenue of $425,480

Source*: Based on information provided by AIATSIS, 2013*

These projects provide AIATSIS with the opportunity to influence research undertaken by universities and other research agencies, contributing to applied research outcomes. They also help to maintain the capabilities of AIATSIS research staff in liaison with universities. In many cases, collaborative research projects generate additional income for AIATSIS, although amounts are often modest relative to the size of AIATSIS project contribution. In some cases, AIATSIS research support is provided *pro bono* or it makes a funding contribution to be involved.

Stakeholders noted the valuable contribution made by AIATSIS to collaborative research projects. For example, the submission received from the Agreements, Treaties and Negotiated Settlements Project indicates the value of AIATSIS to leading research in native title:

> The partnership with… the Native Title Research Unit of AIATSIS has been a valuable one for the Chief Investigators in the Agreements, Treaties and Negotiated Settlements Project from 2002 to the present and resulted in a prodigious research output with significant impact in policy and legal developments. This experience has led us to believe that it is vital that AIATSIS continue to be involved in research projects in partnership with universities funded by the Australian Research Council, the National Health and Medical Research Council, and other competitive research funding bodies
>
> *Public submission from the Agreements, Treaties and Negotiated Settlements Project*

Some stakeholders considered that the role of AIATSIS as a research partner should be formalised in its enabling legislation, as is the case for some other PFRAs:

> The Institute should be required under the Act to partner with universities and research institutions to ensure that its staff and research community are part of the wider Australian and global research community, aware of key developments in research practice and ethics, and participate in research and scholarly projects and events to ensure best practice and outcomes
>
> *Public submission from Professor Marcia Langton*

Research stakeholders expressed a strong desire to continue working with AIATSIS in a partnership capacity, drawing on AIATSIS researchers' knowledge, skills, ethical approaches and collections infrastructure.

AIATSIS as lead bidder for ARC grants

AIATSIS was granted eligibility to apply for ARC grants in 2007 as a lead bidder. To-date it has made two funding bids, neither of which has been successful. AIATSIS submission to the Review noted the limitations to AIATSIS research capacity:

> A lack of success in this area reflects AIATSIS' inability over that period, due to insufficient funding for positions and competitive rates of pay, to attract senior noted academics with a strong track record and a lack of support for staff in applying for and managing grants.
>
> *Review submission from AIATSIS, 2013*

The AIATSIS submission proposes a model that would build its internal capacity, in particular to support it to secure ARC grant funding:

> Currently AIATSIS has appropriation sufficient to fund only eight research fellowships ranging in level from associate fellow through to senior fellow. This small cohort of researchers limits the capacity of AIATSIS to build a strategic program of research and to leverage competitive research dollars. Increasingly it limits AIATSIS capacity to attract the most senior Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers and academics in Indigenous studies...
>
> With funding, AIATSIS would strengthen its research capacity through its annual appropriation to enable it to employ academic Chairs in its chosen areas of expertise, an appropriate number of academics at lower levels and commensurate research support staff to provide high quality pre and post award management support.
>
> *Public submission from AIATSIS*

However, many university research leaders consider that the role of AIATSIS should not be to compete for scarce competitive grants funds, but to focus on leading and supporting the wider Indigenous research sector in a collaborative capacity. Many university stakeholders consider that AIATSIS can be more effective if it focuses on fostering collaborative relationships across the higher education sector through influencing ethical research practice, capacity building activities, and promoting access to its cultural collection. In undertaking such a collaboration role, it will be important for AIATSIS to maintain its internal research capacity, including by forming strong partnerships with leading university based researchers.

Some stakeholders suggested that an important and valuable role for AIATSIS would be in helping to set national research priorities, and potentially supporting grant allocation decisions, in collaboration with the ARC. The Review acknowledges the support for such a role but notes that this is well beyond the legislated function of AIATSIS and would need to involve broader multi-agency considerations. Such involvement would also likely conflict AIATSIS from undertaking a support or partner role on ARC research grant projects.

AIATSIS role in the National Indigenous Research and Knowledges Network (NIRAKN)

AIATSIS also plays a role in university sector networks, including through NATSIHEC, the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council (IHEAC) and the newly established NIRAKN. These forums provide AIATSIS with opportunities to support researchers and respond to areas of need across the university sector.

NIRAKN was established in 2012 to help develop and build connections between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers across Australia (ARC 2013 and NIRAKN 2013). It will do so using funding of $3.2 million to mid-2016, allocated through an ARC special research initiative. NIRAKN has attracted additional funding of $4.4 million by contributing organisations, including Ninti One and the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples (NIRAKN 2014). NIRAKN involves 44 Indigenous academic network participants from 21 collaborating universities and five partner organisations[1].

NIRAKN's vision is to:

> develop a critical mass of skilled, informed and qualified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, who can address the urgent needs of our communities, through the delivery of culturally appropriate research. NIRAKN will endeavour to facilitate a national Indigenous research agenda for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the nation.
>
> *NIRAKN 2014*

Its primary aims are to (NIRAKN, 2014):

- establish a quality program of capacity building initiatives to form a skilled and qualified research community by support aspiring, postgraduate, and early to mid-career Indigenous researchers
- establish a regenerative undergraduate to postgraduate pipeline of new researchers, across institutions, the nation, and fields of critical research importance
- connect Indigenous researchers across disciplines, nationally and internationally, to develop a culturally supportive and inclusive research environment which enables the cross-fertilization of ideas and a platform for new Indigenous multidisciplinary research
- develop an ongoing integrated research program of collaborations with the ARC and NHMRC, government, industry, community and philanthropic grant funding
- achieve national and international recognition as a leading network of Australian Indigenous research expertise, knowledge, and innovation
- initiate the Indigenous research agenda by applying Indigenous knowledges and expertise to multidisciplinary collaborative projects of pressing research. These are needed to inform community and government policy and program delivery.

[1] National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, the United Nations University, Ninti One Limited, Waminda South Coast Women's Health and Welfare Corporation and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation.

AIATSIS is playing a role in co-leading a NIRAKN research node in history, politics and law. Other nodes are in Indigenous sociology and knowledges, Indigenous health and wellbeing, and Indigenous law.

The objectives of NIRAKN are similar to some of the legislated functions and objectives of AIATSIS. In many ways, these objectives provide a contemporary picture of the needs across the university and research sector. Some university representatives interviewed suggested that NIRAKN evolved to fill a void in researcher connections and capability building that could have been filled by AIATSIS, though AIATSIS notes that at the time proposals were sought, it did not have the resources or capacity to support such structures.

As such, AIATSIS now plays a support role across the networked model, rather than being at the centre of the research hub. The relative roles of AIATSIS and NIRAKN, principally in relation to capability building support, need to be carefully designed to avoid duplication and potential confusion for stakeholders.

There is also a need to consider the long-term positioning of NIRAKN, given the limited-term nature of its funding. AIATSIS notes an opportunity for it to provide the infrastructure to support the initiative in the longer term, aligning with its statutory functions, subject to the allocation of adequate resources to do so.

In the short term there is strong support among stakeholders for AIATSIS to be actively involved with and build from the activities of NIRAKN:

> We would recommend that AIATSIS utilise the NIRAKN program to develop a long-term research teaching and skills development program to compliment work taking place within partner universities and other institutions, with a view to defining its own role within the national network. As a Statutory Authority it would likely support national workshops that could take place in Canberra, and also provide targeted short-courses less likely to be offered within universities.
>
> *Public submission from the University of Notre Dame Australia*

Contribution to universities through capacity building activities

Term of Reference 4 seeks "a framework for supporting possible future roles in supporting researchers, higher degree by research students, research supervisors and career researchers in areas of Indigenous studies". Though the IVRF program is discussed further in detail in Section 2.6 it is noted here that one of AIATSIS major contributions has been to nurture and develop the research capabilities of a leading cohort of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, either through employment at AIATSIS or research opportunities facilitated by the AIATSIS grants program. Many of these researchers now hold senior posts within universities and contribute not only to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies, but to multi-disciplinary research more broadly. This has been central to AIATSIS retaining strong networks and partnerships across the university sector, and has led to a high level of goodwill for AIATSIS, particularly among many leading Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research stakeholders.

Nonetheless, as illustrated through the *Behrendt Review,* there remains a significant and intergenerational need to continue increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers that embark upon and complete higher education studies. This requires action on a number of fronts to address underrepresentation and underachievement across many areas of schooling and higher education by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. In turn this strengthens the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice through various professions, including the field of research.

In the main, universities have primary responsibility for capacity building activities for students and early career researchers, though as noted in the *Behrendt Review*, some

universities are failing to provide adequate mainstream academic support. AIATSIS capacity building activities focus on providing pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and researchers, including through the IVRF program. Through IVRF and university connections of research staff, AIATSIS provides some students with supervisory and research support while they complete their studies. In return, research fellows contribute to AIATSIS projects. AIATSIS also provides employment opportunities for researchers.

The extent to which AIATSIS can play a role in capacity building activities is relatively limited in scale. The IVRF involves a relatively small number of participants (less than 6 in 2013-14) across the university sector relative to total Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student enrolments. AIATSIS does not run broad-based capacity building activities for all universities at present, with pathways for existing students at universities more often supported through designated Indigenous studies or support units.

One senior university stakeholder noted that there have been significant shifts in the process for completing higher degrees by research over recent decades, with students now requiring greater support in building research methodology capabilities. It was also raised that AIATSIS capacity building activities do not adequately extend to researchers in remote and regional areas. As noted by Ninti One:

> AIATSIS has played an important role in the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers in Australia through its research grant programs (currently suspended) and more recently its Indigenous Visiting Research Fellowships Program (currently not accepting applications) and through its in-house research programs. Whilst these initiatives have had positive impacts, they have not significantly increased the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers living in remote areas.
>
> *Public submission from Ninti One*

An overall theme in comments provided to the Review in relation to TOR 4 is that in the context of the growing and increasingly geographically dispersed university research sector, the role of AIATSIS in capacity building activities requires contemporising.

Key Findings

AIATSIS has played a key role in helping to develop a cohort of leading and influential Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, but there remain significant unmet needs across the university sector to support students and early career researchers.

AIATSIS provides a valuable collaborative role with universities through research partnership and networks, but the level of and nature of its current involvement is variable across universities.

The relative roles and responsibilities between universities, the National Indigenous Researchers and Knowledges Network (NIRAKN) and AIATSIS in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have some overlap and require further clarification.

2.4 Ethical research

Term of Reference 5

The role of AIATSIS in maintaining and promoting the highest standards in ethical research with Indigenous peoples and Indigenous collections management

This section discusses the role played by AIATSIS in leading ethical research practice. This section responds to TOR 5. Collections management approaches include related ethical considerations and are discussed in more detail in Section 4.2 (TOR 9).

AIATSIS role in promoting ethical research

AIATSIS plays a key role in promoting ethical research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The definition and importance of ethical research are well outlined in the *Behrendt Review*:

> Ethical research practice in research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and their knowledge refers to the conduct of research that ensures that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their cultural materials and knowledge are treated respectfully and that research is acceptable to all involved (Laycock et al. 2009, p. 12).
>
> Importantly, ethical research practice ensures that the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to their stories and knowledge is respected and the ownership over the products of the research is negotiated and agreed with community members at the beginning of the research process.
>
> Fundamental to the practice of ethical research is that the research is undertaken in partnership with communities and that communities should be informed and consent to all phases of the research. The research should also be of benefit to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities involved.
>
> *Behrendt et al, 2012, p.91*

AIATSIS role in ethical research includes:

- developing and promoting the Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies (GERAIS)
- supporting the NHMRC to refresh its ethical guidelines for the health and medical sector.

AIATSIS has established a Research Ethics Committee (REC) to provide advice on the ethical aspects of research proposals to be carried out by AIATSIS staff and grantees, as well as on external collaborative research projects to be carried out with AIATSIS staff.

The REC comprises seven members, including at least four Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members. The custom is for its Chair to be an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person. The REC is also responsible for overseeing the *GERAIS*.

Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies

AIATSIS developed the early iterations of the *GERAIS* in the 1990s to steer the conduct of applied research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. They have been revised on several occasions since—most recently in 2012. They are now applied by AIATSIS in the conduct of its own research, and more widely by researchers across Australia, in particular by universities.

The adoption of the *GERAIS* promotes culturally appropriate research practice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous researchers. The *GERAIS* are widely accepted as an authoritative voice on research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, and were largely acclaimed by researchers, universities and research bodies:

> AIATSIS is a recognised leader in setting ethical standards and practices for research and cultural collection management and access protocols. The resources, materials and information provided on the AIATSIS website are widely used by researchers and communities. We believe AIATSIS' role in maintaining, updating and promoting the highest standards and practices in ethical research and access protocols should remain core business for AIATSIS.
>
> *Public submission from Ninti One*

> The Institute's guidance regarding ethical research has also proven crucial in developing equitable research and collections-management cultures at this and other universities in Australia and around the world. The ethical protocols the Institute created to underpin its own and other institutions' research and collections policies and procedures have done a great deal to help place Indigenous people at the heart of and in control of research and collections management across the nation.
>
> *Public submission (name withheld)*

> AIATSIS has been a leader in the field of ethical research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples since it developed the AIATSIS Guidelines on Ethical Research... The Guidelines have formed the basis of specific research protocols dealing with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities for a range of community based organisations, research institutions and representative bodies.
>
> *Public submission from the University of Notre Dame Australia*

> AIATSIS compiled ethical codes for researchers. Probably they are the best – or at least among the best – ethical codes available to linguists. They have been very useful to me.
>
> *Public submission from Tasaku Tsunoda, Japan*

Application of GERAIS

Stakeholders from the university sector noted several issues associated with human research ethics committee (HREC) approvals processes in relation to the application of the *GERAIS*. Primary among these concerns were that:

- ethics approvals processes for projects concerning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples do not adequately take into account the specific cultural competency and associated needs of these projects
- there is no consistent approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on HRECs, resulting in variable oversight of research applications
- adoption of the *GERAIS* is not mandated when research involves Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- there is no review process for HREC applications involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, for instance by AIATSIS, prior to consideration
- training is not widely available for HREC members in relation to research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

As a result, while the *GERAIS* are adopted by universities, stakeholders noted that they are applied variably and have the potential to be more influential. Some universities sought more advanced involvement and guidance from AIATSIS to support ethical research conduct. The *Behrendt Review* suggested that there be a specific body linked to all HRECs at universities to assess Indigenous research drawing on expertise from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This was supported through one public submission:

> There has been a historical lack of benefit and empowerment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities resulting from research carried out on people and in communities. There has often been a lack of consultation with the communities to obtain appropriate consent to perform research. This partially results from a lack of support and education for communities to be able to appropriately consider the benefits of participating in research and articulate their aims and expectations if they agree to participate.
>
> Appropriate mechanisms to: ensure that prior informed consent is obtained before research is conducted; ensure that research aims and expected benefits have been appropriately articulated to the community prior to research commencing; and evaluate and monitor the outcomes and benefits resulting from research, have failed to be incorporated into research funded through government programs.

> It is time that a statutory body such as AIATSIS is empowered to assist the government and academic institutions to put in place appropriate and empowering policies to ensure that these aims are achieved and that A&TSI peoples are engaged as equal partners in research.
>
> *Public submission (name withheld)*

Another suggestion offered to improve adoption of the *GERAIS* is to require a standard ethics appraisal form to accompany research submissions and to be reviewed through HRECs. At present, HRECs are required to develop their own forms, though many use the NHMRC pro forma which is not considered to be sufficiently aligned to the *GERAIS*:

> Develop an A&TSI specific ethics appraisal form for HRECs: the National Ethics Application Form, as developed by the NHMRC, has many non-applicable sections and the structure and processes outlined in the form can conflict with culturally appropriate processes of A&TSI research, which creates confusion for HREC members. It is understood that individual HRECs are advised to develop their own tailored application forms based on the proposals they assess, but it is our experience that many HRECs use the generic NHMRC form.
>
> *Public submission (name withheld)*

This echoes the broader finding of the *Behrendt Review* that there is a need for AIATSIS to provide more formal guidance to PFRAs, universities and researchers on ethical research practice. Further, the AIATSIS submission to the Review also highlights opportunities for ethical guidance to be more widely adopted by Government:

> We note, for example, that ethics assessment is rarely considered in relation to government engagement in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Ethical engagement should be seen as helpful and can be an indicator of success. The incoming Coalition government has noted the continuing failure in bureaucratic engagement, and AIATSIS has the experience, skills and knowledge to inform, educate and support government administrators and program managers in effective and ethical community engagement.
>
> *Public submission from AIATSIS*

Embedding ethical standards

Application of the NHMRC ethical guidelines is compulsory for grant recipients, whereas the application of the AIATSIS guidelines is largely voluntary. AIATSIS noted in its submission that it is exploring options to embed its ethical guidelines as an Australian Standard. Universities would welcome such a development, based on comments provided through public submissions:

> There could be a strengthening with Universities and AIATSIS to formally adopt the ethical guidelines within respective university's research ethics when research relates to Indigenous peoples.
>
> *Public submission from the Australian Catholic University*

> Guidelines could be shared more widely and developed as a basic standard of practice for all researchers engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
>
> *Public submission from the University of Newcastle*

At the time of the Review, AIATSIS was collaborating with the Lowitja Institute to assist the NHMRC to revise its ethical guidelines.

Key Findings

AIATSIS has played a lead role in developing and supporting ethical research practice, and its *Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies* are respected nationally and internationally.

There remains potential for wider application of the *Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies* by publicly funded research agencies, universities and researchers.

2.5 Grants

Term of Reference 6:

The impact and cost effectiveness of the AIATSIS managed grant program (and the Research Grants) and the Indigenous Visiting Research Fellowships employment program

This section discusses the impact and cost-effectiveness of the AIATSIS research grants program. It responds to TOR 6.

Background

Under the *AIATSIS Act* 1989, AIATSIS is asked 'to conduct research in fields relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies and to encourage other persons or bodies to conduct such research'. One way in which AIATSIS has traditionally supported research by other persons or bodies is through the AIATSIS research grants program.

The AIATSIS research grants program provides relatively small funding amounts (generally in the order of $25,000) to researchers in communities and universities to conduct research. The grants program operated from the establishment of the AIAS in 1964 until its suspension in 2012. The program was designed to support research by organisations and individuals in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies where there were no other suitable funding sources, particularly to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to conduct research.

Eligibility for AIATSIS grants did not require academic qualifications or an association with a university, making the grants relatively widely accessible, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (AIATSIS review submission, 2013). Funding could be used to support project costs incurred by researchers, such as salaries, fees for community informants, travel costs, and data collection costs (AIATSIS, 2011).

Topics of research are outlined in Table 4.

Table 4 **Applications and grants by topic 2007-11**

Topic	Applications received	Applications approved
History	85	33
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing	81	15
Education and cultural transmission	63	16
Archaeology	45	17
Public policy, politics and law	42	10
Anthropology	38	13
Linguistics	23	14
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art	21	9
Indigenous knowledge systems and intellectual property	16	7

Source: AIATSIS 2013k

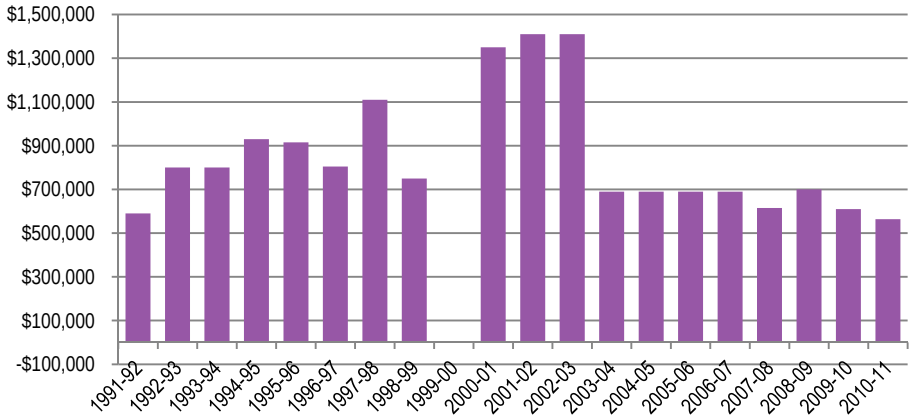
Many grant applications were from non-Indigenous researchers at universities, often for studies to be conducted in collaboration with communities or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers. Between 2008 and 2011, 20-33 per cent of applications were received from Indigenous community-based organisations (AIATSIS review submission, 2013). Grants were particularly relevant for supporting community-focused research as:

- applications were assessed with specific attention to the ethical research practices outlined in *GERAIS*
- funding was provided on the basis of the full cost of undertaking ethical research, including to accommodate longer periods of time spent in communities and co-payments to community organisations and individuals participating in research.

The grants program was supported from AIATSIS annual appropriation. Funding allocated to the program reached $1.4 million between 2001-02 and 2002-03, but by 2011 had decreased to $564,000. Grant values averaged approximately $25,000 during the years preceding the suspension of the program in 2012 (AIATSIS, 2010a).

A summary of total grant allocations over the past 20 years through the AIATSIS research grants program is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 **Value of grants awarded by AIATSIS 1991-92 to 2010-11**



Note: No data available for 1999-2000; financial year data quoted
Source: AIATSIS public submission 2013

The number of applications and grants from 2007 to 2011, based on available data provided by AIATSIS, is detailed in Table 5. This demonstrates significant demand for the program over the years prior to its suspension, including from Indigenous applicants or co-applicants (aside from 2009).

Table 5 **Grant applications, value and number of successful Indigenous applicants or co-applicants**

Year	Total applications	Total successful	Amounts requested	Amounts awarded	Bids by Indigenous applicant or co-applicant	Awarded to Indigenous applicant or co-applicant
2007	87	35 (40.2%)	$2,661,136	$699,791 (26.3%)	Not recorded	13
2008	75	25 (33.3%)	$2,486,716	$619,980 (24.9%)	49	14 (28.6)
2009	78	28 (35.9%)	$2,266,143	$712,048 (31.4%)	4	2 (50%)
2010	100	27 (27.0%)	$3,202,642	$618,141 (19.3%)	46	15 (32.6%)
2011	81	23 (28.4%)	$2,480,650	$564,571 (22.8%)	49	14 (28.6%)

Note: Amounts awarded refer to Research Advisory Committee recommendations; calendar year data quoted.
Source*: AIATSIS 2013m*

Impact and cost effectiveness

The Review has drawn on the views of many stakeholders in relation to the impact of the grant program while it was operational, as well as its absence following suspension. The assessment of individual grant outcomes was beyond the TORs and would require systematic and detailed evaluative research and community engagement to adequately and reliably gauge impacts. The analysis is therefore limited to the overall perceived value of the program. Likewise, in relation to assessing cost-effectiveness, the Review does so at a whole of grant program level, rather than on a project by project basis.

An Issues Paper provided to the Review by AIATSIS regarding the grants program emphasises that (2013h):

- early grants focused on recording and preserving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural materials, playing a key role in growing the AIATSIS collection through research materials, photos, videos, sound recordings, field notes and manuscripts
- since the mid-1970s, research grants have focused more on contemporary issues
- community based organisations were able to bid for grants, though universities were the primary applicants, often for research to be undertaken in partnership with communities
- grants are of primary benefit to early career researchers, given the less restrictive eligibility guidelines relative to major grants programs (e.g. ARC, NHMRC).

It is worth highlighting the role of the grants program in helping to build the AIATSIS collection, with primary research materials collected through research projects now forming a significant element of the collection. Without the grants program in AIATSIS early period, many cultural records would not have been recorded or preserved.

Through interviews, many stakeholders corroborated the benefits of the AIATSIS research grants program, noting that it:

- increased AIATSIS role, profile and status across universities and communities
- supported the completion of research that AIATSIS would not have been best placed to complete itself
- provided an entry point for community or early career researchers to build their capabilities
- not only provided funding to researchers, but created an avenue through which AIATSIS could also provide capacity building support for research and promote ethical research
- filled areas of unmet research need that could not be addressed through larger scale national competitive grants bids, such as the ARC
- resulted in the provision of additional support for higher degree by research students that universities may not have been able to provide.

Some universities noted limitations in the real influence of the grant program, given its small scale relative to larger grant funding programs available to university researchers. For example, UNDA noted a perception that the focus of the grants program had shifted over time away from those who perhaps needed it most:

> The grants program became focused on mainstream research outputs and was increasingly being accessed by university based researchers rather than individuals, community based organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers.
>
> *Public submission from the University of Notre Dame Australia*

Such comments were echoed through interviews with AIATSIS, which noted that while research revenues at universities were growing, AIATSIS continued to face internal fiscal pressures in conducting its own research program. The benefit of providing grants, often to

universities, was considered to be limited relative to the costs incurred by AIATSIS in maintaining its own critical mass in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research practice.

The grants program also incurred relatively large administrative overheads. Guidance from the National Audit Office recommended that administrative overheads not exceed 10 per cent of grant outlays. However, in 2011, for a grant outlay of $564,000, AIATSIS incurred administrative costs of $162,000. Combined with the reduced scale of grants paid to recipients over time, the overall cost-effectiveness of the program was called into question by AIATSIS.

Suspension of the grant program

The reasons for suspending the grant program were complex, relating both to internal budgetary pressures and to the quality of applications received. Given its long history, the suspension of the grants program was reportedly a difficult decision for Council. The rationale for suspension of the program was noted in the *AIATSIS Annual Report 2011-12,* as shown in Box 1.

Box 1 **Stated rationale for the suspension of the AIATSIS research grants program**

For the first time in 40 years, AIATSIS did not invite applications for research grants for 2012. Council took this decision following considerable deliberation concerning the strategic capacity of AIATSIS to undertake, support and commission research. In the context of the changing and increasingly competitive research and fiscal environment within which AIATSIS operates, Council noted the financial revenue growth over recent years of both the higher education and research sectors generally, which does not match AIATSIS experience. Government funding for AIATSIS has fallen steadily over the past decade, in inflation-adjusted terms.

Internal reviews of the grants program presented to Council in 2010 and 2011 found that the program was not able to meet critical intended purposes for many reasons. Applications from Indigenous researchers and communities were declining; community interest in more practical research did not necessarily result in competitive applications; research costs were rising while the overall pool of grant money was staying static; excellent grants of high cost or major research collaborations could not be supported; and the costs of managing the program relative to the amounts offered were higher than other audited programs. Given the overall pressures on the organisation, AIATSIS was struggling to maintain funding of the program at 7.5 per cent of the total appropriation whereas in the 1970s the figure was close to 24 per cent.

At the same time, AIATSIS had declining capacity to employ research staff, provide research advice to government, and support field research of staff. It also had a declining expertise in important topics, increasing reliance on non-ongoing contract or grant based research, and ad hoc support of Indigenous researchers. In addition, the grants program is no longer eligible for inclusion in the Australian Competitive Grants Register, due to an Australian Government policy decision in 2010.

For these reasons, Council reluctantly decided that the grants program could not be funded next year. Instead, the funds will be used to bolster research in priority areas which are critically short of resources.

Source: AIATSIS 2012a, pp.23-24

The Review heard many views from various stakeholders, including AIATSIS, regarding issues associated with the grant program during the years prior to its suspension, including that:

- the quality of applications were highly variable and there were only a limited number from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers:
  - as a result, a limited proportion of grants were allocated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, with many being directed to non-Indigenous researchers in areas of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies.

- a small group of anthropologists and historians sought to monopolise program funding, given the perceived lack of alternative funding sources in those fields
- there was limited funding available relative to the number of applications
- the program incurred significant administration costs.

The decision to suspend the AIATSIS research grants program continues to be felt by many researchers, particularly those in community-based fields of research, who consider they have few other funding avenues available. The grants program suspension also created a perception that AIATSIS was focusing inwardly rather than directing its efforts towards facilitating research by others involved in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies.

The implications of the grants program suspension were illustrated through many discussions and public submissions. The following submission is illustrative:

> The cancellation of the AIATSIS Research Grants program in 2012 has been a retrograde step—one that undermines the core mission of AIATSIS to undertake and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies
>
> The cancellation of the AIATSIS Research Grants program has significant implications for the future of archaeological research into Aboriginal prehistory, accentuating critical imbalances in the national funding of this field. In the scheme of things, the AIATSIS program awarded only small research grants, generally less than $25,000. However, these have been of critical importance to archaeologists working outside universities – in museums, in public agencies, as independent scholars, and as community-based archaeologists. This group of researchers do not have the access to ARC grants that university-based archaeologists enjoy.
>
> Cancellation of the AIATSIS grants scheme has several long-term effects: it narrows the base of researchers and adversely affects the diversity of the research carried out. It cuts off the sole source of funds for small research projects initiated by Aboriginal communities. It removes the most important source of seed funds for community liaison in advance of major research projects. It removes the major source of 'start-up' money often used by early career researchers—including archaeologists of Indigenous descent - to leverage into larger industrial-strength ARC grants.
>
> *Public submission (name withheld)*

While the suspension of the grant program drew some negative sentiment towards AIATSIS, the strength of feeling also reflects the positive impact that the grant program had on many researchers over its long history. As such, the strategy behind the decision to suspend the grants program was questioned by many stakeholders.

Considerations for the reinstatement of grants

Many stakeholders, including AIATSIS, felt that the grants program, if reinstated, should adapt its focus to primarily target community-based research by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It could also continue to support research pathways for early career researchers, with grants potentially tied to workshops and other development activities.

Reinstating the grants program may also help AIATSIS to promote research in areas of priority, particularly where community leadership is important to support both ethical practice and research outcomes. Many stakeholders, including AIATSIS, felt that the program would need to be reintroduced at a scale that supports a larger number or value of projects, to decrease the relative administrative costs, otherwise it would be an inefficient mechanism to support research.

Though many stakeholders consulted through the Review identified the absence of avenues for research funding following the suspension of the AIATSIS grants program, it was beyond the scope of the Review to undertake a national gap analysis of grant programs for research sectors that traditionally accessed grants (e.g. languages, history, anthropology). Establishing a case for reinstatement of the grants program would require such a detailed study of the needs and gaps across the community research sector.

Key Findings

From 1964 until its suspension in 2012, the AIATSIS research grants program was an important enabler of research in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies, and played a key role in building the AIATSIS collection.

Prior to its suspension, the limited proportion of grant funding able to be allocated relative to administration costs reduced the overall cost-effectiveness of the program.

The suspension of the grants program continues to be felt strongly by community researchers/academics, who consider that there are few alternative avenues to attract small-scale research funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies.

2.6 The Indigenous Visiting Research Fellowship Program

Term of Reference 6:

The impact and cost effectiveness of the AIATSIS managed grant program (and the Research Grants) and the Indigenous Visiting Research Fellowships employment program

Previous sections have referred to AIATSIS role in building the capacity of researchers across universities, research and community sectors through university links, ethical research and the research grants program. This section focuses on the Indigenous Visiting Research Fellowship program. It responds to TOR 6.

Background

The *AIATSIS Act* 1989 asks AIATSIS 'to assist in training persons, particularly Aboriginal persons and Torres Strait Islanders, as research workers in fields relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies'.

One way in which AIATSIS does this is through the IVRF program. It was established in its current form in 2008 as a response to the under-representation of Indigenous researchers in universities and research fields. The genesis of the program is acknowledged by AIATSIS in a paper that was commissioned as part of the *Behrendt Review*:

> AIATSIS has long recognised the need to actively foster and promote greater participation of Indigenous people in the research and higher education sectors. Of those involved in the higher education sector, far too many Indigenous staff in universities are either managing high teaching or administrative loads, for example as centre directors. There are far more Indigenous people who may be interested in research and inquiry who do not know how to begin a research career.
>
> We recognise that many Indigenous academics enter the research sector through alternative career trajectories, often coming from public service or community sector organisations, often later in their life. To this end, many Indigenous people struggle to complete PhDs at the same time as their teaching and administrative responsibilities, or while working in other sectors.
>
> *Strelein, 2011, p.5*

The IVRF program supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers to undertake a period of residency in Canberra to conduct research full time, access national collections of research materials (including AIATSIS, the National Library of Australia and the National Archives) and engage with policy-making organisations and their representatives. Program participants are mentored and supported by senior AIATSIS staff, are given opportunities to collaborate on AIATSIS research projects, and to publish their work. Some senior AIATSIS staff reported spending up to half a day each week on supervisory activities for IVRF participants.

The stated objectives of the program (AIATSIS, 2013c) are to:

- overcome barriers to participation in the research sector for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- increase the quantum of Indigenous research output available
- increase the take up of Indigenous research by policy-makers in key Closing the Gap target areas
- increase research degree completions and indirectly increase higher degree participation and downstream educational participation and attainment.

The program has been partly funded through annual appropriations, in recent years using funds reallocated from the suspended grants program, with the majority of funding coming from additional contributions from the Australian Government. Funding information provided by AIATSIS identifies that $500,000 was provided from DIICCSRTE for the program in 2010-11 and $350,000 in 2011-12. The number of participants fluctuates according to the available funding. AIATSIS notes that funding was received from DEEWR and FaHCSIA between 2008 and 2010, but actual funding amounts have not been provided.

The IVRF program will continue for the next three years as part of the Step Up program. AIATSIS will receive funding of approximately $2 million per annum to 2015-16 for a range of activities to support approximately 14 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people per annum to develop skills in either research or collections management with support and training.

During their tenure at AIATSIS, IVRF participants are remunerated under Australian Public Service conditions, usually between APS Level 4 (base salary of approximately $55,000) and Executive Level 1 (base salary of approximately $90,000) reflecting expertise and experience. The salary levels acknowledge that many participants access the program from other employment, often as mature-aged students, and may not do so without adequate financial support.

IVRF participants

According to AIATSIS, the program attracts (AIATSIS review submission, 2013):

- people eligible and wishing to undertake higher degrees by research who have financial and family responsibilities that would prohibit them from full time study without adequate financial assistance
- late-term, part-time PhD candidates who have struggled to complete
- individuals working in support roles within universities who were interested in exploring a research/academic career
- public service or community sector managers who are interested in ‘trying out’ research.

AIATSIS has supported 24 IVRF participants since the establishment of the program. In its Review submission, AIATSIS noted that many past IVRF participants have become well-known and respected academics, including Professor Kerry Arabena, Professor Megan Davis, Dr Jeanine Leanne and Dr Valerie Cooms. As at September 2013, AIATSIS had three IVRF participants. The profile of all IVRF program participants is shown in Table 6.

Table 6 **Profile of IVRF program participants to 2013**

Characteristic	
Gender of participants	Female – 15 Male – 9
Area of research	Health and wellbeing – 9 Arts – 4 Governance - 4 History – 3 Education – 2 Law – 2
Highest level of education attained prior to undertaking the IVRF program *(16 respondents)*	Certificate III or IV - 1 Diploma or Advanced Diploma - 1 Bachelor Degree - 8 Masters Degree - 5 PhD – 1
Enrolment in higher degree by research during IVRF participation	Yes – 11 No - 5
The stage of qualification during recipients Indigenous Visiting Research Fellowship (IVRF) placement *(15 respondents)*	Beginning – 6 Middle – 5 End – 4
In the 6 months leading up to the IVRF placement, the recipient was	In full time employment - 11 In part time employment - 1 Studying full time - 3

Note: based on 24 IVFR participants, unless otherwise specified
Source: AIATSIS 2013c

Impact and cost-effectiveness of the IVRF program

As with the grants program, the Review has not been able to undertake a detailed or systematic assessment of the impact or cost effectiveness for IVRF participants, but has relied on stakeholder views about the impact of the IVRF program as part of AIATSIS capacity building activities. There was also limited information available regarding the total investment by AIATSIS specifically on the IVRF program, so the analysis is necessarily limited to the overall perceived value of the program.

The important role that AIATSIS has played through the IVRF program in supporting career development for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples was acknowledged and valued by many stakeholders, particularly across the university sector. The IVRF program was considered an important, albeit resource-intensive, model for supporting researchers by providing academic support to its participants. The IVRF program was commended for its role in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers to improve their skills by being immersed among AIATSIS researchers. It is also highly sought after, with less than 25 per cent of applications being successful.

In addition to supporting researchers to complete their studies, or to transition into research careers, the IVRF program also has reciprocal benefits for AIATSIS, including that:

- along with supporting their own academic research projects, IVRF participants participate in the AIATSIS research program, increasing the volume and quality of research output
- research fellows regularly draw on the collection and their research helps to contribute to it
- in some cases, researchers attract additional work and funding to AIATSIS
- the program increases the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers within AIATSIS
- the program helps to build AIATSIS connections and profile with the university sector.

The 2011 paper developed by AIATSIS for the *Behrendt Review* outlines the benefits of the IVRF program (Strelein, 2011):

- *a large return on a small investment:* though boutique, the investment is highly targeted
- *a culturally inclusive environment:* engagement in research *in situ* at AIATSIS improves research practice
- *the value of a cohort:* researchers avoid isolation of university-based research, networking through a cohort of IVRF and other researchers
- *the need for a mature wage:* a salary is provided to participants, many of whom are mature age and may have alternate employment options in a range of sectors
- *the need for flexibility:* program conditions allow researchers to direct the timing of their involvement
- *intensive case management:* academic and cultural support structures through AIATSIS that may not otherwise be provided through the university sector
- *demand and capacity for research career participation*: significant unmet needs, reflected in the number of participants relative to applicants.

Limitations of the IVRF program

Stakeholders noted that challenges exist in the ability of the IVRF program to meet Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers' capacity development needs more generally. The primary concern is that it offers support to a relatively small number of researchers relative to the growing number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and researchers in the higher education sector. There is a trade-off in providing cost and time-intensive support for a small number of IVRF participants in comparison to provision of broad-based capacity building support that could benefit a larger number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, albeit less intensively.

While a degree of financial support is required for participants to complete their studies, there may also be potential to host a larger number of participants at lower levels of remuneration.

Other issues identified through interviews included that:

- a number of selected IVRF participants were not studying at higher degree levels, despite the program being intended for higher degree study
- a significant time investment is made by AIATSIS in providing supervisory support to IVRF participants—both while participating in the program and afterwards—filling a gap in quality supervision that is largely the responsibility of universities
- the duration of involvement in the IVRF program is usually less than 12 months, though some participants have re-applied and extended their involvement beyond this period, potentially at the expense of additional participants
- participants from regional and remote locations felt less able to access the program due to the requirement to reside in Canberra.

In summary, the IVRF program provides invaluable support to those involved but supports a relatively small number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Future options

The design and conduct of the IVRF program in future should be shaped by needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students across the higher education sector. In this

regard, there remains a need to define AIATSIS role respective to capacity building roles played by universities and NIRAKN, as outlined in Section 2.3.

The *Behrendt Review* identified a role for AIATSIS in potentially supporting improved supervisory practice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. This may be undertaken through preparation of guidance materials to support supervisors, rather than requiring intensive support by AIATSIS.

Some felt that AIATSIS should use its knowledge and leadership to provide training in research methods. This was illustrated through public submissions:

> The possibility of AIATSIS providing training in research methodologies through short-term courses has been discussed for some time. These would likely occur in a similar manner to workshops that are currently offered to Stolen Generations Corporations Researchers that have been conducted at AIATSIS in Canberra, and regionally, including the Kimberley…
>
> We would recommend that AIATSIS utilise the NIRAKN program to develop a long-term research teaching and skills development program to complement work taking place within partner universities and other institutions, with a view to defining its own role within the national network. As a Statutory Authority it would likely support national workshops that could take place in Canberra, and also provide targeted short-courses less likely to be offered within universities.
>
> *Public submission from the University of Notre Dame Australia*

The University of Newcastle noted the role that could be played by AIATSIS in future:

> A stronger emphasis on programs to support HDR students and early researchers is required. This gap could be addressed with incentives to HDF students to publish research and/or become more engaged in research projects. Collaboration with projects such as NIRAKN would be an asset in this work.
>
> *Public submission from the University of Newcastle*

AIATSIS role in developing the skills of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers more broadly across the higher education sector requires clearer definition.

Key Finding

The Indigenous Visiting Research Fellowship (IVRF) program provides intensive supervisory and financial support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to complete their studies. While the reach and scope of the IVRF program is limited to a small proportion of the growing number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and early career researchers, it has had a positive influence and should be studied for the broader lessons it contains.

2.7 Conducting research

Term of Reference 7:

The place of AIATSIS in conducting and facilitating research in Indigenous knowledge and community based research

This section discusses the research program either undertaken or facilitated by AIATSIS and the place of AIATSIS in conducting research of national significance to build capacity in Indigenous knowledge and community based research. It builds upon previous discussion regarding TOR 3 (Section 2.2), TOR 4 (Section 2.3), TOR 6 (Section 2.5) and responds to directly to TOR 7 which refers to the AIATSIS research program.

The AIATSIS research program

Under the *AIATSIS Act* 1989, AIATSIS is required 'to conduct research in fields relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies and to encourage other persons or bodies to conduct such research'. This emphasises AIATSIS role in conducting research, in addition to supporting research through universities and community researchers.

To support this function, AIATSIS runs a multi-disciplinary research program, structured across two divisions:

- Indigenous social and cultural wellbeing (12 full time equivalent staff)
  - language, arts and cultural expression
  - education, history and cultural transmission
  - health and wellbeing
- Indigenous country and governance (17.2 full time equivalent staff)
  - native title and traditional ownership
  - land and water
  - governance, public policy and development.

These divisions are supported by a research business team (8 full time equivalent staff) to assist in making grants submissions and provide research support.

Over recent years, research has comprised at least 25 per cent of AIATSIS spending each year (AIATSIS, 2012b). The research program is funded through base appropriations, augmented by externally generated funds. Since 2008, appropriations and additional funds have contributed approximately 50 per cent each to AIATSIS total research expenditure.

Project funding, ranging from $7,000 to $450,000, is generated through partnerships with universities via national competitive grants programs and other research collaborations, as outlined in Section 2.2. Additional research income is generated from consulting projects, largely to government.

In 2012-13, total research expenditure was $5.1 million, representing 29.3 per cent of AIATSIS total expenditure of $17.4 million. Of research expenditure, 77 per cent was spent on salaries, 13 per cent on public programs, and the balance on other operational costs (AIATSIS, 2013a). This includes funding for specific research areas and large-scale projects, such as:

- *the Native Title Research Unit* (NTRU) - funding of between $750,000 and $1 million per annum between 2008-09 and 2014-15 to support native title research and information services. AIATSIS is also involved in organising the National Native Title Conference, which is funded largely from registration and sponsorship fees.
- *language maintenance and revitalisation project* - funding of $340,000 in 2012-13 from the former Department of Regional Affairs, Local Government and Sport (DRALGAS) for Indigenous languages support, including a national survey of languages.

Research priorities

Setting and communicating AIATSIS research priorities

The AIATSIS *Corporate Plan 2010-11 to 2012-13* outlines research program objectives "to provide leadership and excellence in promoting, facilitating and undertaking high quality research in Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies" (AIATSIS, 2010e).

While there was some awareness among stakeholders of AIATSIS research capabilities, particularly in its influential native title work, there was a general lack of understanding of its overall research program. The Review was able to obtain general information about the structure of AIATSIS research divisions, but documentation regarding AIATSIS research priorities was not readily available. The lack of information regarding research project selection or of the status of commissioned projects, combined with the suspension of the grants program, led many stakeholders to believe that AIATSIS has shifted its focus from supporting external research completion to instead conducting its own research program. There was low level of understanding amongst stakeholders regarding the rationale, focus and status of AIATSIS research program.

Research demand and supply

One of the general perceptions held by external stakeholders is that AIATSIS is focusing on academic research, largely in collaboration with universities. Some felt that AIATSIS could be more heavily involved in undertaking research to support emerging Australian Government priorities for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Some stakeholders noted that AIATSIS had had little involvement in certain major policy directions over recent years, such as Closing the Gap and the Northern Territory Emergency Response.

AIATSIS considers that such extended involvement in national priorities research is limited by its available resources. In short, that demand for research outstrips its ability to respond:

> The[re are] increasing demands for AIATSIS to conduct research to underpin or support policy development, program design and delivery and evaluation. Requests for assistance from government and community far outstrip our capacity.
>
> *AIATSIS budget statement in Treasury, 2013*

In seeking to extend the scale of its research program, AIATSIS notes that many recent reviews have acknowledged the importance of cultural research, but that AIATSIS has not, in turn, benefited from additional funding:

> [AIATSIS} has not however, benefited from major funding packages. This includes the significant Australian Government expenditure provided for *Closing the Gap* on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage, even though the importance of culture and language to identity is clearly mentioned associated documents. It did not benefit from funding associated with the Australian Government response [to] *Creative Australia*, though the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture's contribution to cultural life was central. Neither has it benefited from funding through the considerable expenditure to the higher education sector associated with the *Review of the Higher Education Sector* or the Innovation packages including the Australian Government response to *Venturous Australia – Building Strength in Innovation: Review of the national innovation system* (*the Cutler Review*) though both of these reviews made recommendations of the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge. Neither has it ever received direct funding through the National Collaborative [Research] Infrastructure Strategy.
>
> *Public submission from AIATSIS*

While AIATSIS has some flexibility in allocating its appropriations funding towards research areas of interest and importance, much of the research work it undertakes is through

contracted provision, leaving AIATSIS with reduced flexibility to adapt to changing priorities or to build expertise in emerging policy or research fields.

Within such a context of potential high demand, the critical point being addressed through the Review is to establish the most valuable focus for the AIATSIS research program, namely areas where AIATSIS has a unique competence that cannot be provided by alternate means.

Decisions about the specific emphasis and areas where AIATSIS orients its own research program will need to be balanced against its other organisational priorities relating to its cultural collection and dissemination functions, as discussed below and in subsequent sections, all with consideration of the overall level of resources available.

Linking research and the AIATSIS collection

The Review contends that the most valuable role for AIATSIS is to focus its research efforts directly around the AIATSIS cultural collection, particularly where linked to services that meet specific stakeholder or community needs. Such research, linked to service streams involving language reconnection and native title claims for example, cannot be covered by other agencies. It also serves to promote use and development of the collection as discussed further in Chapter 4.

The obverse is that AIATSIS should avoid research that can be undertaken by other researchers, with little reliance on the collection. In essence, AIATSIS research should play a bridging role between the collection, the needs of its users, and other relevant bodies or agencies. This sentiment was reflected by many Australian Government stakeholders through interviews. Some AIATSIS members also drew this connection through the survey process:

> The Institute should make the collections its core business and concentrate on renewing internal processes to facilitate world class research and community engagement with those collections. The research section of the Institute should be reconfigured to facilitate projects that deal with the collections, wherever possible in conjunction with community-based stakeholders. The research budget could be re-deployed on a competitive basis to stimulate such projects. Such a tightening of focus would give the Institute a clearer identity, help continue to build the collections, and establish a stronger base from which to argue for government funding.
>
> *AIATSIS member (survey response)*

> There is a need to concentrate on the things the Institute does best, and that is primarily the collections, the contact with Indigenous communities (with family history and return of materials and supporting their visits), the specialist services - such as the language database and small grants program.
>
> *AIATSIS member (survey response)*

Strengthening the link between research and the collection is of particular relevance to AIATSIS in setting its future research priorities and building research capacity in areas of acknowledged strength.

National Indigenous knowledges research priorities

It was noted throughout consultations that there is no single organisation, or indeed mechanism, for setting national priorities relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies research. Research prioritisation decisions are made variously by universities, government departments, and national grant allocation agencies (such as ARC and NHMRC).

The *Behrendt Review* called for inclusion of priority goals on Indigenous knowledge and research, and supporting the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

people. These goals would support the *Closing the Gap* agenda and strengthen the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to deliver better outcomes to their communities.

Some government stakeholders also identified that AIATSIS, as a national body, is well positioned to play a greater, if not leading, role in guiding national priorities. As before, this is beyond its current legislated function and involves broader considerations involving other departments and agencies, and would need to be underpinned in the first instance by AIATSIS having the capacity and capability to undertake such a larger role. NIRAKN is another national body seeking to support national research priority setting and expressed openness to work collaboratively with AIATSIS in this area.

Exemplars of practice

Native title

AIATSIS has historically played a central role in supporting native title research, predominantly through the NTRU, which was established following the Mabo land rights decision in the early 1990s. By using the collections resources, augmented by researchers' legal knowledge, AIATSIS has led numerous submissions for inquiries and provided thought leadership over a long period in this complex area of policy, in close liaison with government, land councils and claimants. Through the NTRU, AIATSIS has also expanded its reach into linked areas such as climate change adaptation.

Its role in native title is further illustrated through the AIATSIS submission to the Review:

> The NTRU has been the leader in the field of native title research and publication for over twenty years and has continued to provide resources to the native title sector. AIATSIS is relied on to provide accurate and timely legal analysis of native title law to the native title sector, and provides advice directly to government on proposed reforms. The ongoing program is now worth over $850,000 per annum and is testament to the value placed on AIATSIS contribution. AIATSIS actively engages its stakeholder network in setting priorities for a three year research plan and is overseen by a Native Title Advisory Committee established by the AIATSIS Council. AIATSIS also provided seed funding and has maintained a ten year partnership with University of Melbourne, through successive ARC grants, for the Agreements, Treaties and Negotiated Settlements Project, led by Professor Marcia Langton.
>
> *Public submission from AIATSIS (see Appendix E)*

The significant role played by AIATSIS was corroborated by the Review submission from the Agreements, Treaties and Negotiated Settlements Project, which emphasised that the communities served by the project—academics, governments, practitioners and local communities—had benefited enormously from the 'scholarly and rigorous' work of AIATSIS.

Stakeholders widely acknowledged the strength of AIATSIS native title research work and considered that this could serve as a model that AIATSIS could replicate in other areas of research where supported by the collection. The characteristics of the successful NTRU model are outlined in the submission by the University of Notre Dame Australia, with reference also to the Family History Research Unit:

> To some extent the Native Title Research Unit (NTRU) has fulfilled a dual role of providing valuable evidence to government, while supporting specific programs of relevance to Native Title Representative Bodies and Prescribed Bodies Corporate. Similarly, the Family History Research Unit of AIATSIS has developed significant links with Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporations and has been both an invaluable source of information and training. The evidence is that AIATSIS works best by focusing on discrete theme or discipline and linking key community groups within this field with relevant programs of activity that lead to increased research outcomes.
>
> *Public submission from the University of Notre Dame Australia*

Notwithstanding the importance of resources provided by AIATSIS, including the native title database and case law summaries, many native title stakeholders acknowledged that contemporary priorities in the field have now shifted into the post-determination area. There is less need for primary research to support claimants and greater need for tailored support and practical assistance for native title holders. Most considered that AIATSIS was not well suited to playing a large role in this area.

Languages

AIATSIS plays a central role in language research, collection and dissemination. AIATSIS supports language networks and centres around Australia to unearth language materials. Through its publications, AIATSIS occasionally supports sharing of stories in native languages. One of the reasons that AIATSIS is able to play a leading role in this area is due to AIATSIS extensive holdings of unique Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language materials. As outlined by AIATSIS, its role has been:

> …in documenting and developing understanding of Australian languages. Early work was largely descriptive and technical which has acted to preserve records of language speakers that may have otherwise been lost. Over the last decade, work has focused on supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in language maintenance and revitalisation.
>
> As a result, AIATSIS has built the world's largest and most comprehensive body of material pertaining these uniquely Australian languages; holding over 40,000 hours of unique audio recordings and over 3,800 written works documenting more than 200 languages.
>
> *Public submission from AIATSIS*

Services provided by AIATSIS to support languages reconnection include developing central resources (such as the AustLang database) and conducting language workshops. In the absence of AIATSIS, language resources would likely be disaggregated across Australia.

AIATSIS leading role in this area was widely acknowledged by government and stakeholders. The 2012 national study of languages—*Our Land: Our Languages*—recommended that AIATSIS carry out the storage and digitisation of Indigenous language materials.

The importance of AIATSIS languages work to cultural expression was outlined in the Review submission by the National Congress of Australia's First People:

> History and culture are fundamental to Australia's identity as a society and a nation, and its interpretation and expression is increasingly important to the economy. Culture in all its many forms is central to the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at an individual, family, community and national level.
>
> The history of dispossession of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples includes a long struggle to retain language, ceremony, traditional knowledge and land, all of which underpin culture. Much has been lost, but much has remained to fuel the modern explosion of cultural reconnection, revitalisation, and expression in traditional and contemporary styles.
>
> Language is central to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Language describes cultural attachment to place, cultural heritage items, and puts meaning within the many cultural activities that people do. Furthermore, language plays a fundamental part in binding communities together, and educational research over a number of decades has intrinsically linked language maintenance to the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
>
> *Public submission from the National Congress of Australia's First People*

While the collections division plays a primary role in the maintenance of materials, AIATSIS role in languages leadership extends to its research program, which has used language materials to advance linguistic understanding and share practice. The research division also supported the Australian Curriculum and Reporting Agency (ACARA) to develop the framework and national curriculum for Australian languages. It is nearing the completion of a three year project funded through the Indigenous Languages Support program for the former Department of Regional Australia, Local Government and Sport (DRALGAS), which

included the conduct of the second national survey of Indigenous languages (the National Indigenous Languages Survey #2).

AIATSIS key role was noted by Professor Tasaku Tsunoda, a linguist and AIATSIS member from Japan, who undertook field research on Palm Island (1971-74) and Halls Creek in the Kimberley (1975-79):

> The former AIAS and the current AIATSIS have been playing a central role in the documentation (or support thereof) of languages and cultures, and in the assembling and maintaining the results of the research, and benefitting the communities concerned. Demands of AIATSIS activities will continue to flow in.
>
> *Public submission from Professor Tasaku Tsunoda, Japan*

The impetus for language research is growing, with many communities seeking to reconnect through language. In his response to the member's survey Professor Tsunoda explained the importance of language revival:

> Compared with the early 1970s, when I started fieldwork in Australia, Aboriginal people are aware of the importance of their linguistic and cultural heritage. The most urgent task of AIATSIS is to conduct and also to support the documentation of the languages and cultures that still remain. The results will benefit the people concerned in long terms.
>
> *Survey response from Professor Tasaku Tsunoda, Japan*

The importance of language was also emphasised by Dr Robert Mailhammer from the University of Western Sydney:

> AIATSIS has been an extremely helpful organisation to my research on Australian Aboriginal languages and their linguistic, cultural and anthropological documentation. Without AIATSIS much of this work would be considerably more difficult and in many cases not possible at all. Its social role as advocate for Indigenous Australians, their rights and their well-being through spread of knowledge about Indigenous history languages and culture is fundamental to the social peace in Australia.
>
> *Public submission from Dr Robert Mailhammer, University of Western Sydney*

Stakeholders generally considered it important that AIATSIS maintain its resource base and capabilities to continue playing a key role in language revival, drawing on its collection and research capabilities, in liaison with communities and linguists.

Family history

Though less connected to AIATSIS research program, family history reconnection services draw strongly on materials held in the collection to meet an identified community need. The Family History Unit (FHU) received funding of between $600,000 and $900,000 per annum between 2010-11 and 2013-14 to support the Stolen Generations National Link-Up Program in a central coordination capacity. In this role, the FHU provides training to caseworkers and undertakes case file reviews across the national network of Link-Up providers. However, its primary role is to draw on information held in the AIATSIS collection to provide a family tracing service for members of the Stolen Generations. This service is aided through AIATSIS advanced annotations, which are linked to documents in the collection, drawing family linkages that may otherwise have not been able to be made.

AIATSIS has previously provided free family history services to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as earlier funding was provided for this wider service. However, the funding rules for the program were restricted to focus on the Link-Up Program from 2010-11. To meet the high levels of demand for the service within available funding, AIATSIS introduced a family history stream for non-Stolen Generations in May 2013 on a fee-for-service basis, known as the *Findin' Your Mob* program.

The role of AIATSIS in supporting family history linkages is important as it is one not currently filled by other agencies. It draws strongly on resources held in the AIATSIS

collection to provide a valuable connections service to Link-Up providers, and through them, to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Key Findings

There is a general lack of awareness and understanding among stakeholders about the purpose, focus and priorities for AIATSIS research program.

While there are many demands on AIATSIS to contribute to emerging areas of research, AIATSIS' unique collection provides it with a point of difference from other Australian research organisations.

There is potential in the medium to long term for AIATSIS to play a stronger role in helping to guide or advise on national research priorities in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies.

3 Dissemination

This chapter discusses AIATSIS role in promoting a greater understanding of Indigenous knowledges and culture, both among the general community and through outreach with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It responds to Term of Reference 8.

3.1 Information and publications

Term of reference 8

The promotional role of AIATSIS in encouraging a greater understanding in the general community of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (including through the provision of information, publications and outreach activities)

The *Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Act* 1989 asks AIATSIS 'to publish the results of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies and to assist in the publication of the results of such studies' and 'to encourage understanding, in the general community, of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies'. Together, these functions require AIATSIS to maintain a range of information dissemination channels.

AIATSIS objectives in dissemination, as stated in the *Corporate Plan 2010-11 to 2012-13*, are 'to create, develop and disseminate a diverse range of publications and services about Australian Indigenous cultures and to promote and market the products, services and capacity of AIATSIS.

Dissemination activities occur across the organisation. AIATSIS shares information through:

- the Aboriginal Studies Press
- the *Australian Aboriginal Studies Journal*
- digital media
- events and conferences
- exhibitions
- hosting visitors to AIATSIS
- policy submissions
- other distribution channels.

Each of these is discussed further below. As limited data were available to the Review team regarding readership, circulation, attendance at events, funding allocated or expenditure/revenue by activity stream, it has not been possible to make a detailed assessment of the reach and impact of the various forms of publication activities.

Aboriginal Studies Press

AIATSIS operates a publishing arm—the Aboriginal Studies Press (ASP)—to provide an avenue for the publication of works in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies. Many of the authors are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, producing works that may not otherwise be supported by mainstream publishers. Many ASP publications have been recognised for their high quality through receiving or being shortlisted for various state and national literary awards. Some texts are used in academic courses.

AIATSIS notes that many ASP publications are expensive and challenging to produce, and are not expected to provide a large financial return. ASP keeps its books in print for a longer period than general distributors, even where initial sales are not strong by commercial standards. The ASP also undertakes marketing and direct selling activities to help generate income and launch books to market.

ASP titles are sold via a national distributor and are made available through bookshops throughout the country and online. AIATSIS has international distribution across the United Kingdom, Europe and North America. Some of its titles are also available on Amazon. AIATSIS recently launched its own e-commerce channel-the Ashop-to allow easier online purchase in Australia and internationally.

ASP has licenses with Informit (RMIT), and internationally through EBSCO, to sell or aggregate its publications with other material. It also receives revenue streams from Copyright Agency Limited (CAL) from the use of ASP's titles (especially the *Aboriginal Studies Journal*) in tertiary teaching and schools.

Most titles are published in print and digital versions. One of AIATSIS most successful publications in terms of units sold is the *Aboriginal Australia* map, which records Aboriginal language and social groups across the continent. Notwithstanding this, some submissions to the Review highlighted that there remains a degree of controversy regarding aspects of the map. It has nonetheless played an important role in raising awareness of Indigenous languages and social groups. Another popular publication is *The Little Red Yellow Black Book*, which provides an introduction to Australia's First People's and has sold nearly 60,000 copies. The *Little Red Yellow Black Book* is used by schools and people undertaking cross-cultural training courses.

ASP particularly supports the writing and production of books by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors. An example of the process of developing *Cleared Out: First Contact in the Western Desert* and the flow-on impact is outlined in Box 2.

Box 2 **Publication case study: Cleared Out**

ASP's publishing success can be measured beyond book sales. The research for Cleared Out exists because of an AIATSIS grant, through the use of AIATSIS archival resources and the dedication of AIATSIS publishing staff (Aboriginal Studies Press).

Told in a non-conventional style (three narratives, language definitions, photographs and maps), Cleared Out required high production costs and a commitment to close collaborative work between the authors and publishing staff.

The book won the West Australian Premier's Literary Prize and History Prize, 2005 and the Stanner Award 2006. *Contact*-a film made from the book-won the Prime Minister's Prize for History in 2009.

Inspired by the work in the community on the book and the film, senior men then took younger men out on country to take part in ceremonies not undertaken for decades. In addition, senior Martu men have visited AIATSIS and deposited more materials in the archives.

The book continues to sell, being used in tertiary teaching courses, thus returning an income stream to the community. The film, from which the community earned money, has won many awards.

Source: AIATSIS 2013d

Education markets for publications are increasingly seen as valuable for AIATSIS to pursue, both to generate financial returns and as a way of supporting its legislated function to encourage understanding across the general community of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies and perspectives. A public submission from Dr Zane Ma Rhea particularly emphasised the importance of AIATSIS in supporting education:

> ...as Australia moves to operationalize its endorsement of the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, AIATSIS is a crucially important institution to provide a leading role in the education of future generations of Australians… I would like to see a greater investment in AIATSIS being able to align its resource collections digitally to the Australian Curriculum in such a way that it is easy for teachers and academics to access appropriate materials. A common response to the question put to teachers in our research about where they found information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, cultures, languages and histories was through Google and Wikipedia…

> AIATSIS needs to be recognised as having a key role to play in Education. As above, in our research we found clear evidence of the opportunity and need for AIATSIS to align its resources, research and publications to the emerging needs of the Education sector.
>
> *Public submission from Dr Zane Ma Rhea, Monash University*

AIATSIS contribution to educational publications, particularly at the secondary school level, where there are large opportunities to influence understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students, remains relatively limited. AIATSIS may seek to further explore the potential to prepare leading materials by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors for use by large cohorts of students in future.

While stakeholders generally acknowledged the value of AIATSIS in supporting the publication of books that may not have been supported by other publishers, concerns were raised about the limited scale of texts produced and sales by the ASP. At present the ASP is only able to produce six to eight books annually, at a total net cost exceeding $500,000 annually. It was suggested that outsourced models for distribution should be further explored, including internationally, where there are larger markets, to reduce costs and increase the market reach of its titles.

AIATSIS also fosters Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors through sponsoring a writer's award. The Stanner Award is an annual prize for an academic work by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scholar, which attracts a $5000 prize, along with up to 50 hours mentoring and editorial support from AIATSIS to craft a thesis into a publishable manuscript. In addition, the work is then published by the ASP.

Eligibility to the Stanner Award was recently restricted to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander writers. This seeks to focus on fostering the skills of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander emerging academics, considered the most able to benefit from support early in their careers.

The Australian Aboriginal Studies Journal

Researchers in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies can publish their work through AIATSIS biannual *Australian Aboriginal Studies* journal. As noted on the AIATSIS website the '*Australian Aboriginal Studies* is an inter-disciplinary journal promoting high-quality research in Australian Indigenous studies with a focus on the humanities and social sciences'.

The *Australian Aboriginal Studies* journal subscribers include individuals, students, organisations and library suppliers. Demand is increasingly for digital only delivery. The journal is licensed to Informit (in Australia) and EBSCO (international). Such aggregated dissemination supports full indexing, abstracts, simple or complex searching modes and allows browsing of all issues from 1983 at the article level.

The value of the *Journal* was noted through public submissions:

> The refereed journal Australian Aboriginal Studies routinely includes major contributions to many areas of research and is the only Australian scholarly journal with this wide multidisciplinary perspective on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues. The journal's broad scope helps break down disciplinary silos and encourages invaluable cross-disciplinary communication.
>
> *Public submission (name withheld)*

One concern raised by university stakeholders was that the *Australian Aboriginal Studies* journal had a relatively low Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) rating, reducing its status in the academic community. Significant factors in receiving relatively low ERA rating are the journal's multidisciplinary nature and focus on a single nation (Australia).

Digital media

At present, AIATSIS disseminates digital information through:

- *multimedia platforms*: including the AIATSIS website and social media
- *Aboriginal Sydney iPhone app*: a guide to important places of the past and present.

These channels were considered important by stakeholders for promoting general understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies, and for building greater awareness of the work of AIATSIS. AIATSIS has responded to the trend towards the increasing digitisation of materials by allocating staff and funding (albeit limited term) to create new digital content.

At the time of the Review, the AIATSIS website was being redeveloped to improve its usability. It was also noted that some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in remote and regional areas have limited internet access. While multimedia tools are critical for mainstream dissemination activities, they need to be complemented by other mechanisms that are tailored to more remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Events and conferences

AIATSIS encourages dialogue among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and more generally through organising, hosting and participating in events and conferences:

- the annual National Native Title Conference
- the biennial National Indigenous Studies Conference
- AIATSIS events, including the seminar series held at AIATSIS and ASP book launches around Australia.

Researchers considered that AIATSIS is well placed to be the primary meeting place or hub for Indigenous knowledge generation and development:

> It would be invaluable to increase the number of workshops, networking opportunities and/or national conferences where researchers can have the opportunity for enhanced interaction with each other, particularly benefiting early career researchers
>
> *Public submission from the University of Newcastle*

AIATSIS events are mostly held at AIATSIS in Canberra, though they are often recorded and later linked on the AIATSIS website for remote viewing. Nonetheless, many stakeholders outside Canberra perceive that the seminar series, while valuable, predominantly encourages participation by those in Canberra. As one survey respondent noted:

> It is very Canberra-focussed—why not affiliated 'branches' of some kind linked to institutions in all states so that seminar series for instance could be sponsored elsewhere and include people who do not live in Canberra
>
> *AIATSIS member (survey response)*

Likewise, the NATSIHEC also suggested that AIATSIS should take the seminar series “on the road”.

AIATSIS itself noted the challenge and time involved in running numerous events. Its *Communications Strategy for 2013* noted that AIATSIS events need to have a distinct rationale and that AIATSIS should focus its attention on fewer, targeted events (AIATSIS 2013e).

It was also suggested by some stakeholders that there would be value in AIATSIS connecting more strongly with Indigenous studies practitioners around the world, for example showcasing its work through booths at major international conferences.

Exhibitions

AIATSIS is not currently set up to be an exhibiting institution. Notwithstanding this, in recent years AIATSIS has developed a number of online exhibitions to showcase digitised materials from the collection. At present, there are 22 exhibitions, with approximately 85,000 pages of collection content accessible online.

The online exhibitions have been very popular and represent over 40 per cent of the total visits to the AIATSIS website over the past four financial years (July 2009 to June 2013)—1.7 million page views, with an average of approximately 35,500 page views per month.

Exhibiting collection materials and sharing stories was considered by some stakeholders to be an important way in which AIATSIS could build public awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, particularly given its location next to the National Museum on the Acton Peninsula in Canberra. As the University of Notre Dame Australia noted:

> the location in Canberra is not utilised to its full potential. The AIATSIS building experiences significant passing traffic, but does not offer exhibitions and programs of interest to the wider community, and also for Indigenous Australians. It is acknowledged that is a difficult task, to expect AIATSIS to be all things to all people. However, the physical site of AIATSIS is underutilised at present, understandably due to a lack of resources and a priority on research outcomes.
>
> *Public submission from the University of Notre Dame Australia*

AIATSIS felt strongly that the full potential to build knowledge about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities would best be unlocked through development of a dedicated national exhibition space. As noted by AIATSIS:

> Given the cross-media composition of the AIATSIS' collection, exhibition facilities need to be designed and fitted to be suitable for display of documents, books, film, video and sound recordings and art and artefacts.
>
> The Smithsonian Institution, and specifically its National Museum of the American Indian, offers one model of an integrated collection, research, education and exhibition facility.
>
> To achieve a similar presence, AIATSIS would need to invest in its physical and digital infrastructure and in the research value-add to the collection. Optimally, this would involve a new and unique national building and surrounding precinct to house AIATSIS, its collections, staff and visitors. It would be of sufficient character to constitute a national symbol and landmark for Australia's cultural identity. It would include public exhibition space, seminar and conference facilities, lecture theatre and facilities for formal and informal educational programs. This would boldly demonstrate the importance of Australia's First Peoples to our past, present and future.
>
> *Public submission from AIATSIS*

A number of international cultural and research organisations do have key roles in mounting such exhibitions about Indigenous peoples, along with spaces and networks to showcase Indigenous cultures. These include:

- *Te Papa, New Zealand:* exhibitions held centrally in Wellington
- *Canadian Museum of Civilisation Corporation:* four types of exhibitions held in the museum, and through partner museums across Canada
- *Smithsonian Institute, USA:* collection exhibited across 19 museums located mostly in Washington DC, with travelling collections across the country
- *Iziko Museum, South Africa:* three collections across 11 museums in Cape Town, along with a national mobile museum.

The Queensland University of Technology suggested that AIATSIS could be modelled on the Smithsonian:

> …the Institute might additionally operate as a museum with a role and responsibilities similar to that of the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) in the United States. NMAI, as is well known, is charged with educating the public about the life, languages, literature, history and arts of Native American peoples. It has an extensive collection of archival material as well as contemporary fine arts, works of aesthetic, religious and historical significance, and articles produced for everyday use. The museum also delivers a program of art and cultural exhibitions, public education and multimedia resources for educators, research seminars and symposia, as well as a film series, an activity centre aimed at families and a native food café
>
> *Public submission from the Queensland University of Technology*

An important consideration here is the exhibiting potential afforded by the proximity of AIATSIS to other national collections agencies, each of whom already have established capability in showcasing materials, including:

- *the National Gallery of Australia:* visual arts
- *the National Museum of Australia:* history and culture
- *the Australian War Memorial:* war history
- *the National Film and Sound Archive:* audio-visual arts.

There is an opportunity for AIATSIS to increase its exhibition capability by working with national collections agencies through partnership approaches, as AIATSIS will do with the National Museum in 2014. Should hosting exhibitions be a long-term priority for AIATSIS, further consideration would need to be given to significant capital cost of establishing exhibition infrastructure, estimated in the AIATSIS submission to be in excess of $100 million, along with ongoing maintenance and staffing costs.

Hosting visitors to AIATSIS

AIATSIS also builds awareness of AIATSIS and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies through hosting groups of visitors. In particular, international diplomatic visitors are regularly directed to AIATSIS. Other groups to visit AIATSIS include school students and groups of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members. As noted through the public submission process:

> Any national or international visitor to Canberra interested in Indigenous Studies makes AIATSIS a priority visitation site whether to access its collections, engage with staff or participate in seminars
>
> *Public submission (name withheld)*

Through interviews, AIATSIS noted that hosting visitors, albeit important, is not a legislated function, and involves significant unfunded staff time. If AIATSIS hosting role is to continue, it should be explicitly included in AIATSIS business planning.

Policy submissions

AIATSIS research outputs not only seek to build a deeper understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, they also provide an evidence base to help inform policy processes. As noted:

> AIATSIS is regularly sought after to provide advice on policy direction and design, through consultancy contracts, evidence to inquiries, reference and advisory groups, and informal advice.
>
> *Public submission from AIATSIS*

By providing such evidence, AIATSIS is able to bring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives to topics under consideration and provided information to government and other readers. There was widespread agreement that while it is inappropriate for AIATSIS to undertake a policy advocacy role, it does and must play an important role in providing evidence to inform policy in Indigenous affairs.

Overall impact of publications and information

AIATSIS role in publicising its own research, and the research of others, and disseminating knowledge about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is considered by many stakeholders as an important area of its activity.

While the impact on the achievement of improved community understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies is difficult to measure, many stakeholders noted that there remain significant further needs to educate and inform the general community about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies. There is a central role for AIATSIS in continuing to stimulate ideas and knowledge exchange about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and communities.

The increasing digitisation of communication media and changing usage patterns mean that it is an opportune time for AIATSIS to review and prioritise its information dissemination activities. As an example, a focus on developing education resources would be welcomed by some stakeholders and may support improved financial returns through engagement with the broader education sector.

If wider readership is able to be achieved, this could also make the titles more attractive to established publishers, thereby allowing AIATSIS to shift its role from one of publishing (which has associated costs) to facilitating partnerships with larger publishing organisations. Such partnerships could also provide a potential source of revenue from the sale of titles. The high quality of AIATSIS publications, recognised through numerous recent awards, suggests that distributors may be more likely to support the publishing and circulation of titles that have been supported in the development phase by AIATSIS.

Key Findings

AIATSIS provides valued options and channels for disseminating research and publications that may not otherwise be published, although limited in scale and reach.

Many stakeholders identified a need for AIATSIS to continue seeking cost effective ways to encourage understanding, in the general community, of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies, including through preparing educational resources.

3.2 Engagement with communities

As stated in its *Corporate Plan,* AIATSIS seeks to build 'national and international understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures through undertaking and disseminating high-quality research, and developing, maintaining and providing access to world-class print and audio-visual cultural collections' (2010e). To achieve this, AIATSIS seeks to work closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

AIATSIS activities in this area are outlined in its public submission to the Review, as shown in Box 3, including areas that AIATSIS supports where resources allow.

Box 3 **AIATSIS role supporting communities**

The role played by AIATSIS in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities includes:

- Acting as a custodian of materials belonging to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within the collection
- Preserving and conserving materials on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owners
- Supporting access to the collection, contributing to better understanding of culture and heritage
- Supporting family history research for service providers under the Link Up program funded by the former Department of Health and Ageing which provides support to the Stolen Generations
- Providing pathways to learning and research through our access to our collections, research fellowships and training programs
- Entering into partnerships to conduct research of interest to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Undertaking outreach visits to communities in which archival audio and visual material and photos regarding a particular community are taken to show to community members
- Providing assistance to the many community groups who visit AIATSIS each year to research and gain information relating to their communities
- Repatriating materials to communities enabling any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person to obtain copies of up to 20 audio-visual items relating to their family or community each calendar year free of charge
- Publishing of books through Aboriginal Studies Press, which prioritise telling stories by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. These promote understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and societies.

When funding permitted, AIATSIS also provided the following services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities:

- Research grants which provide opportunities to researchers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to undertake their research, e.g. research into family histories;
- Family history research services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people generally
- In-house assistance with research in the area of language research support.
- Large scale documentation projects

Source: AIATSIS public submission, 2013

The AIATSIS collection holds material relevant to many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities throughout Australia. This is valued highly by communities, particularly those that have been the subjects or participants in field research. With this comes the responsibility to help communities to access and repatriate these materials.

While the central Canberra location of the collection presents a safe and central storage facility, it places the collection at a distance from many of its depositing communities. While continued digitisation may support improved remote access in the future, currently outreach visits are the primary method of making information from the collection accessible to community members not able to travel to Canberra.

Where AIATSIS is able to undertake outreach in collaboration with communities, it is highly effective and valued. The community access visits are a key program in this regard. They involve sharing selected items from the collection with communities, and repatriation of up to

20 documents per person free of charge through the Return of Materials to Indigenous Communities (ROMTIC) process. AIATSIS role in working with the people of Kowanyama was noted through a public submission from ABM Elgoring Ambung Aboriginal Corporation:

> AIATSIS in our view has played and still plays a major role in our development as a community which strives for self-governance and a good standing place in modern society. AIATSIS provides us with not only the knowledge of our past history but also helps us to maintain our culture through the transition of knowledge.
>
> *Public submission from ABM Elgoring Ambung*

Outreach of the collection, however, requires significant effort and expense, which limits the number of access visits possible within the AIATSIS budget. The need for more outreach activities was remarked upon by many community members consulted as part of the Review and was a key concern of AIATSIS.

Based on community visits during the Review, it is clear that many communities are unaware of materials held by AIATSIS until the community access visits take place.

The high cost of outreach activities means that AIATSIS is not able to conduct these on a systematic basis. In recent years, no more than four community visits have been held annually. Within these constraints, more cost effective options are required to achieve increase the reach of AIATSIS in this area. Options identified through the Review include:

- *Developing community information guides* that provided tailored information to individual communities about the contents of the AIATSIS collection to encourage greater awareness and visitation by community members to Canberra.
- *Supporting community visits to AIATSIS:* this form of 'in-reach' supports communities to visit AIATSIS, rather than 'outreach', which involves AIATSIS visiting communities with key materials from the collection. This model also has associated costs and relies on identification of key community members and the advance preparation of items of interest to the community.
- *Sharing materials through local collections agencies:* this approach would require AIATSIS to partner closely with local collections agencies by copying and sharing key materials from the AIATSIS collection in locations that are closer to communities. This would likely require significant preparatory effort by AIATSIS, including to navigate access protocols, but may promote greater usage of materials of importance to local communities.

While these community engagement models may come at a lower cost, they are unlikely to be cost neutral and will need to be funded either through internal re-prioritisation or justifications for additional funding. The increasing digitisation of collections materials will also need to be factored in as a potential means of increasing accessibility for remote users.

Key Finding

Current AIATSIS community outreach activities are valued where they occur, but their extent and scope is limited largely by their relatively high cost.

4 Managing and sharing the collection

This chapter discusses AIATSIS role in managing deposits and access to its collection, as well as its digitisation program. It responds to TORs 9 and 10.

4.1 About the AIATSIS collection

The AIAS was established to collect materials to support research by universities and other institutions. This is evident in the second reading speech by Senator Gorton (Commonwealth of Australia, 1964) in 1964:

> It is not intended that the new institute should rival existing institutions, or do work which properly and conveniently lies within the appropriate departments of universities and similar institutions. It will exist to complement the work of these institutions, to work through them, and to strengthen them by its activity….
>
> …Its programme will be designed to ensure that important material now available is not lost forever. Collection is its prime role; the study of materials at leisure is largely for the future and for other institutions…
>
> …the Government does not envisage the institute's employing a research staff of any size and that the staff it engages will be devoted mainly to collecting and organizing material for the use of scholars… This work of collecting, processing and preservation is seen by us to be the core of the institute's work.
>
> *Commonwealth of Australia, 1964, pp.1026-1028*

Today, the AIATSIS collection is a central repository for items of significance about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and people. AIATSIS seeks to maintain a selection of artefacts and documentation about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and culture, drawn from various parts of Australia. It does not seek to gather or maintain art collections but is more focused on research materials—written, audio and visual. Many items held by AIATSIS are unique, being drawn from field research by AIATSIS and grant recipients, or donated by community members. As stated by AIATSIS and reflected in the views of many others:

> Most of the items in the AIATSIS collections are the primary results of field research and those deposited by individuals, families or organisations for safe-keeping and appropriate access. The material is unique and irreplaceable and provides an invaluable link between past, present and future generations of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.
>
> *AIATSIS, 2013a, p.71*

The AIATSIS collection infrastructure supports academic and community researchers, along with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to conduct their own research discovering information about their own cultural heritage and family history.

AIATSIS in the past sought to collect such materials on a comprehensive basis, but is now more selective in its acquisition:

> Ideally the collection should seek to be comprehensive. However, available resources including storage space, playback or viewing equipment or software, conservation facilities, and staff time, necessarily impact upon the range of material which may be collected. For this reason, the AIATSIS Audiovisual Archive primarily collects unpublished audio-visual materials. Published or duplicate audio-visual materials are only collected when their acquisition would greatly facilitate access by Australian Indigenous communities, or they are sufficiently rare to warrant preservation beyond that which is offered by the custodian of the original.
>
> It does not seek to duplicate the collections of other archives, libraries, museums or galleries.

> The AIATSIS Library has tailored its aim to collect comprehensively to generally published material only and acquires all other material as resources and availability allow.
>
> *AIATSIS, 2012b*

It is noted here and discussed later in this chapter that AIATSIS is one of a number of agencies that collect and house materials relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The 'national collection' of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander materials therefore comprises artefacts that are dispersed across community locations and state and territory collections.

Size of the AIATSIS collection

The AIATSIS collection currently includes over a million items, comprising:

- *catalogued items on the MURA catalogue:* 344,500 books, journals, manuscripts, pictorial collections, posters, serials, references, pamphlets and other sources
- *photographic images:* 636,000 still images (negatives, colour slides, digital images)
- *audio:* 40,000 hours of audio recordings
- *moving images:* 9.500 videos and 16,000 film canisters
- *art and artefacts:* 420 artefacts, 547 artworks and 21 restricted records (men's business).

The collection is not static. Based on figures provided by AIATSIS, the library collection has been growing at an average rate of 1,389 items per year over the last four years. These items can vary in size and include books, manuscripts, pamphlets, CDs and DVDs and serials.

Average growth in other media between 2006-07 and 2010-11 is shown below. including accelerated growth based on the most recent figures available (2010-11):

- *photographic images:* 25,900 images per annum average, and 64,299 images in 2010-11
- *audio:* 1,500 files per annum average, and 1,453 files in 2010-11
- *moving images:* 1,700 files per annum average, and 5,794 files in 2010-11.

4.2 Collections preservation and access

Term of Reference 9

AIATSIS role in preserving and disseminating information and knowledge about its cultural collection and how the collection can be best utilised and preserved including through digitisation

This section considers the role of and access to the cultural collection maintained by AIATSIS. It responds to TOR 9.

Importance of the AIATSIS collection

AIATSIS stakeholders widely acknowledged the significance of the collection in preserving the histories, cultures, languages and artefacts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia. Many items held in the collection are unique and would not otherwise have been collected, or appropriately maintained, without the activities of AIATSIS over its fifty year history. As noted in the *Behrendt Review*:

> The cultural collection represents one of the most important archives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artefacts in Australia. The histories contained in its collection have been critical for thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and others seeking to learn about their heritage and connect with their families.
>
> *Behrendt et al, 2012, p.98*

Management and promotion of the collection is considered by many stakeholders to be the most important role of AIATSIS. When asked to rate the importance of AIATSIS activities,

members identified that 'maintaining the collection of print and audio-visual items' was of critical importance to 85 per cent of respondents, the highest rating of any AIATSIS activity members (survey results are provided at Appendix D). 'Facilitating access to the collection in Canberra' was considered to be of critical importance by 66 per cent of respondents, the second highest response.

The public submission from the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples noted that items within the AIATSIS collection engendered a sense of ownership among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities:

> Although a government agency, AIATSIS holds a valued place in the hearts and minds of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples because it is the only national collection and cultural institution that is entirely about our peoples. The collection holds the memories of generations, cultural knowledge waiting to be returned and relived, and reconnects our peoples with our lands, languages and ancestors.
>
> Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples feel a sense of strong ownership of AIATSIS and its collection, something that few other national institutions could claim. That ownership is understood not in a western property law context, but through a First Peoples paradigm of collective and trans-generational ownership of knowledge, cultural values, beliefs, rituals and laws.
>
> *Public submission from the National Congress of Australia's First People*

The collection is considered most valuable both for the information it contains and the services that it facilitates. As noted by AIATSIS:

> Initially the collections were a by-product of research, with a strong emphasis on anthropology, archaeology and linguistics. These materials were largely recorded and collected as source material for academic publications and deposited with AIATSIS for safekeeping. Today, this vast resource has taken on an added importance for Indigenous Australians that goes well beyond simple stewardship. It is now Indigenous Australians who form the overwhelming majority of people accessing the photographs, film and audio material for purposes as diverse as language maintenance, family history research, the revival of material culture practices, Native Title claims, documentary making and the establishment of keeping places located in remote communities.
>
> *AIATSIS 2010b*

Accessibility of the collection

Challenges for AIATSIS as collections manager

The AIATSIS *Corporate Plan 2010-11 to 2012-13* outlines the objective of collections management and development as 'to develop, maintain and preserve well-documented archives and collections and to maximise access to these, particularly by Indigenous peoples, in keeping with appropriate cultural and ethical practices' (2010e). This objective emphasises the importance of maintaining the collection, with access as the ultimate objective.

The activities required by AIATSIS to manage its collection are extensive and are detailed below (a full list of collections activities is provided at Appendix B):

- *managing collections infrastructure*: catalogues, vaults, playback equipment, digital storage equipment, accident management
- *collections development:* assessing items offered by depositors, acquisition of items, new item registration, quarantine management
- *collections management:* accessioning materials, preparing item descriptions, creating finding aids, maintaining thesauri, capturing usage data, annual stocktakes, conservation, end processing, serial purchasing

- *digitisation and preservation:* digitising materials, preserving materials, recording events, creating item copies
- *access:* this includes staffing the library (currently open to the public 11am to 3pm on weekdays), providing reference services and supporting audio-visual access, including hosting visits from families and communities to review audio-visual material
- *other activities:* maintaining policies and protocols, volunteer program management, supporting researchers, purchasing infrastructure and materials, cleaning, IT system development.

There is also an important link between collections management and end-user access. AIATSIS collections management practices were designed with cultural and ethical collections practice as a primary consideration, as evidenced by the inclusion of information disclosure clauses in Section 41 of the *AIATSIS Act* 1989. AIATSIS supports users to access the collection through a range of search aids, reference guides and thesauri. Through digitisation of parts of the collection, AIATSIS has been able to both preserve items and provide improved access.

At September 2013, the AIATSIS collections division comprised 53 full time equivalent staff. Continual growth in the collection will increase the magnitude of the required cataloguing and maintenance effort, particularly given that many materials received from retiring academics are in aged hard copy formats or analogue media.

The March 2012 AIATSIS Collections Management Strategic Plan identified a number of significant challenges facing the collection, as shown in Box 4, many of which were echoed in the Review interviews with AIATSIS staff.

Box 4 **Collections management challenges**

Over the last 15 years, reductions in funding have generated a series of cascading issues which now completely determine the strategic environment in which the Library struggles to function:

1. Inadequate funding produces a reactive operational model completely reliant on fixed-term digitisation funding to support a number of core operations.

2. Additional budget cuts in 2006 (10%) and 2011 (7% from the movement of funds from other Programs to Research) plus efficiency dividends (1.25% – 2% annually) have further exacerbated the funding shortfalls.

3. Loss of staff. The Library has experienced a 38.5% loss of ongoing staff in the last 15 years.

4. Increasing pressures on staff and their morale. Library staff has high rates of sick leave.

5. Loss and reduction of important functions – conservation, family history, archival capacity, collection processing and documentation capacity.

6. The current budget cut (7%) will cost the Library another position or its current purchasing budget for new materials. The Library currently has large work backlogs of unprocessed collections.

7. Reduced capacity to meet the current challenge of digital access, collections development, storage management and archiving.

8. Increasing incapacity to supply contemporary levels of research infrastructure - i.e., limited access to hard cover and on-line journals, limited capacity to obtain new theses and other manuscript material, limited opening hours, and limited digitisation capacity.

9. Reduced capacity to upgrade collection housing infrastructure i.e., building sealing, insulation, fire suppression and dehumidification upgrades.

10. No budget capacity to purchase and staff 2nd generation digital archiving technologies ($1-2 million) and to upgrade the current 15 year old library management system ($200-100,000).

11. Meeting the trends in increases in client service enquiries over the last 5 years. Turnaround times have been extended to 25 days on client requests.

12. Negligible capacity to implement career development and succession planning for library staffing of whom several critical staff will retire over several years.

Source: AIATSIS 2012b (March)

These challenges are intensified by continued and rapid growth of deposits to the collection as well as increases in the number of requests to access the collection. While visits and interlibrary loans appear to be declining, Table 7 illustrates a clear growth in reference requests. These are expected to rise even further as the AIATSIS catalogue becomes integrated with the National Library of Australia's Trove database.

Table 7 **Library service requests 2009-10 to 2012-13**

Statistics	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Extended reference requests	652	687	720	965
Ready reference (phone calls/in person)	2,942	2,732	2,395	2,814
Number of visitors	868	790	776	703
Number of group tours	26	28	20	30
Interlibrary loans and document supply	462	609	411	138

Note: The decrease in interlibrary loans in 2012-13 resulted from vacancies in AIATSIS staffing; Decreases in visitors after 2009-10 may reflect the cessation of family history services to the public from July 2010 and restricted library opening hours from July 2011.

Source: AIATSIS 2013a

The preservation and provision of access to the collection will continue to require significant attention to cataloguing and digitising the large and growing number of materials, and responding to access requests. It is important that the resources and effort required in this area are systematically identified and given priority in business planning and budgeting.

Challenges for collections users

Many users highlighted the importance of, and expressed frustration with, current limitations to the accessibility of the collection. There was consistent feedback that materials were only readily accessible to those in and around Canberra. Many regional and remote stakeholders considered that using the AIATSIS collection requires prohibitive travel time and cost. This is particularly the case for elderly community members who have a strong interest in the collection because of its ability to help them uncover their past connections.

Even users who had visited the AIATSIS collection raised issues of accessibility. The limited resources available for library processing activities has resulted in restrictions in library opening hours from 11am to 3pm on weekdays, whereas formerly the library was open from 9am until 5pm (except Tuesdays). Libraries ACT acknowledged the impact of restricting library hours:

> In recent years, AIATSIS Library limited its opening hours to the public significantly. Libraries ACT understands that this decision was a pragmatic one and may have been an attempt to devote resources to building an online service while continuing to provide face-to-face services. This has affected access drastically. If the Library were to regain funding to enable a return to opening hours during business hours them people who are unfamiliar with library systems would have the opportunity to find what they need without the stress of limited time; people who have travelled to visit the collection would be able to maximise their time researching; and people who need to see or study an item in its physical form would be best able to do so
>
> *Public submission from Libraries ACT*

The limited library opening times were compounded by the length of time required to process document requests. In some cases, materials sought by users were not able to be retrieved within the library's opening period, requiring return visits. Visiting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members seeking access to AIATSIS materials were not always aware that advance bookings were required to enable the retrieval of physical documents or audio-visual materials.

Information provided by AIATSIS (2013i) about waiting times for requests show that response times can vary by request, with a cap of 25 days for document retrieval:

- *general reference enquiries:* variable response times, not exceeding 25 days:
  - routine requests are completed within an hour
  - research requests or requests by clients with no access to computers/internet/low literacy often take 2-3 hours
  - requests from Facebook about family history or phone calls from other staff/reception/voicemail fast tracked by Client Services staff, usually within 24 hours
  - remaining requests are added to a folder in date order and processed over time.
- *language and people bibliographies:* requests completed within 25 days
- *reference inquiries for access visits:* completed within 25 working days, with routine requests completed within two to three hours
- *reference inquiries for remote access to materials:* completed within 25 working days, with routine requests completed within two to three hours.

Given these accessibility issues, some stakeholders indicated that they seek alternate channels rather than working through AIATSIS. Some also noted that the restricted accessibility may influence their decisions about whether to deposit materials with AIATSIS:

> I have found it quite difficult and time-consuming getting access to archival materials at AIATSIS, and I think this is an area that requires much improvement… In turn, I would be reluctant to deposit materials I have gathered in the AIATSIS archive, since I have doubts about whether it is efficiently maintained. I have been considering archiving my materials in an overseas archive - which seems like a pity, but may in fact be the more reliable option.
>
> *Public submission (name withheld)*

> AIATSIS is presently not adequately resourced, managing to maintain and develop its archive to the standards now being achieved by its counterparts elsewhere in the world through digital technology. A sign of the decline in prominence of AIATSIS is that researchers report a growing trend towards the use of alternative digital archives (such as PARADISEC, the DOBES Archive, and ELAR) to deposit Australian Indigenous materials, largely because these archives offer substantially greater online accessibility, more efficient depositing processes and superior reliability. If continued, this trend will undermine the status of AIATSIS as the premier national archive for Indigenous linguistic and cultural materials and seriously limit its utility for researchers and communities.
>
> *Public submission from the University of Melbourne*

AIATSIS is aware of the access challenges faced by users, as reflected in its submission:

> …negative feedback is occasionally heard concerning the accessibility of materials. For example, several submissions were made to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs' Inquiry into Language Learning in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities in 2012, which raised concerns including:
>
> - access protocols at AIATSIS are excessively onerous
> - centralisation of resources at AIATSIS makes it difficult for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to find and access materials
> - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients are sometimes unable to gain access to material directly relevant to their family or community.
>
> *Public submission from AIATSIS*

AIATSIS notes that limited resources are the major reason for many accessibility issues, with additional resources required to improve access to materials in the AIATSIS collection:

> More reference and access staff would reduce waiting times considerably, as well as increasing our capacity to undertake proactive access initiatives, such as community access visits. Increased staff would also allow the Library and Audiovisual Archive to extend their opening hours, a key issue frequently raised in client feedback.
>
> A permanent rights management officer position would contribute substantially to progress on renegotiating existing conditions of access, and solving difficult issues relating to access and use, which impact significantly on staff time.

> Purchase and implementation of a comprehensive Digital Asset Management System (DAMS) to control digital materials (and analogue material in the case of the Audiovisual Archive) would considerably improve staff access to material, and hence client access, particularly if the system was interoperable with Mura. A DAMS would also put AIATSIS in a better position to develop new ways of making selected material available online, as well as new ways of describing material via crowd-sourcing and other means.
>
> More staff acquiring, describing, cataloguing, conserving, preserving, digitising and quality checking collection material would result in more material being discoverable and accessible, now and into the future.
>
> *AIATSIS Issues Paper - Access to Collections, 2013j (unpublished)*

It will be important to seek ways to adequately resource both library opening hours and material request processing activities. As discussed previously, adequate digitisation and cataloguing will also be essential to preserving materials and enhancing access to the AIATSIS collection in the longer term.

Depositor protocols

Many materials in the AIATSIS collection have been deposited by community members or researchers. The AIATSIS collection operates under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library, Information and Resource Network (ATSILIRN) protocols. These recognise the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the owners of their knowledge and culture and support protection of content and perspectives in documentary materials. At the request of depositors, access restrictions can be placed on items to be held by AIATSIS.

Some stakeholders, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community users, felt that depositor conditions unnecessarily restrict access to many important materials, even to members of communities from which items were originally drawn. Having said this, AIATSIS is respected among many stakeholders for establishing and maintaining the highest standards of consent, as illustrated by:

> Given the protocols in place, I have confidence that informed consent guides access to use materials from the collection and that if teachers or academics use material from the collection they can be confident that proper protocols have been observed. While some may complain about this, it is in keeping with the guidance provided by the UN DRIPs, ILO 169 and Article 8j of the Convention on Biological Diversity regarding the recognition of the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to control the preservation and maintenance of their knowledges.
>
> *Dr Zane Ma Rhea, Monash University*

AIATSIS faces a difficult legal situation in that it does not own many materials that it holds on behalf of depositors. This restricts its ability to share certain materials without depositors' permission. While AIATSIS is authorised to provide permissions through the Principal in some circumstances, the process is complicated and has created a perception among some stakeholders that materials are inaccessible.

Libraries ACT identified a range of considerations that need to be balanced in managing access conditions:

> Access to items in any cultural institution is managed through a number of factors, which can include restrictions placed on access by donors. AIATSIS access protocols are part of the industry norm; a recognition of the particular provenance of collection items; and a means of supporting the items' continuing value to the communities from which they came. AIATSIS has particular responsibilities in this area but access conditions are a matter of ongoing review in the industry. This should be negotiated on a continuum which will maintain the balance of all these factors over time.
>
> *Public submission from Libraries ACT*

AIATSIS has recognised this challenge and is taking steps to reduce unnecessary access restrictions, with the aim of improving openness to users while continuing to respect appropriate cultural practices. At the time of the Review, AIATSIS was examining access

arrangements and updating access policies, including legal and cultural aspects, as part of a risk assessment to improve the practicality of current practices.

The national collection

The Australian Government currently maintains a network of national collections agencies that preserve and exhibit information of importance to the nation, including materials relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and people, including:

- *National Archives of Australia*: three divisions of records related to Indigenous peoples, including Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Territory administration
- *National Film and Sound Archive*: Indigenous collection including moving images and sound recordings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples over 110 years
- *National Museum of Australia*: seeks to increase awareness and understanding of Australia's history and culture through its collections of 10,000 objects dedicated to specific communities within its First Australians gallery
- *National Gallery of Australia*: aims to increase understanding, knowledge and enjoyment of the visual arts, and includes the largest Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander collection in the world with over 7,500 pieces of work
- *National Library of Australia*: maintains and develops a national collection of library material across 12 sections, including an Indigenous collection that emphases Indigenous oral history and pictorial collections
- *Australian War Memorial*: develops collections that assist Australians to remember, interpret and understand the Australian experience of war and its impact on Australian society, including film, art, photography, ephemera, manuscripts and heraldry relating to Aboriginal servicemen.

In addition to national collections agencies, states and territories maintain their own cultural and collections agencies, notably libraries, galleries and museums. There are also a number of local collections across Australia, such as Gab Titui in the Torres Strait Islands and the Strehlow Research Centre in Alice Springs. Some collections and materials are also held privately, often by field researchers or art collectors, or internationally. The range of collection organisations means that there is no single national register or coordination point for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander records, knowledges and cultural materials. Information relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is spread across national, state and territory, local and private collections. While Trove endeavours to link many items through a national catalogue, there is currently no central reference to items held across the country. Reference support and/or guides would help users more readily identify the existence of, and methods of access to, materials that may support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies research.

Such a national coordination role is beyond the scope of this Review as AIATSIS is not currently resourced or legislated to undertake such activities. However, the Review notes that there would be value to researchers in the development of a national register of collections holdings at the national, regional and local levels, potentially paired with a 'reference librarian' service, to provide an authoritative guidance regarding collections to support research on topics of interest.

Key Findings

The AIATSIS cultural collection is widely valued as critical to the preservation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' knowledges and cultural materials.

The resources currently applied to managing the AIATSIS collection are insufficient to promote the level of accessibility desired by users. Access is restricted by factors including AIATSIS Canberra location, limited library opening hours and sometimes lengthy document retrieval times.

AIATSIS depositor and access protocols help to manage the cultural collection in ways that acknowledge the cultural significance of items, but can impact the perceived accessibility of the collection.

4.3 Digitisation of the collection

Term of Reference 10

Strategies for the expansion, maintenance and management of the digitisation of the cultural resource collection in order to preserve it and make it available to Indigenous communities and individuals and students and researchers

This section discusses the digitisation of the AIATSIS collection. It responds to TOR 10.

The need for digitisation

The AIATSIS collection contains many unique items that are critical to preserve but are in a state of decay due to the condition of the media on which they are recorded. In particular, many analogue records, such as magnetic tapes, have a limited 'shelf' life and are not able to be recovered once their condition has deteriorated.

Recognising this issue across the many formats deposited by researchers and communities, AIATSIS instigated a digitisation process over a decade ago to protect these items. The *AIATSIS Archive 2025 Preservation Plan* (*Preservation Plan*), released in 2010, primarily focuses on preserving the entirety of AIATSIS magnetic tape collections—a collection of over 65,000 hours of audio and video material.

Many analogue magnetic tapes are expected to decay by 2025 at the latest, and many even earlier, as noted in the *Preservation Plan:*

> In addition, increasing levels of failure are expected to occur in the majority of currently held analogue magnetic media by 2020. Whilst a small number of objects may still play, it is unlikely that many analogue magnetic collection materials, including video, audio and film-sound, 20-30 years or older will be playable…
>
> The vast majority of analogue magnetic media in our collection is already 20-30 years old. Whilst it is widely accepted that appropriate, high quality storage can extend the lifespan of these materials, most collection objects were not stored in these ideal conditions prior to their deposit at AIATSIS, and most of these already exhibit some degree of deterioration.
>
> *AIATSIS 2010c*

The need to maintain playback material for many analogue formats is critical to the digitisation process, as noted in the AIATSIS submission:

> In addition to the decline of the objects themselves, in many cases the playback machinery required to view or hear the content is no longer readily available or in good working order, having been surpassed by recent digital capture and playback devices. Technical staff with the requisite skills to repair, maintain and operate such vintage equipment are an ageing workforce and in many cases the required skillsets are no longer part of the course offerings at Australian Technical Colleges.
>
> *Public submission from AIATSIS*

In addition to preserving items for later research use, digitisation is also considered by many stakeholders to be a key mechanism for increasing access to and unlocking the full potential of the AIATSIS collection, including for remote users. Digitisation is not only a preservation imperative, for users it is also an access imperative.

Other national collections agencies recognise the priority to digitise materials and face similar challenges. For example, the National Museum of Australia illustrated the digitisation imperative through its submission to the *Creative Australia* policy:

> Australia's collections need to be available online for all Australians. It is a fundamental part of social inclusion and of paramount importance in bridging the digital divide. At the National Museum of Australia, the key to liberating content and bringing collections to life is the Museum's capacity to digitise the collection in new and innovative ways so audiences can interact with the Museum online, onsite and offsite.
>
> *National Museum of Australia, 2012*

Stakeholders emphasised that digitising unique cultural materials before they decay should remain a leading priority for AIATSIS:

> I cannot stress enough how important it is that the AIATSIS holdings are digitised for future generations and that AIATSIS has capacity to make this material available to communities and researchers in accord with proper protocol.
>
> *Public submission from Professor Jon Altman, Australian National University*

> The digital divide is most apparent at the Institute: with such a collection, and so little of it available digitally in the age of the Internet and social media, the urgent need to remedy this situation should be one of the highest priorities… The development of a digitisation and online accessibility project at the Institute is a matter of the highest priority.
>
> *Public submission from Professor Marcia Langton*

Progress of digitisation

The *Preservation Plan* outlined the expected size of the collection in 2025 (taking into account new material deposits), the extent of digitisation achievements to 2010, and annual digitisation targets. This is shown in Table 8.

Table 8 **Digitisation progress**

Media type	Projected total size by 2025	Already digitised to 2010	Expected annual digitisation required	Reported progress in 2012-13
Audio	58,760 hours	14,144 hours	3,100 hours	5,490 items
Video	12,900 hours	1,686 hours	775 hours	n/a [a]
Pictorial	965,280 items	81,450 items	60,000 items	35,676 items
Motion picture	14,160 hours	1,432 hours	825 hours	n/a [a]
Documents and manuscripts	n/a	n/a	n/a	23,036 pages scanned

[a] Digitisation of moving image collections limited in 2013 due to AIATSIS prioritisation decisions
Note: Measures of progress are not directly comparable for audio
The *Preservation Plan,* from which targets were derived was specifically for audio-visual material and therefore did not include targets for documents or manuscripts
Source: *AIATSIS* 2010c; AIATSIS 2013a

The collection is, however, growing faster than anticipated as a result of acquisitions and item deposits with AIATSIS. In 2012-13:

- 1,726 items were added to the Library collections
- 88 audio-visual collections were offered for deposit or donation, containing:
  - 16,215 photographic images
  - 210 audio recordings
  - 58 moving image items
  - 189 other items, including art and artefacts

AIATSIS expects that the rate of deposits will increase as researchers become more aware of decay of items on certain media, especially magnetic tapes, and as many field researchers retire and donate primary research materials to AIATSIS for safe-keeping.

The Review has not been able to obtain a detailed analysis of the progress, or forward estimates, of the digitisation program. While the AIATSIS *Annual Report 2012-13* suggests that it is making good progress in its digitisation activities, it is evident that a significant workload remains over the coming decade. In 2012-13, AIATSIS assessed all materials in its collection in order to prioritise materials for digitisation using criteria such as material format, equipment required, condition, age, rarity, value and demand (AIATSIS 2013a). This process estimated that there was around four years of work required to digitise all materials assessed as Priority 1 (of five categories) from 2012-13, with significant further work also required for Priority 2 to 5 items.

Challenges facing the digitisation process

Limited term funding

The *Preservation Plan* identified that funding of $96.4 million was required over 14 years—an average of $6.75 million per annum—to digitise the entire AIATSIS analogue tape collection.

Since the preparation of the *Preservation Plan*, AIATSIS has received a total of $6.4 million in additional funding for digitisation activities on a non-recurrent funding basis. It was not successful in seeking additional funding in 2011-12, instead funding digitisation activities from its financial reserves, but was awarded non-recurrent funding of $3.2 million per annum in 2012-13 and 2013-14. Funding for the digitisation program is due to expire in mid-2014.

At minimum, digitisation of the highest priority materials within the AIATSIS cultural resources collection will require significant funding for several years. Working with partner organisations to support the digitisation process should be investigated for its potential to leverage existing digitisation facilities to reduce costs. The National Museum of Australia, for example, suggested the potential to share infrastructure in this area:

> The proximity of each organisation to the other, the complementary nature of their collections, and the relative high cost of digitisation hardware, software and staff resources, suggest that establishment of shared services arrangements in this area might provide real efficiencies and cost savings to each.
>
> *Public submission from the National Museum of Australia*

AIATSIS itself notes that while it provides support for several other agencies, digitisation technologies for many of its own ageing analogue formats are not generally held by other collections agencies.

Taking steps to improving access following digitisation

It is a natural expectation of users that digitised materials will be more accessible than hard copy materials, including remotely. This means that careful balancing is required between increasing the level of digitised materials and supporting user access to the digitised materials, as acknowledged by AIATSIS:

> At the same time, the demand for access to collection content by new generations of communities and individuals, academic, cultural and family history researchers is a constant and growing pressure on the AIATSIS Preservation Digitisation program.
>
> *Public submission from AIATSIS*

Common national requirements

As expressed below, digitisation is a common issue across the national collections agencies and could provide the impetus for greater inter-agency partnership:

> Collaborating more widely with universities, libraries and museums in the digitisation of collections would be productive. AIATSIS is currently one of a number of mostly small and relatively isolated players in this space around the nation at present. As noted earlier, the Institute could play a much stronger national co-ordinating and guiding role than it does now.
>
> *Public submission (name withheld)*

While beyond the defined scope of this Review, this suggests there may be an opportunity in the longer term to consider a national collaborative approach to procuring and locating collections digitisation infrastructure. The objectives would be to achieve economies of scale for digitisation across collections institutions, as well as to streamline the maintenance and management of equipment so that it could most effectively support participating agencies. Costs could potentially be recuperated through fee-for-service provision.

In summary, digitisation is a major and ongoing administrative task facing many collecting institutions. For AIATSIS, it presents a significant opportunity to preserve materials at risk of being lost. Given the increasing scale of the collection, along with the old age and poor condition of many items, there is a critical mass of digitisation work required over at least the next decade. Should digitisation funding not be maintained at least at current levels, there is a risk that ageing materials will be irrecoverable to future generations of researchers.

There is also a need for AIATSIS to plan for and commence sharing materials that have been digitised. This should extend to reconsidering future community outreach models and the ways that digitised materials may be made available to communities on a broader basis.

Key Findings

Digitisation is critical for the preservation of aging materials within the AIATSIS cultural collection. This requires continuation of intensive efforts to digitise high priority materials, and ongoing efforts to manage the digitisation of AIATSIS growing collection.

Users expect that digitised materials will play a role in improving accessibility of the AIATSIS collection, including remote access.

The expiry of digitisation funding presents a risk that some cultural materials and records will be lost or inaccessible to future generations.

5 Structure, governance, funding, role and stakeholder needs

This chapter discusses AIATSIS existing corporate and governance arrangements, including a discussion about its overall role and ability to meet stakeholder needs and expectations. It responds to TOR 11, followed by TORs 1 and 2.

5.1 Corporate and governance arrangements

Term of Reference 11

Whether current circumstances and demands warrant any changes in structure, governance and/or funding to equip AIATSIS to effectively undertake its mission

This section discusses AIATSIS organisational structure and staffing, funding and performance monitoring. It responds to TOR 11.

Organisational structure

AIATSIS is a statutory authority which reports directly through the Minister for Education to the Government and Parliament. AIATSIS is governed by a Council, drawn from members and appointments by the Minister, with a majority Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation. It also has advisory committees for key streams of its work, including research, ethics, native title and publishing. An audit and risk committee oversees the operational activities of the organisation.

Executive leadership of AIATSIS is through the Principal and Deputy Principal, supported by an Executive Board of Management which comprising the Principal and Deputy Principal along with the Directors from each of AIATSIS eight divisions.

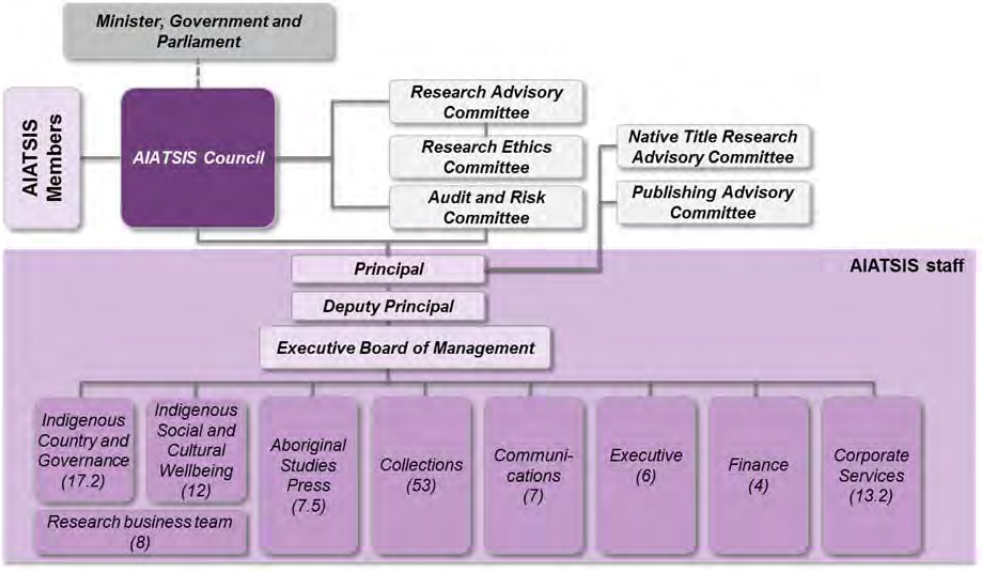
AIATSIS undertook a divisional restructure in 2012-13 to draw together the library and audio-visual archives, and to establish specific divisions for finance and communications. These divisions include two research units, the Aboriginal Studies Press, collections, communications, executive, finance and corporate services.

There were a total of 127.9 full time equivalent (FTE) staff working with AIATSIS in September 2013. The number of staff by function are:

- *research*: total of 37.2 FTEs (29.1 per cent) across three divisions
- *dissemination*: total of 7.5 FTEs (5.9 per cent) narrowly defined as the Aboriginal Studies Press
- *collections*: total of 53 FTEs (41.4 per cent)
- *corporate*: total of 30.2 FTEs (23.6 per cent).

The AIATSIS organisation structure, including staff numbers by division, is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3 **AIATSIS organisation structure and staff numbers by division**



Note: staff numbers accurate as at September 2013. Staff numbers are full time equivalents by division
Source: AIATSIS 2013a

Council

The AIATSIS Council is responsible for governing AIATSIS. Council members hold office on a part-time basis and meet four times per year. Most Council members also have specific responsibilities through designated roles on other AIATSIS Committees.

An external review of Council undertaken by Moreton Consulting in 2013 found that "the Council operates as an effective and well-functioning board". At the same time, recommendations identified for improvement included that Council:

- identify ways to strengthen its focus on strategy and positioning the Institute into the future
- consider ways for Councillors to promote and monitor AIATSIS reputation through their networks and to share this information with each other and management.

This Review has identified that meeting future needs will require changes to AIATSIS current practices, either in relation to its operating models for service delivery, program mix or funding allocation. In this regard, the Review endorses the views of Moreton Consulting of the need for Council to strengthen its focus on future directions and to include a mix of people with the appropriate skills and experience to develop organisational strategy and priorities that position the Institute to best meet the needs of stakeholders within available funding. The Council and Executive will also need to give consideration to whether external support is required effect the organisational change associated with the Review recommendations.

In regard to skills, the Moreton Consulting study provided Council members with opportunities to identify their further development needs:

- six sought further development in 'public sector and government'
- four sought information about 'legal obligations'
- four sought development in 'financial management'.

There was a general perception among stakeholders consulted through the Review that the skills and experience of the current Council members is aligned more specifically with the AIATSIS research function and that these would need to be broadened for AIATSIS to be able strengthen its collections and dissemination roles. While not warranting a specific finding or recommendation, Council should, as part of normal governance processes, maintain flexibility and establish succession planning to ensure that its composition and skill base is refreshed as appropriate to reflect changes in organisational focus over time.

Committees

A Research Advisory Committee (RAC) meets twice annually. Its role and composition are established through the *AIATSIS Act* 1989. Its primary role has been to make allocation decisions for the AIATSIS research grants program. Following suspension of the grants program, the RAC has focused on setting research priorities. The RAC was reconstituted in late 2013 with an entirely new membership.

The Research Ethics Committee (REC) similarly played a role in supporting the RAC in grant allocation decisions, reviewing all applications based on their ethical research processes. The REC reviews all AIATSIS research projects and has recently established the capability to provide ethical approvals more broadly as a human research ethics committee (HREC) on a trial basis.

Rather than acting as a human research ethics approval committee itself, the Review believes that the REC could have greater impact by focussing on helping to build the capacity of other HRECs to assess and approve research applications involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies research, particularly where research involves community engagement. Moreover, there appears little justification for maintaining both the RAC and REC as separate committees, particularly if the AIATSIS research grants program remains suspended.

An Audit and Risk Committee oversees the operations of AIATSIS, including risk management, assurance, internal audit, legislative compliance, financial statements, business continuity and disaster management. It plays an advisory role directly to the AIATSIS Council. This committee was introduced in 2009 and has since focussed on improving AIATSIS business management processes.

Native Title Research Advisory and Publishing Advisory Committees each make contributions to setting AIATSIS directions in their respective areas of expertise. Some stakeholders identified a need for an advisory committee focussed on advancing the AIATSIS collection. At the time of the Review, AIATSIS was in the process of establishing such a committee.

Membership

There are approximately 530 members of AIATSIS located throughout Australia and overseas, with criteria for membership requiring each to demonstrate expertise and involvement in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies. Approximately 130 members (25 per cent) identify as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people. Through the *AIATSIS Act* 1989, four positions on Council and eight on the RAC are drawn from this membership.

The views of AIATSIS members were collected through a survey conducted as part of the Review. The 131 respondents had an average age exceeding 60 years and were located primarily in NSW (26 per cent), ACT (21 per cent) and Queensland (18 percent). The ageing

nature of AIATSIS members was also acknowledged by AIATSIS through interviews, with a desire to attract more young people to apply for AIATSIS membership.

Survey responses indicated that members were entirely (28 per cent), mostly (44 per cent) or partially (20 per cent) satisfied with the benefits that accompanied AIATSIS membership, while 8 per cent were not satisfied. The primary benefits of membership included maintaining an awareness and understanding of AIATSIS activities, connecting to a network of researchers, voting in elections and maintaining their research profile. At the same, the benefits of membership were not universally understood:

> I'm unclear myself on the benefits that membership offers that are not available to non-members. Everything I do/access, I was able to do before. Hence, offering members opportunities that are not available to non-members (other than sitting on the Council or Research Committee) would make a paid membership much more attractive. And while that might be the opportunity to attend particular functions at AIATSIS for free, that sort of benefit is not especially attractive to interstate members such as myself.
>
> *AIATSIS member (survey response)*

AIATSIS acknowledges that academic researchers dominate its membership and that membership criteria do not accommodate some stakeholder groups with a keen interest in the work of AIATSIS, including:

- people with an established career in management or curation of collections
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members
- early-career researchers and postgraduate students in relevant areas of study
- prominent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who could raise the profile of AIATSIS

The survey identified that membership could be improved through:

- greater involvement as members for those living outside Canberra
- opportunities to network with other members
- paying membership fees for advanced services or subscription fees, for example, for the *Australian Aboriginal Studies Journal*
- greater contribution to the work of AIATSIS
- more information about the work of AIATSIS.

The survey also indicated that members were not currently highly engaged, many seeking to participate more actively in the work of AIATSIS. Members were also generally willing to pay a small fee to be a member, linked to additional member benefits. As one survey respondent noted:

> I think there could be two levels of membership: a membership which is willing to support AIATSIS both financially and more generally; and a membership which is more deeply involved and committed to Indigenous research, activity and cultural engagement. This would help a move towards widening the scope of the organisation, which I believe would be healthy
>
> *AIATSIS member (survey response)*

AIATSIS membership structures were being examined by AIATSIS during the Review. Any significant changes to existing membership structures will likely require accompanying change to AIATSIS legislation. A more detailed summary of results from the members survey are provided at Appendix D.

Workforce

AIATSIS had 127.9 full time equivalent (FTE) staff members in September 2013. Including those working part time, the staff headcount was 136. The AIATSIS workforce has a significantly higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff (26 per cent) than

the APS average (3 per cent) (AIATSIS, 2013b). Other characteristics of employees in 2011-12 and 2012-13 are shown in Table 9.

Table 9 **Employee characteristics 2011-12 and 2012-13**

Indicator	2011-12	2012-13
Number of staff employed (headcount)	129	136
Women	59%	58%
People with a disability	5%	5%
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	28%	26%
Staff with English as a second language	4%	4%
Proportion of staff with ongoing employment contracts	38%	35%
Total employee expenditure ($)	$10,468,000	$11,516,000

Source: AIATSIS 2013a

With approximately 65 per cent of staff employed in untenured positions, an important issue for AIATSIS is to transition key staff from fixed-term contracts to permanent conditions. AIATSIS identified a provisional retention rate of 0.67, indicating that two thirds of staff are retained year-on-year (AIATSIS 2013b), and also noted pressures to retain key staff. A contributing factor in this regard is that only 27 per cent (2013) considering themselves fairly remunerated for the work they do, relative to 68 per cent of APS employees (AIATSIS 2013f).

Notwithstanding this, many stakeholders consulted as part of the Review acknowledged AIATSIS staff for their commitment, knowledge and passion for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies. This acknowledgement also included Council and committee members. Staff themselves expressed higher levels of pride (85 per cent in 2013) in working for AIATSIS compared to the APS more broadly (71 per cent). Staff also felt personally attached to AIATSIS (73 per cent in 2012) compared to staff in the APS (59 per cent).

Funding

AIATSIS is funded primarily through appropriations, contracts and grants from the Australian Government. A summary table of AIATSIS revenue is shown in Table 10. Total revenue is anticipated to decrease from approximately $16.9 million in 2013-14 to $13.2 million in 2014-15, largely as a result of the expiry of non-recurrent appropriations funding for the digitisation program ($3.2 million in 2012-13 and 2013-14).

Table 10 **AIATSIS revenue 2007-08 (actual) to 2015-16 (forward estimate)**

Funding agency	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
	Actual $'000	*Actual $'000*	*Actual $'000*	*Actual $'000*	*Actual $'000*	*Actual $'000*	*Budget $'000*	*Budget $'000*	*Budget $'000*	*Budget $'000*
Appropriations										
DIICCSRTE appropriations (including non-recurrent appropriations funding for digitisation)	11,801	11,928	12,209	13,172	9,451 [b]	12,798	13,300	10,152	10,302	9,873
Australian Government grants [a]										
DIICCSRTE Indigenous Visiting Research Fellowship				500	350	9				
DIICCSRTE Step-up program for Indigenous tertiary education							2,022	2,104	1,931	
DoHA Family History Unit support	379	432	394	889	606	624	690			
FaHCSIA Native Title Research Unit support	513	813	821	1,040 [c]	758	800	882	952		
FaHCSIA Stolen Generations research project						200				
AGD grant on Federal minimum connection threshold				72 [d]						
National Museum of Australia grant			5							
DRALGAS Indigenous languages support including NILS2						340				
Total other	*892*	*1,245*	*1,220*	*2,501*	*1,714*	*1,973*	*3,594*	*3,056*	*1,931*	*0*
Total appropriations and other	***12,693***	***13,173***	***13,429***	***15,673***	***11,165***	***14,771***	***16,894***	***13,208***	***12,233***	***9,873***

[a] Excludes AIATSIS own-source revenue

[b] Funding decrease reflects gap in digitisation funding in 2011-12, which was met from AIATSIS financial reserves

[c] AIATSIS provided the figure of $1.075 million, later corrected by the Attorney-General's Department through draft report comments

[d] AIATSIS provided the figure of $43,000, later corrected by the Attorney-General's Department through draft report comments

Source: AIATSIS, 2013g

Additional revenue is generated from activities such as sales of goods, provision of consulting services, and research grants. Own source revenue is also collected for various services and contract payments. Total revenue generated by AIATSIS in 2012-13, including appropriations, was $17,537,000. Expenditure was $17,403,000.

Non-recurrent funding streams

Several long-standing functions are funded through non-recurrent funding streams. Particular examples are:

- *digitisation*: non-recurrent appropriations funding from Department of Education (~$3.2 million per annum, expiring 2013-14).
- *family history services*: contract funding received from the Department of Health and Ageing (~$600,000 per annum, expiring 2013-14).

— *native title research*: contract funding from the former Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) (~$950,000 per annum, expiring 2014-15).

While non-recurrent funding sources are likely to remain important for AIATSIS to deliver services that provide specific and emerging needs, AIATSIS notes that greater certainty, particularly through consolidating long-standing grant funding into its annual appropriation, would increase its ability to undertake longer term strategic planning and resource allocation. Some implications of limited-term funding are that AIATSIS:

— faces difficulty formalising staff contracts

— is restricted from strategically and flexibly allocating funding across the organisation to meet areas of greatest need

— is required to report to multiple agencies, rather than through a single consolidated reporting processes.

At the same time, some Australian Government agencies consider that specific grant funding contracts assist with the management of the contracted services. In this regard, the Review notes that many of the services held in highest regard by stakeholders, such as native title and family history, have been delivered by AIATSIS largely under specific funding contracts, some dating back to the 1990s.

The Review believes it important that there is a mechanism for Australian Government to work with AIATSIS to coordinate and obtain synergies from the combined investment, irrespective of whether this is via separate contracts or consolidated funding streams.

Adequacy of funding to meet stakeholder expectations

The Review had access to only very broad information regarding AIATSIS allocation of funding and resources, predominantly through the divisional personnel numbers. An activity-based costing exercise was last undertaken by AIATSIS in 2011 to quantify the application of effort, but has not been repeated since. Little information has been available regarding the flows of funding within AIATSIS divisions by activity stream. This has limited any analysis regarding resource allocation or funding flows at a function or program level.

What is clear, however, is that AIATSIS has faced increasing difficulty in delivering its current programs at expected levels of service within current funding. Major recent decisions by Council to restrict library hours and suspend the research grants program were made in the context of limited available funding, with priorities directed towards maintaining AIATSIS research and collections management functions.

The Review notes that the digitisation program and related collections management functions were not anticipated to the extent now required when the *AIATSIS Act* 1989 was developed. These functions currently compete internally for funding that may otherwise have been used by AIATSIS for research programs and to pursue other priority activities.

Resourcing issues have impacted on all streams of activity:

— *research*: research activities are being oriented towards areas where additional funding may be available, such as through ARC grants

— *dissemination*: there have been restrictions to the scale of the Aboriginal Studies Press and community outreach activities

— *collections*: AIATSIS has faced challenges maintaining its digitisation program and has contracted library and audio-visual opening hours, along with back of house processing

— *corporate*: generally, there are high ratios of contract staff and perceptions of low remuneration levels in comparison to other APS agencies.

While many external stakeholders acknowledged that its overall level of funding presents challenges for AIATSIS across its service streams, there was a view that funding constraints should also be used by AIATSIS as the impetus to rationalise the range of services it undertakes and to concentrate available funding on the areas of greatest need. There was a consistent view that AIATSIS was attempting to spread its efforts too thinly and needs to do fewer things better.

Performance monitoring

At present, AIATSIS organisational and program monitoring is undertaken at a relatively high level, often based on high level and generally qualitative information, rendering it difficult to estimate and articulate the value of its services to funders and stakeholders. Improved service monitoring has the potential to drive productivity and performance improvements, through ensuring activities undertaken are monitored by staff and targeted towards clear and achievable goals. It is also an important pre-requisite for supporting any case for additional funding or program extensions.

While there are acknowledged difficulties in measuring outcomes of research, the same issues face all PFRAs and are the subject of significant attention arising from the 2011 *Focusing Australia's Publicly Funded Research Review*. AIATSIS is staying abreast of advances in this area and should adopt these in monitoring its research outcomes.

It is also noted that the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act* 2013 will replace the *Financial Management and Accountability Act* 1997 and the *Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act* 1997 from 1 July 2014. This is expected to place an even greater emphasis on AIATSIS with regard to management of governance, resources and risk, and for greater rigour in performance monitoring.

Key Findings

AIATSIS has well-established corporate governance processes and practices to support its decision making and operations, but its committee structures need to adapt to match organisational priorities.

AIATSIS membership represents the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies research community, though many members are unclear about the benefits of membership or opportunities for engagement.

AIATSIS funding comprises a number of non-recurrent grants, from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, resulting in uncertainty regarding AIATSIS long term resource base.

AIATSIS has faced increasing difficulty in delivering its current programs at expected levels of service within current funding.

Monitoring of organisational outputs and outcomes in relation to investment is at a high level and limited, rendering it difficult to assess and communicate return on effort and to support additional funding for program investment.

5.2 AIATSIS role

Term of Reference 1

AIATSIS current role and functions and future strategic directions, against its legislated objectives

Earlier sections of the Review have detailed the major activities undertaken by AIATSIS in research, dissemination, collections and corporate areas. This section considers AIATSIS overall role in relation to its legislation and its future strategic intentions. It responds to TOR 1.

Defining AIATSIS role and objectives

The *AIATSIS Act* 1989 does not set out a specific set of objectives to be achieved. These are implied in AIATSIS functions, in particular through the function to 'undertake and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies' incorporating multidisciplinary research, dissemination and care of the collection.

While the legislation provides AIATSIS with guidance on its overall direction, it is open and broad in nature. It requires interpretation by the AIATSIS Council, Committees and senior staff to determine the scope and scale of the activities towards which AIATSIS directs its efforts.

Prioritisation of activities has on occasion been assisted through clarifying expectations with the responsible Minister, as recommended for statutory authorities through the *Review of the Corporate Governance of Statutory Authorities and Office Holders (Uhrig Review):*

> In a number of cases statutory authorities would benefit from greater clarity in the definition of their purpose, direction and objectives. This could be achieved through the relationship between government, portfolio departments and statutory authorities, including through regular enunciation of expectations. To assist this process, it is recommended that each Minister issue a Statement of Expectations to statutory authorities within their portfolio where the Minister has a role in providing direction. This document would outline relevant government policies, including the Government's current objectives relevant to the authority and any expectations the Government may have on how the authority should conduct its operations. Statements would need to be framed carefully, respecting the areas of necessary independence provided for in the statutory authority's enabling legislation. Each statutory authority would then respond by outlining how it proposes to meet the expectations of government in a Statement of Intent, including the identification of key performance indicators agreed with the relevant Minister.
>
> *Department of Finance, 2003*

To this end, the former Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research wrote to the AIATSIS Chairperson in February 2010 to:

> … consolidate and refine the Government's expectations of AIATSIS. It includes reference to the Government's priorities for research and innovation, strategic direction, research excellence, local and international collaboration, training of researchers, communications with myself and my Department, and encouragement of public debate and the independence of AIATSIS.
>
> *AIATSIS 2010d*

In response, the AIATSIS Chair responded to outline AIATSIS strategic intentions. AIATSIS executive staff commended this process for helping to establish open communication with its responsible Minister and to clarify AIATSIS priorities. However, its impact was somewhat limited due to a succession of Machinery of Government and ministerial changes over recent years.

The Review considers that such statements should be developed regularly, at least every three years, to refine and agree the role and expectations of AIATSIS. This will both assist AIATSIS to clarify its priorities and ensure that the Australian Government, through the Minister, is able to coordinate its expectations of, and investment in, AIATSIS activities.

Stakeholder views about AIATSIS role and priorities

Notwithstanding the challenges in setting priorities, AIATSIS is held in high regard by many stakeholders, particularly for its cultural collection, its support of research in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies across Australia, and its role in launching of the careers of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers.

As discussed previously, many stakeholders regarded the role played by AIATSIS in establishing the collection as crucial in securing the cultural history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Stakeholders expressed strong confidence that AIATSIS maintains sensitive materials securely and always works in the best interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Stakeholders also placed great value in AIATSIS role as a national body for research in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies and helping to inform emerging policy in these areas.

Further examples of stakeholder reflections on the importance of AIATSIS role are detailed below.

> I regard AIATSIS as the national flagship institution with responsibility for the collecting of, preservation, maintenance and dissemination of reliable information about the lifeways of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of Australia. It acts as a trusted repository for knowledge held by Indigenous Australians and for research that has been conducted in the field of Indigenous Studies by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers nationally.
>
> *Public submission from Dr Zane Ma Rhea, Monash University*

> The Institute is the preeminent research and collecting body for Australian Indigenous people and is vital to the preservation of our linguistic and cultural heritage, history and socioeconomic status.
>
> *Public submission from Professor Marcia Langton*

> AIATSIS has the reputation as the leading institution for raising awareness and achieving success in building capacity, maintaining, sharing and recording of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges, histories, cultures and languages.
>
> *Public submission from the Australian Catholic University*

> AIATSIS role as the premier collection of material and information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, and its community access/outreach programs where AIATSIS staff visit and build relationships with communities, is vital to reconnecting communities with their cultures and histories.
>
> *Public submission from the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples*

> AIATSIS occupies a unique position in Australia over its 50 years of establishment. Its legislative role and functions are just as critical to the intellectual growth of Australians with Indigenous history and future relationships with other Australians as it was when first enacted.
>
> *Public submission from George Villaflor*

Also discussed previously is that, despite strong levels of goodwill, stakeholders consistently expressed concern that AIATSIS is attempting to undertake more activities than its available funding and capability allows it to effectively deliver (the number and extent of activities currently undertaken by AIATSIS are detailed further in Appendix B). Illustrative of stakeholder views in this regard are:

> It is trying to be all things to all people. AIATSIS cannot do this. There is a need to concentrate on the things the Institute does best, and that is primarily the collections, the contact with Indigenous communities (with family history and return of materials and supporting their visits), the specialist services - such as the language database and small grants program.
>
> *AIATSIS member (survey response)*

> It is not possible for the Institute to meet the totality of the needs and expectations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and researchers because of its steadily reducing funding levels. The unmet needs are great.
>
> *Public submission from Professor Marcia Langton*

There is also varying understanding of the core role of AIATSIS. While this is somewhat understandable given the wide range of stakeholders which interact with AIATSIS, the fact that many are unclear as to when, where and how AIATSIS can assist leads to non-use or ineffective use of what AIATSIS is able to offer. As noted by Charles Darwin University:

> Throughout the University's internal consultations, it became apparent that there was a significant lack of general knowledge or awareness of AIATSIS, its key characteristics, legislated functions and any support it offers to Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers…. In the absence of a clearly defined and promoted AIATSIS function, role or support in relation to the university, there were equally limited expectations or assumptions of AIATSIS' role and any support it offers.
>
> *Public submission from Charles Darwin University*

AIATSIS is aware of this issue and initiated an organisational awareness process in 2011 and 2012, 'One AIATSIS', to build a shared internal view of the organisation initially among internal staff. AIATSIS 50th anniversary celebrations in 2014 provide a good opportunity to extend these awareness-raising activities to external stakeholders.

AIATSIS strategic directions

During the course of the Review, a revised *Statement of Strategic Intent 2013-16 (Statement)* was developed by AIATSIS (see Figure 4 below). The goals in the *Statement* are embedded in the AIATSIS portfolio budget statement for 2013-14 and outline AIATSIS future organisational objectives, which will direct AIATSIS activity over the coming three years. AIATSIS notes the major differences from its previous *Corporate Plan*:

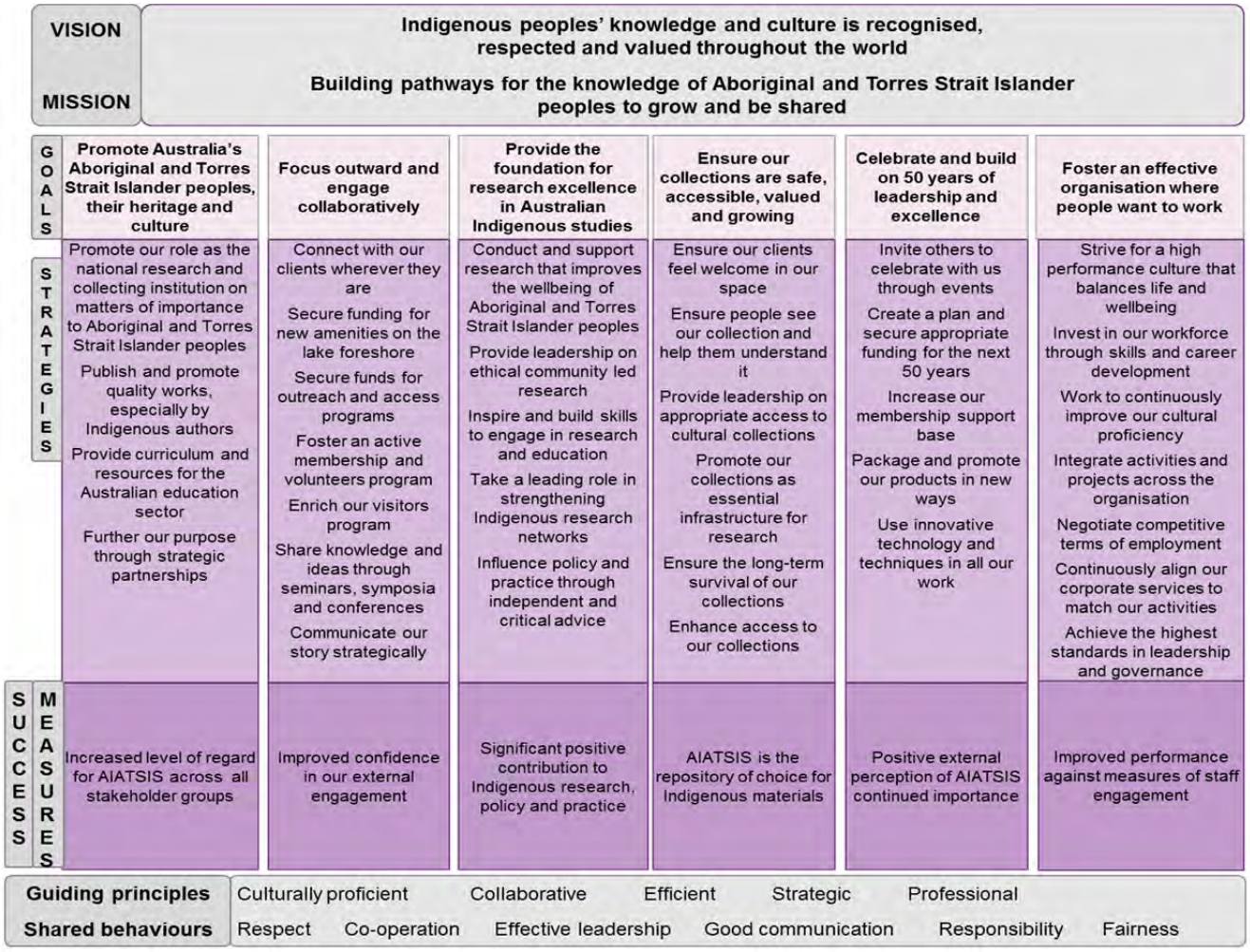
> AIATSIS' most recent strategic planning document indicates a clear change of direction. AIATSIS has changed its purpose statement from merely promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures to actively creating pathways for the knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to be shared and valued.
>
> Our priorities in achieving this purpose are to promote Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their heritage and culture; focus outwardly and engage collaboratively with its stakeholders and clients, wherever they are; provide the foundation for research excellence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies; ensure the AIATSIS collection is safe, accessible and growing; and celebrate its achievements over almost 50 years of providing leadership in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies.
>
> *Public submission from AIATSIS*

The *Statement* focuses on six interrelated goals for the organisation, with strategies, guiding principles and shared behaviours to steer the conduct of staff. Success measures acknowledge the importance of improved external awareness and respect for AIATSIS among stakeholders.

A number of the strategies within the *Statement* focus AIATSIS involvement in areas that have been highlighted in previous sections of the Review, namely to:

- provide curriculum and resources for the Australian education sector
- further its purpose through strategic partnerships
- secure funds for outreach and access programs
- take a leading role in strengthening Indigenous research networks
- enhance access to our collections
- negotiate competitive terms of employment.

Figure 4 **AIATSIS Statement of Strategic Intent 2013-2016**



Source: AIATSIS 2013h

Key Findings

The *Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Act* 1989 provides AIATSIS with the ability to undertake the functions considered important by its stakeholders, but its openness and breadth necessitates identification and prioritisation of a practicable set of core activities that can be delivered effectively within available funding.

Clarification of expectations by the responsible Minister, when undertaken, has proved helpful to AIATSIS in prioritising and targeting its activities.

5.3 Meeting the needs and expectations of stakeholders

Term of Reference 2

How AIATSIS meets the needs and expectations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and researchers and whether there is an unmet need

This section outlines stakeholder expectations of AIATSIS in relation to their future needs, along with areas where these needs are not being met. It responds to TOR 2.

Stakeholder perspectives

AIATSIS works with a broad variety of stakeholders across the country and internationally, as outlined in Section 1.3. The number of AIATSIS stakeholders has also grown significantly:

> AIATSIS' achievements in 2012‑13 must be considered in the context of the changes in the Indigenous affairs landscape. Since its establishment almost 50 years ago, our recognised community of stakeholders has grown tremendously. Fifty years ago, Indigenous people were not counted in the census at all, but in 2011, 548,370 people who identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin were counted in the Census, and this is estimated to be an undercount of more than 100,000.
>
> *Chairman's Message, AIATSIS Annual Report 2012-13*

The types of interactions and the nature of the service needs also vary considerably within and between these groups. Few see a complete picture of all AIATSIS activities and the contexts in which they operate inform their present and future needs of AIATSIS. The expectations of AIATSIS held by different stakeholder groups are outlined below. Areas of unmet need are broadly identified within each stakeholder grouping.

Australian Government agencies

Representatives from various Australian Government departments seek leadership from AIATSIS in existing areas of strength, notably family history (for both the Stolen Generations and the broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander public), native title research and events, and languages. They recognised a need to prioritise service delivery activities to maintain a reputation for quality, and to improve access to collections for users.

The ARC noted that while it does not play a role in identifying research needs and gaps, this was an area where AIATSIS could potentially have a valuable role for research in Indigenous knowledges.

The NHMRC identified benefits in collaborating with AIATSIS on ethical research guidelines. It expressed concern regarding the small size of AIATSIS health research team, and favoured it remaining a partner in bids for competitive NHMRC funding.

While AIATSIS thought leadership and influence in its areas of expertise was highly valued, the experience among government agencies when engaging AIATSIS to deliver contracted services was variable. Issues were raised in relation to its general level of project management capability, as well as long response times to some requests.

Collections agencies

Collections agencies consulted noted that all are under increasing budgetary pressure, as is AIATSIS. Stakeholders felt that AIATSIS would therefore need to focus on areas of highest value, particularly to improve the accessibility of its collection, including through partnership models.

There was a general view that accessibility restrictions at AIATSIS were causing users to seek materials through other collections agencies where available. Agency staff were also unclear of the AIATSIS outreach model in relation to the number of visits and selection of communities. It was considered important for collections agencies to establish partnerships

for more systematic, reliable and predictable sharing of materials within and across jurisdictions rather than operating in silos.

University sector stakeholders

Universities considered that AIATSIS is having a diminishing role in supporting the growing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies efforts across the country, citing variable and informal partnership models, and a limited role in capacity building.

Many were also unclear about the role of AIATSIS in relation to universities. While AIATSIS maintains some partnerships with particular researchers across universities, these tend to be personal rather than institutional, with the mutual benefits of more systemic relationships between AIATSIS and universities not being made explicit. It was suggested that AIATSIS could develop an advanced package of activities, potentially to be accessed on a fee for service basis, to help universities to support their research bids, provide capacity building to higher degree students and provide advanced collections access and navigation to partners.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

Visits to remote and regional community hubs identified a limited awareness of AIATSIS at an individual or institutional level. This most likely reaffirms the previously discussed limited scope of AIATSIS outreach programs.

Researchers in more geographically distant areas also noted difficulties in gaining access to AIATSIS services, citing geographical separation, understaffing and long waiting times as key issues. Many suggested that models be considered to promote a regional presence, for example through representatives in partner organisations who are specifically trained to access and share AIATSIS resources.

Public submissions from regional and remote bodies called for AIATSIS to focus on working with communities to preserve materials and play a central role in ensuring ethical practices are maintained across the research sector for the benefit of community members.

General public

There is little evidence to indicate that members of the general public have any greater awareness of AIATSIS and its role than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, as referenced above. Stakeholder feedback provided to the Review suggests there is an increasing need for AIATSIS to play an educational role in raising the profile of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and cultures.

International

The views of international representatives were collected primarily through the survey of AIATSIS members. The nine responses received from international members suggest similar themes to those heard from other stakeholders, namely that:

- the AIATSIS collection is recognised as the major strength of the organisation
- remote access and digitisation should be prioritised
- there are opportunities to extend partnerships with counterpart organisations in other countries.

AIATSIS members

The Review included a survey of AIATSIS members, which sought their views about the strengths, challenges and opportunities for AIATSIS, along with their future vision for the organisation. Respondents emphasised:

- *strengths:* the collection; helpful staff; capacity building; research; national positioning and information dissemination
- *challenges:* funding; maintaining a strategic focus; government relations; capacity building; staff expertise; collections access; grants and research partnerships
- *opportunities:* forming partnerships; increasing funding; raising awareness of AIATSIS; strategic positioning; management/leadership improvement; community outreach; and building its online presence
- *vision:* extending the collection; becoming a leading research and knowledges hub; building a strong public profile; focusing on partnerships and extending its geographic coverage.

Further findings from members are provided at Appendix D.

AIATSIS

AIATSIS recognises the challenge in meeting the diversity of stakeholder needs, as outlined in its *AIATSIS Portfolio Budget Statement 2013-14*:

> With many competing demands on our resources, which are already considered to be insufficient for us to meet our statutory responsibilities, we are at risk of failing to meet the expectations of our key stakeholders.
>
> *Treasury 2013, p.156*

As a consequence, AIATSIS initiated a change program throughout 2013 to:

- reorient the AIATSIS organisational structure to tie collections together and build a greater communications and finance focus
- recruit leading people to key positions, including the Deputy Principal and several new directors aligned to organisational priorities
- undertake strategic priority setting, resulting in the *Statement of Strategic Intent 2013-16*
- refresh positions on Council and Committees to bring fresh skills and leading practitioners, including election of an entirely new set of members to the Research Advisory Committee
- provide training to staff in leadership and project management
- improve reporting and accountability processes and practices.

The change program had just commenced and its impact on stakeholders was not able to be assessed at the time of the Review.

Implications and future needs

The Review TORs focus primarily on assessing AIATSIS performance in relation to its legislated functions and current activities. While the Review findings have identified specific areas of activity that can be addressed individually, they collectively suggest that the future positioning of AIATSIS within the national context requires significant adaptation, if not transformation.

Having played an important role in establishing and developing the networks and capabilities in Indigenous knowledges research, there is now a clear need for a national

leadership and capacity building role which can have a broader and leveraged impact on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies sector as a whole.

In doing this, a critical pre-requisite for AIATSIS is to unlock the full potential of its major resource—its collection of unique cultural materials. Large amounts of the collection remain untapped owing to limited accessibility for researchers, yet are critical to revitalise the culture, language and knowledges at risk of being lost as many community members age. The collection also contains materials that can support nation-building activities, changing the way the general population engages with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures. This will help address another critical gap identified by stakeholders—to encourage greater understanding in the general community of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures.

To play a greater national leadership role requires AIATSIS to strike a balance between undertaking activities itself and facilitating others where they are best placed, including in some areas that may previously have been led by AIATSIS.

In adopting a more collaborative approach, it will be important for AIATSIS to establish close links with all universities to build its own research profile as well as to provide the required capacity building support to universities, early career researchers and students. Both AIATSIS and the research sector would also benefit if links to leading academics were strengthened, for example through offering part-time appointments that both allow academics to undertake research on the AIATSIS collection as well creating pathways for AIATSIS into university faculties. Such a partnership approach would strengthen the AIATSIS research program, with the academic rigour helping to drive high quality standards, at the same time enhancing the reputations of the partnering universities and academics.

Once there is a track record for strong academic involvement and leadership in AIATSIS research, some suggested there could even be potential for AIATSIS to become a 'Learned Academy' for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, working at the forefront of national research networks. The characteristics and activities of Learned Academies are further outlined in Box 5 below.

The formation of AIATSIS as a Learned Academy would be a departure from the usual learned academy model, given it is, and is expected to remain, an Australian Government statutory authority. The existing learned academies are non-government organisations, small in size and limited in their responsibilities for undertaking research. This model does, nevertheless, present a longer-term consideration for AIATSIS and government.

Box 5 **Learned Academies in Australia**

Characteristics

- There are four Learned Academies in Australia: Australian Academy of Science, Academy of Social Sciences in Australia, Australian Academy of the Humanities and Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering. Each has been established by Royal Charter.
- The role of the Academies is to promote excellence in their respective disciplines in Australia and contribute to public policy. The Academies coordinate the promotion of research, teaching and advice in their discipline, promote national and international scholarly cooperation across disciplines and sectors, comment on national needs and priorities, and provide advice to government on issues of national importance.
- Each Academy is a non-government organisation, and members are elected as Fellows of each Academy by their peers on the basis of their exceptional contribution to knowledge in the field. A limited number are elected annually.
- The Academies receive annual establishment grants from the Commonwealth that foster research and scholarship, providing and conducting administrative support, workshops, forums and similar events that enable the Academy and its Fellows to contribute on important national

issues, managing the development and execution of policy, education and supporting relationships with international communities. They also receive donations and bequests and access additional competitive grant funding (this is seen in the development of exemplar curriculum).

- Each Academy is governed by an Executive Council and supported by a small staff: As an example, the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia has an Executive Director, Executive Manager, Program Manager (Workshops and Public Forums), Publications and Communications Manager, Program Manager (Policy and Advocacy, International), Membership Manager, Accounts Officer and Human Resource and Payroll Officer.

Activities:

- Education: promoting the teaching of the discipline at all levels, such as through the development of curriculum units (see Science by Doing) and initiatives to inform public understanding and debate.
- International collaboration: facilitating exchange and scholarships that improve links between Australian researchers and their international counterparts.
- Policy and research: facilitating the provision of expert advice to government, industry, the media, professional and community organisations.
- Publications: proceedings of the Academy, editorial boards for flagship journals, monographs and occasional papers.

It is important to note that the existing Learned Academies do not conduct research programs.

In summary, there was a strong response from stakeholders consulted that it is essential that AIATSIS continue to play a lead role in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies, for the benefit of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians. Many of the issues that led to the establishment of AIATSIS in 1964 in relation to cultural preservation remain relevant today, particularly in supporting services enabled by materials in the collection, including family history reconnection services and language revitalisation.

Stakeholders not only acknowledged that there is still more to do, but that a different focus is required. Now that there is a substantially enlarged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies sector, the key responsibility of AIATSIS is custodianship of the cultural collection. In other areas, its most effective contribution will be by continuing to build the capacity of others involved in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies across Australia.

Key Finding

Stakeholder expectations of AIATSIS vary, with few clear about all of its legislative functions or capabilities. Many stakeholders identified that AIATSIS is currently spread across many activity streams.

There are opportunities for AIATSIS to play an enhanced national leadership role by focusing its efforts on supporting and collaborating with other institutions and individuals involved in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies.

6 Strategic directions

This chapter draws together the Review findings to consider implications and provides recommendations for the role and positioning of AIATSIS.

6.1 Future directions

The Review TORs focus primarily on assessing AIATSIS performance in relation to its legislated functions and current activities. While the Review findings have identified specific areas of activity that require attention, they collectively indicate that a shift is required in the positioning of AIATSIS within the changing national Indigenous knowledges research environment.

At the outset, it is considered that AIATSIS three major existing activity streams remain broadly appropriate and should continue, though with some change in emphasis:

- *research:* setting clear research priorities that direct activities around the AIATSIS collection, and playing a collaborative role in research partnerships
- *dissemination:* leading and promoting awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' knowledges and cultures, with an emphasis on developing resources to improve understanding across the general community
- *collections:* supporting accessibility and digitising materials to remain a custodian of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' knowledge and cultural materials.

Within these streams, activities will need to be critically reviewed by AIATSIS, with increased priority given to some existing activities, while ongoing efforts in areas of limited impact will require reconsideration.

The most important and fundamental priority is for AIATSIS to unlock the full potential of its major asset—its collection of unique cultural materials. Large amounts of the collection remain untapped owing to limited accessibility for researchers, yet it is critical to revitalise the culture, language and knowledges at risk of being lost as many community members age. The collection also contains materials that can support nation-building, changing the way the general population engages with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures.

AIATSIS should also critically assess and reprioritise its current activities to give a greater focus to supporting other agencies and organisations. Having played a significant role in establishing and developing the current Indigenous knowledges sector, it is opportune for AIATSIS to shift its emphasis towards areas where it has unique capabilities and can have a broader and leveraged impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies.

While stakeholders acknowledged the pressures faced by AIATSIS in addressing its broad legislated functions in a constrained budgetary environment, they also sought clear statements of actions or intent from AIATSIS in response to these pressures, particularly in the areas of:

- *improving accessibility*: to the collection, to AIATSIS research priorities, to capacity building support, to publications and to opportunities for knowledge exchange
- *greater collaboration*: with national, state, local, community and other partners

- *enabling rather than doing*: serving as a national facilitator for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies, supported by its own work where AIATSIS is best placed
- *building researcher capacity*: providing support for researchers in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies, particularly Indigenous researchers, for priority projects across Australia.

The changes suggested in this Chapter provide AIATSIS with an opportunity to address the needs identified by stakeholders, whether communities, researchers or government. They will help prepare AIATSIS to perform its anticipated role at the helm of national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies research and cultural resources preservation. They will enable AIATSIS to draw others into action where they are best placed, and in doing so, reaffirm its value across the research and collections sectors, not only advancing its own competencies and leadership, but also supporting the capacity of others to complete and share nationally important research.

A key factor in achieving this change will be the level of trust and respect afforded by other parties across research and collections networks. This trust will need to be earned and maintained—it is not a right and cannot be mandated or guaranteed. It will be created through AIATSIS interactions with its stakeholders, and maintained through the connections and relationships that are able to be formed across a national network.

The users of AIATSIS services will benefit most from the transition, through improved and targeted research, greater access to cultural collections, and capacity building pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers. The changes outlined will also support universities, with AIATSIS playing an increasingly collaborative role. The Australian public will also benefit through improving their access to educational materials, histories, languages and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This will promote a deeper national dialogue and help shape the future directions of the nation.

6.2 Review recommendations

This section builds on the Review findings, detailing options and preferred ways forward for AIATSIS. In some cases, recommendations prompt further work by AIATSIS in areas where the Review has not been able to draw firm conclusions.

Despite limited ability to gauge funding needs through the Review, the recommendations have been drafted under the assumption that AIATSIS funding will be maintained at least at current levels while more detailed reprioritisation and strategic realignment activities are undertaken. Maintaining funding at current levels may in itself require a degree of service rationalisation to focus on areas of strength and adapt or discontinue activities of limited or lesser benefit to stakeholders. The Review notes that any further reduction in funding levels would place many of AIATSIS most core activities at severe risk, and forestall the benefits of the transition outlined.

The recommendations involve a significant degree organisational transformation, which will place demands on organisational leadership and staff skills to effect change. Adoption of the recommendations will therefore necessitate that the Council and Executive give consideration to whether external support is needed to facilitate implementation of the Review recommendations.

Term of Reference 1: AIATSIS current role and functions and future strategic directions, against its legislated objectives

Review findings

- The *Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Act* 1989 provides AIATSIS with the ability to undertake the functions considered important by its stakeholders, but its openness and breadth necessitates identification and prioritisation of a practicable set of core activities that can be delivered effectively within available funding.
- Clarification of expectations by the responsible Minister, when undertaken, has proved helpful to AIATSIS in prioritising and targeting its activities.

Suggested action

AIATSIS fulfils important national needs to preserve and raise awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures. It does so through programs that support a diversity of stakeholders across Australia and internationally. AIATSIS holds a place in the hearts of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and plays a central role in increasing the knowledge base of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies across the general community.

As a statutory authority reporting to the Minister for Education, AIATSIS plays a key role in establishing priorities to meet its legislative functions. AIATSIS current suite of programs engages a diversity of stakeholders with varying needs and expectations. The AIATSIS budget also comprises multiple program funding streams.

Given the diversity of stakeholder needs and funding streams, there is a need for Government and AIATSIS to work together to prioritise and coordinate these investments. An appropriate and accepted mechanism for this is through a Ministerial Statement of Expectations, to be developed collaboratively between the Minister for Education and AIATSIS, with AIATSIS responding through a carefully planned and resourced Statement of Intent. Given the nature of the functions and activities involved, it is anticipated that such statements would be required every three years, with the Minister to review progress in implementing the Statement with AIATSIS annually.

This process will help to build a shared understanding of the capabilities and constraints of AIATSIS, and help to coordinate and establish an achievable set of priorities. It will promote regular communication and collaboration between AIATSIS and the Minister, resulting in agreement to a consolidated set of activities that are aligned with AIATSIS and Australian Government expectations. It will also help AIATSIS to identify areas where existing funding is insufficient to meet all needs and will help to build the case for additional provision in areas of established priority.

Recommendation: Establish clear expectations and priorities

That the Australian Government:

1. *Affirm and maintain AIATSIS role as the key national cultural research agency focused on preserving and raising awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identities, knowledges and cultures.*
2. *Coordinate whole-of-government priorities for AIATSIS through the established mechanism of a Statement of Expectations from the Minister for Education. The Statement should take a three year perspective, with AIATSIS to respond with a Statement of Intent.*

Term of Reference 2: How AIATSIS meets the needs and expectations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and researchers and whether there is an unmet need

Review findings

- Stakeholder expectations of AIATSIS vary, with few clear about all of its legislative functions or capabilities. Many stakeholders identified that AIATSIS is currently spreading its efforts across too many activity streams.
- There are opportunities for AIATSIS to play an enhanced national leadership role by focusing its efforts on supporting and collaborating with other institutions and individuals involved in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies.

Suggested action

Stakeholders generally considered, and it is the conclusion of the Review, that the demands and responsibilities of the activities currently undertaken by AIATSIS exceed its resources and ability to deliver to expected service levels.

While it is inevitable that different groups will hold different perceptions the role of AIATSIS, many stakeholders are unclear when, where and how AIATSIS is able to provide support to meet their needs, which itself can result in inefficient or ineffective use of AIATSIS services. The lack of clarity about AIATSIS role reflects the diverse groups that interact with AIATSIS, the intermittent nature of outreach activities and the breadth of activities conducted by AIATSIS in responding to its legislated functions.

This highlights the need for AIATSIS to better communicate its role and priorities with stakeholders, including regarding the scope of program activities. While the Statement of Expectations/Intent will help to clarify organisational priorities and programs, there is an obligation on AIATSIS to engage with stakeholders and communities to help inform their expectations and understanding of its role.

Amongst other channels, this will require attention to the information to be provided through the AIATSIS website, including regarding its research priorities and status, publications in development, new or digitised collections materials and upcoming events. It will also require regular and enhanced communication with members and others involved with the work of AIATSIS.

Recommendation: Communicate and engage with stakeholders

That AIATSIS:

3. *Develop and implement a stakeholder and community engagement strategy to build awareness of AIATSIS role, priorities and programs among key stakeholders.*

Term of Reference 3: AIATSIS role in supporting the Australian research sector, promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies and developing the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers

Review findings

- The field of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies is multi-disciplinary, complex and difficult to define.
- AIATSIS has been instrumental in building capabilities across the field of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies over the past fifty years, but there would be merit in it reconsidering how its services can best meet the requirements of the evolving research sector.

Suggested action

The Review acknowledges the significant role played by AIATSIS in helping to grow the size and capacity of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies research sector in Australia. As a result Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies research is now widely distributed across universities, institutions and individuals with expertise in research activities.

As such, there is a need for AIATSIS to consider where its current role in research is having the greatest impact, whether in:

- supporting policy research on behalf of for the Australian Government to influence leading directions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- targeting specific research topics in areas of existing strength, such as native title and languages
- allowing researchers to select their research topics based on individual expertise
- conducting research that is attracted only through contracted provision, including by the Australian Government and major grant programs.

A critical assessment of these options against the current state of Indigenous studies and research across Australia will help to focus its research efforts. One area of priority identified in the Review is for AIATSIS to link its research explicitly to its collection of over one million cultural materials. This is not just research in relation to use or development of the cultural collection but also research the collection itself generates for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities or the general community. Examples of research activities of this type relate to native title, which has played a leading role over the past 20 years by drawing on resources within the collection, and languages reconnection services, which have supported the development of the National Curriculum.

Recommendation: Review research strategy

That AIATSIS:

4. *Research and prepare a report on the current state of Indigenous studies and research across the Australian higher education and research community, and review its strategy in that context.*

Term of Reference 4: The nature of its current relationships with universities and a framework for possible future roles in supporting researchers, higher degree by research students, research supervisors and career researchers in areas of Indigenous studies

Review findings

- AIATSIS has played a key role in helping to develop a cohort of leading and influential Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, but there remain significant unmet needs across the university sector to support students and early career researchers.
- AIATSIS provides a valuable collaborative role with universities through research partnership and networks, but the level of and nature of its current involvement is variable across universities.
- The relative roles and responsibilities between universities, the National Indigenous Researchers and Knowledges Network (NIRAKN) and AIATSIS in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have some overlap and require further clarification.

Suggested action

While AIATSIS has played a leading role in the field of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies over the past fifty years, the national research environment has evolved significantly over that time. The university sector has expanded its reach and involvement in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies. Large-scale research projects are facilitated through funding from the ARC, NHMRC and cooperative research centres, for example.

An important need now is for AIATSIS work with universities to help further build and sustain the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and researchers, particularly those undertaking higher degree by research studies and for early career researchers. While the IVRF is an option in this regard, its influence has been concentrated. Broader impact will require AIATSIS to consider the development of support activities that could improve the capacity of a larger number of students across universities, potentially through developing guidance for supervisors or providing select mentoring support. This area also requires further specific consideration of the networking and capacity building role being undertaken by NIRAKN.

With the suspension of the AIATSIS research grants program, there is a perception among university stakeholders that AIATSIS has become less connected to research practice at universities.

One option for AIATSIS to connect more closely with universities could be through establishing Adjunct Chair positions, open to leading academics in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies. These positions could offer academics part time employment at AIATSIS while maintaining their substantive positions at university. It is anticipated that leading academics will be attracted to the opportunity to work closely with researchers at AIATSIS and to undertake research projects that draw on the AIATSIS collection. This model would also serve to extend the capacity of AIATSIS researchers and draw closer links between AIATSIS and the university sector, and could also encourage wider research collaborations. The Review notes that there are resource and cost implications associated with this option that require further investigation as part of its design and implementation.

Another option is a program that provides advanced collections access to universities on a fee-for-service basis. This could draw together several existing AIATSIS activities into a package of services including:

- extended access to the collection beyond standard opening hours, including access to a reference librarian to enable rapid access to materials
- a short term residential program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers to undertake research on the collection
- research skills training for higher degree by research students or early career researchers by leading AIATSIS research staff.

Factors that would need to be addressed in establishing a fee-for-service program, include: dealing with perceptions of exclusivity based on ability to pay; preferential treatment linked for example to proximity; and any impacts on service levels for non-fee paying clients. Such a program would also incur costs during the establishment and marketing phase and requires further testing with universities regarding desirability and willingness to pay to support the services. For this reason, it has not been included as an explicit recommendation, but is suggested for further investigation amongst other options.

Recommendations: Strengthen research relationships and collaborations

That the Department of Education:

5. *Work with AIATSIS, universities, NHMRC, ARC and NIRAKN to consider their roles and opportunities for effective collaboration.*

That AIATSIS:

6. *Promote more collaborative research involvement between AIATSIS and universities, including increasing the use of the AIATSIS cultural collection. Consider developing a business and funding case for establishing part-time Adjunct Chair positions within AIATSIS for leading university academics in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies.*

Term of Reference 5: The role of AIATSIS in maintaining and promoting the highest standards in ethical research with Indigenous peoples and Indigenous collections management

Review findings

- AIATSIS has played a lead role in developing and supporting ethical research practice, and its Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies (GERAIS) are respected nationally and internationally.
- There remains potential for wider application of the *GERAIS* by publicly funded research agencies, universities and researchers.

Suggested action

The Review supports the findings of the *Behrendt Review* that while the AIATSIS ethical guidelines are well-known and highly regarded, further guidance material is required to support researchers and Human Research Ethics Committees (HRECs) at universities to better apply the guidelines.

Adoption of the guidelines can also be supported more strongly by the Australian Government. Whereas the NHMRC requires its grantees to apply the NHMRC ethical research guidelines for all Indigenous research through contract conditions, there is no such requirement for ARC grant recipients in areas of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies research to similarly apply the AIATSIS guidelines. Further, as identified through the *Behrendt Review*, the guidelines could be adopted more strongly for research undertaken by government, including Publicly Funded Research Agencies.

With the AIATSIS grants program suspended, the AIATSIS Research Ethics Committee (REC) has trialled new service streams, including serving as an ethics review body. Considering the enlarged and nationally dispersed nature of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies research, the Review considers that, rather than operate as research ethics approval committee itself, AIATSIS can have a more influential role by helping improve the knowledge and practice of HRECs within universities and other institutions across Australia. This would include establishing guidance materials and providing support services to improve knowledge, awareness and application of its guidelines. AIATSIS should also work with NIRAKN to promote appropriate use of the guidelines across the university sector.

Recommendations: Promote wider application of the Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies

That the Australian Government:

7. *Endorse the wider application of the AIATSIS Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies, for example through the ARC Discovery Indigenous grants program and for research undertaken by the Australian Government agencies with or relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.*

That AIATSIS:

8. *Work with universities and NIRAKN to encourage adoption of the Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies as a standard for ethical research in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies. Develop, and make available, guidance materials and support services for human research ethics*

committees and researchers in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies to support application of the Guidelines.

Term of Reference 6: The impact and cost effectiveness of the AIATSIS managed grant program (and the Research Grants) and the Indigenous Visiting Research Fellowships employment program

Review findings

- From 1964 until its suspension in 2012, the AIATSIS research grants program was an important enabler of research in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies, and played a key role in building the AIATSIS collection.
- Prior to its suspension, the limited proportion of grant funding able to be allocated relative to administration costs reduced the overall cost-effectiveness of the program.
- The suspension of the grants program continues to be felt strongly by community researchers/academics, who consider that there are few alternative avenues to attract small-scale research funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies.
- The Indigenous Visiting Research Fellowship (IVRF) program provides intensive supervisory and financial support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to complete their studies. While the reach and scope of the IVRF program is limited to a small proportion of the growing number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and early career researchers, it has had a positive influence and should be studied for the broader lessons it contains.

Suggested action

Prior to its suspension in 2012, the AIATSIS research grants program was a long-standing program of AIATSIS that supported researchers across the field of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies. A decade before its suspension, the program distributed over $1.4 million in funding per annum, but fell to below $700,000 from 2003-04 onwards.

There was a strong reaction, particularly amongst community researchers, to the program's suspension. For many, the grants program filled a need that could not be met through other funding channels. A detailed scan of the grant environment for community and university research is therefore required to more thoroughly identify the need for reinstatement of the grants program relative to other funding channels. As this is beyond the scope of this Review, no explicit recommendation is able to be made with regard to the re-introduction of the grants program. The funding implications of reintroducing the grants program, if justified, would also need to be considered, whether through re-prioritisation of existing funding or seeking additional funding.

The IVRF program has been allocated a three year funding extension through the Step Up program and will therefore continue to 2015-16. To date the IVRF program has supported some 24 participants. As there are a now larger number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and researchers across the university and research sectors, the Review believes that it will be important for AIATSIS to prioritise whether its greatest impact from investment beyond current funding extension will be through the provision of intensive support (IVRF model) or through broader support as identified in Recommendations 4 and 5.

Recommendation: Identify community based research needs

That the Australian Government:

9. *Consider whether current research grants in the major funding streams (i.e. ARC and NHMRC) are being made available, as appropriate, to community based*

research, and whether there is a role for AIATSIS in the prioritisation and distribution of funding to support community research.

Recommendation: Review the Indigenous Visiting Research Fellowship (IVRF) program

That AIATSIS:

10. *Subject to funding, continue the IVRF program in the short term and review the ongoing need for the IVRF program relative to the other capacity building services across the tertiary education sector that should be supporting successful degree outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers.*

Term of Reference 7: The place of AIATSIS in conducting and facilitating research in Indigenous knowledge and community based research

Review findings

- There is a general lack of awareness and understanding among stakeholders about the purpose, focus and priorities for AIATSIS research program.
- While there are many demands on AIATSIS to contribute to emerging areas of research, its unique collection provides it with a key point of difference from other Australian research organisations.
- There is potential in the medium to long term for AIATSIS to play a stronger role in helping to guide or advise on national research priorities in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies.

Suggested action

AIATSIS maintains capability to undertake research in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies through two separate divisions—Indigenous Country and Governance and Indigenous Social and Cultural Wellbeing. The Review found that the rationale for these divisions and their research priorities is not well documented or understood by stakeholders. The AIATSIS research strategy requires clearer articulation and communication.

As discussed in Recommendation 4, the Review believes that a significant focus of the research program should be on research that draws on and builds the cultural collection. This will increase the use of the collection, utilise AIATSIS unique strengths in this area, and encourage further research on the collection. Research in new and emerging areas not related to the AIATSIS collection should be subject to agreement with government and specified in the Statement of Expectations/Intent, as outlined in Recommendation 2. It will also be important that AIATSIS documents and makes readily available its annual research priorities and program.

The Review also considered stakeholder requests for AIATSIS to undertake a greater role in setting national research priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies nationally. These included providing guidance to the ARC (and in some cases the NHMRC) for allocation of competitive grant funding to support a nationally focused Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies research effort.

Such considerations are however beyond the scope of this Review and would require significant extension to the current functions of AIATSIS, as well as having implications for the other agencies. In particular, they would most likely conflict AIATSIS from participating in collaborative bids for research grants. The Review recommendation therefore focuses on the need for AIATSIS to prioritise and focus its research activities around its collection.

Recommendation: Undertake research that draws on or develops the AIATSIS cultural collection

That AIATSIS:

11. *Develop and publicise strategic research directions informed by the continued use, targeted research, growth and development of its unique collection.*

Term of Reference 8: The promotional role of AIATSIS in encouraging a greater understanding in the general community of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (including through the provision of information, publications and outreach activities)

Review findings

- AIATSIS provides valued options and channels for disseminating research and publications that may not otherwise be published, although limited in scale and reach.
- Many stakeholders identified a need for AIATSIS to continue seeking cost effective ways to encourage understanding, in the general community, of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies, including through preparing educational resources.
- Current AIATSIS community outreach activities are valued where they occur, but their extent and scope is limited largely by their relatively high cost.

Suggested action

There is a need for AIATSIS to share research and collections materials. It should continue to provide or facilitate publication avenues for researchers and other parties involved in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies, particularly through digital formats that can have greater reach and impact.

AIATSIS should also investigate opportunities to more actively inform the general community about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and knowledges, including by translating the research conducted into information resources about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, cultures, histories and societies. One option to consider in this area is to increase its audience through preparing materials for educational purposes at the secondary and tertiary levels.

It is clear that the information and materials within the AIATSIS collection are held dear by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities. At the same time, there was a strong perception that these materials are only accessible to those in and around Canberra, with travel time and cost to visit prohibitive for many remote users, particularly for elderly community members who form the closest connections to the past.

AIATSIS delivers a program of outreach activities to make the collection accessible to more remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. These activities are, however, costly and resource intensive. They require significant staff time pre-visit for material collection and preparation, travel time and costs for upwards of five AIATSIS staff for each visit, and often require follow-up activities to copy and share materials identified by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. These costs mean that the frequency of visits and the ability to share materials from the collection are necessarily limited, and therefore inaccessible to many potential Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members.

The Review considers that other community-facing activities need to be investigated for promoting greater and cost effective access to the collection to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia. Options include in-reach (supporting selected community members to visit AIATSIS) or leveraging closer partnerships with local collections agencies to hold and share materials relevant to local peoples.

Recommendation: Emphasise broad understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures

That AIATSIS:

12. *More fully develop materials that strengthen online communications and identify community engagement opportunities to build general community understanding of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and knowledges. This may include collating, indexing, repackaging and presenting information about languages, cultures, histories and societies, drawing on materials held within the AIATSIS collection.*

Recommendation: Review community outreach models

That AIATSIS:

13. *Consider models to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, for example through community access visits, sharing materials through local collections agencies or supporting community visits to AIATSIS. Develop detailed costing proposals where required (e.g. community visits).*

Term of Reference 9: AIATSIS role in preserving and disseminating information and knowledge about its cultural collection and how the collection can be best utilised and preserved including through digitisation

Review findings

- The AIATSIS cultural collection is widely valued as critical to the preservation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' knowledges and cultural materials.
- The resources currently applied to managing the AIATSIS collection are insufficient to promote the level of accessibility desired by users. Access is restricted by factors including AIATSIS Canberra location, limited library opening hours and sometimes lengthy document retrieval times.
- AIATSIS depositor and access protocols help to manage the cultural collection in ways that acknowledge the cultural significance of items, but can impact the perceived accessibility of the collection.

Suggested action

The effort directed by AIATSIS towards management of the collection is essential to maintain its accessibility for researchers and other users. Many stakeholders, however, identified access challenges, even for those able to visit the collection. The restricted library opening hours, sometimes lengthy document retrieval times and need for appointments to access audiovisual items has made access more difficult.

It is therefore important that to increase effort on promoting the accessibility of the collection, not only to those visiting AIATSIS in person, but also to remote users. Greater information than was available to the Review is required to identify existing resource effort or to suggest the changes required to resource allocation in this regard. Where additional funding will need to be sought, this should be subject to approval by government to meet access levels specified in the Statement of Expectations/Intent, as outlined in Recommendation 2.

In relation to the impact of depositor and access protocols, AIATSIS is aware of this issue and is taking steps to reduce unnecessary access restrictions, with the aim of improving openness to users while continuing to respect appropriate cultural practices. At the time of the Review, AIATSIS was examining access arrangements and updating access policies, with consideration of relevant legal and cultural aspects.

Recommendation: Expand access to the AIATSIS cultural collection

That AIATSIS:

14. *Expand user access to the AIATSIS collection, through reducing waiting times, assisting collections navigation, extending the AIATSIS library hours and strengthening online access. Undertake work to identify best practice, including international best practice, for the management and accessibility of research collections.*

Term of Reference 10: Strategies for the expansion, maintenance and management of the digitisation of the cultural resource collection in order to preserve it and make it available to Indigenous communities and individuals and students and researchers

Review findings

- Digitisation is critical for the preservation of aging materials within the AIATSIS cultural collection. This requires continuation of intensive efforts to digitise high priority materials, and ongoing efforts to manage the digitisation of AIATSIS growing collection.
- Users expect that digitised materials will play a role in improving accessibility of the AIATSIS collection, including remote access.
- The expiry of digitisation funding presents a risk that some cultural materials and records will be lost or inaccessible to future generations.

Suggested action

As with collections management previously, digitisation of materials represents a large and ongoing workload. It is an essential investment in order to preserve items that may otherwise be lost. Digitisation can also play a role in improving accessibility, allowing materials more easily able to be shared. Given the scale of the AIATSIS collection and the age of many items, there is a critical mass of digitisation work required over the next decade. An operational challenge over this period is to plan for and commence sharing materials that have already been digitised and to manage user expectations for broader access while the digitisation process continues.

AIATSIS digitisation infrastructure has been established on the basis of an investment by the Australian Government of approximately $3.2 million per annum, due to expire in mid-2014. Given there is a four year backlog of even the highest priority materials, this is considered the minimum investment required over the short to medium term to continue the digitisation of the most vulnerable materials. Further, the cultural collection is growing annually so the digitisation that is currently funded through non-recurrent appropriations should be formalised into longer-term appropriations. The actual level of ongoing funding requires a specific and detailed analysis of the future scale of the digitisation task.

It is also noted that many other national collections institutions also have similar digitisation requirements. While beyond the Review's TORs, the Australian Government could in the longer term consider whether it could achieve economies of scale through establishing a national network of collaborative digitisation infrastructure capability which all collections institutions could access.

Recommendation: Continue and fast-track the digitisation program

That the Australian Government:

15. *In the short term, continue funding digitisation of the cultural collection at current levels ($3.2 million per annum) to address the most vulnerable materials, and seek from AIATSIS a more detailed analysis of the annual appropriations funding required for ongoing digitisation activities.*

That AIATSIS:

16. *Continue to identify and implement digitisation activities for the most vulnerable materials within the cultural collection. Determine the urgency, timing, needs and expected outcomes of digitisation and work with the Australian Government to establish an appropriate longer term annual appropriation for the task.*

Term of Reference 11: Whether current circumstances and demands warrant any changes in structure, governance and/or funding to equip AIATSIS to effectively undertake its mission

Review findings

- AIATSIS has well-established corporate governance processes and practices to support its decision making and operations, but its committee structures need to adapt to match organisational priorities.
- AIATSIS membership represents the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies research community, though many members are unclear about the benefits of membership or opportunities for engagement.
- AIATSIS funding comprises a number of non-recurrent grants, from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, resulting in uncertainty regarding AIATSIS long term resource base.
- AIATSIS has faced increasing difficulty in delivering its current programs at expected levels of service within current funding.
- Monitoring of organisational outputs and outcomes in relation to investment is at a high level and limited, rendering it difficult to assess and communicate return on effort and to support additional funding for program investment.

Suggested action

The final TOR seeks to identify whether changes are needed to AIATSIS structure, governance or funding to undertake its role. The critical first step in this assessment is to agree to the future role of AIATSIS, with consideration for Review suggestions. The previous findings and recommendations identify adaptations to strengthen AIATSIS structures and governance.

Implementing the recommendations will require changes to AIATSIS current practices, either in relation to its operating models for service delivery, program mix or funding allocation. In this regard, the Review endorses the views of Moreton Consulting of the need for Council to strengthen its focus on future directions and to include a mix of people with the appropriate skills and experience to develop organisational strategy and priorities that position the Institute to best meet the needs of stakeholders within available funding. This may also include considering whether external assistance is required to assist with effecting the organisational change associated with the Review recommendations.

The AIATSIS committee structure also needs to be adaptable to changing needs across the organisation. This may involve some consolidation, such as the merging of the Research Advisory and Ethics Advisory Committees in the absence of the AIATSIS grants program. It is also important that AIATIS reinvigorate its ageing membership and provide greater avenues for mutual engagement.

In relation to funding, the Review has clearly identified that AIATSIS is not able to provide its current range of services to the service levels expected within its current budget. This raises the question of whether funding should be increased or the range of services should be decreased or both. This cannot be answered independently or ahead of settling the future direction and priorities for AIATSIS. Once these and the expected outcomes are agreed, further and more detailed work will be required to establish delivery models and to quantify the resources required.

As a general principle, the Review considers that there are opportunities to more effectively allocate AIATSIS resources and effort on the basis of relative need and priority. As

previously discussed, many external stakeholders acknowledged that its overall level of funding presents challenges for AIATSIS across its service streams, but considered that funding constraints should also be used by AIATSIS as the impetus to rationalise the range of services it undertakes and to concentrate available funding on the areas of greatest need.

The Review has suggested some areas where AIATSIS can adapt or reduce the scope of its activities to changing circumstances. At the same time, some of its critical functions, such as collections management and digitisation, are likely to require increased levels of funding in the coming years. The Review has also suggested areas where AIATSIS could explore options to generate additional funding through fee-for-service provision, philanthropy and partnerships.

In order to assist with business planning and establishing rigorous cases for its future activities, it is important that AIATSIS is able to measure and monitor its activities and performance to a greater extent than at present. The Review found that organisational and program monitoring is undertaken at a high level that does not readily capture information to aid in the measurement of outputs and outcomes. This creates difficulties for AIATSIS in promoting its achievements to funders and stakeholders. Improved service monitoring has the potential to increase productivity and priority-setting across AIATSIS, by ensuring activities are targeted towards clear and measurable goals.

Recommendation: Adapt committees and membership

That AIATSIS:

17. *Review its Committee Structures and consider the ongoing need for the Native Title and Publishing Advisory Committees of Council.*
18. *Review AIATSIS membership composition with a view to increasing involvement by younger researchers and other parties with an interest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies.*

Recommendation: Attract additional or co-funding

That AIATSIS:

19. *Establish a clear organisation strategy to meet statutory obligations within the context of changed technology and stakeholder requirements and identify any funding requirements for later government consideration.*
20. *Where appropriate, continue to investigate and implement mechanisms to attract additional funding through fee-for-service activities, partnerships and philanthropy.*

Recommendation: Enhance performance monitoring

That AIATSIS:

21. *Identify and track a set of key performance indicators to measure and report on progress against organisational priorities, along with processes to elicit user feedback across AIATSIS service streams. This will further position AIATSIS for the pending Public Governance, Performance and Accountability (PGPA) Act, scheduled for introduction in July 2014.*

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National Library of Australia Act 1960 (Commonwealth)

National Museum of Australia Act 1980 (Commonwealth)

Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 (Commonwealth)

Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Commonwealth)

Science and Industry Research Act 1949 (Commonwealth)

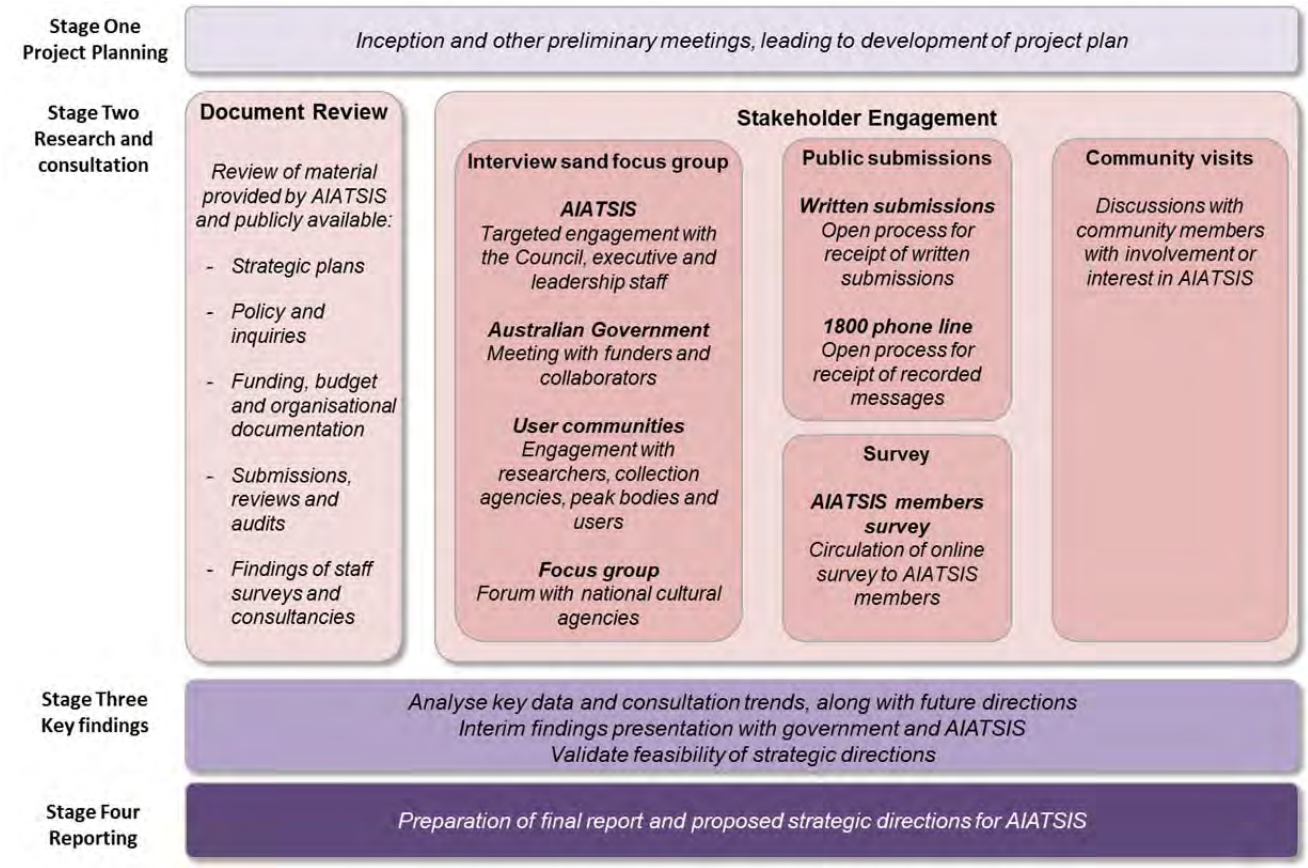
Appendix A Review method, stakeholders interviewed and key questions

A.1 Methodology

The Review involved four stages of work, as shown in Figure A1. The majority of the data collection was undertaken between mid-August and mid-September. The Federal Election in September, change of government and subsequent period of uncertainty regarding the lead agency for oversight of AIATSIS has resulted in some delays in stages three and four.

Major activities in each of these stages are detailed further in the sections that follow.

Figure A1 **Overview of Review methodology**



Source: ACIL Allen Consulting 2014

Approach to stage one – project planning

The first stage of work oriented the team to the project and involved introductory discussions with the former DIICCSTE, the reference group, AIATSIS and a number of key informants with background to AIASTIS.

This stage also involved preparation and approval of data collection tools to be used throughout stage two, including: tailored guides for interview questions; a discussion guide for public submissions; survey questions for AIATSIS members; a guide for community

visits; lists of stakeholders to be consulted; and a document request list for AIATSIS. This information was accompanied by a detailed project plan.

Further, the Review developed questions to test each of the TOR. These are shown in Section A.2. Finally, a Review website was established to provide interested parties with further information and share public submissions.

Approach to stage two – research and consultation

Stage two involved the conduct of data collection, including through stakeholder engagement (interviews, a public submissions process, a survey of AIATSIS members, community visits) and document review.

Interviews

Interviews were held with three broad stakeholder groups:

- *AIATSIS representatives:* the Council, executive, selection of committees and divisional staff members
- *government representatives*: agencies and government departments involved with AIATSIS, often as funders
- *user communities:* universities, researchers, collections agencies, Indigenous peak bodies and other groups with an interest in and connection to AIATSIS.

A focus group was also held with national collecting agencies. A full list of organisations interviewed is provided in Section A.1. .

Survey

Each AIATSIS member was emailed an invitation to complete an online survey regarding the role of AIATSIS, effectiveness/importance of various AIATSIS activities, benefits of membership and areas for improvement.

Of AIATSIS 530 members, 131 (24.7 per cent) responded to the survey. A summary of the AIATSIS survey results are provided in Appendix D.

Public submissions

A public submissions process was established to provide a mechanism for organisations and individuals to share their views about the performance and future directions of AIATSIS. The discussion guide was circulated via the AIATSIS website, through direct letters to vice-chancellors at each of Australia's universities, on the Review website and in an advertisement in the Koori Mail.

The public submissions process included the additional avenue of a 1800 telephone portal, which allowed respondents to record a voice message.

In total, the Review received:

- 38 written submissions
- one recorded voice message.

Five of written submissions sought to withhold their identities. A summary of the major comments and concerns from each submission is outlined in Appendix E.

Community visits

Community visits were designed to gain on the ground insight into needs and perceptions about the past, present and future role of AIATSIS. The community visits involved participation in interviews and focus groups by community leaders, users of AIATSIS services, researchers, university representatives, research institutions and collections agencies.

The locations visited were:

- Cairns, North Queensland
- Perth, Western Australia
- Broome, Western Australia.

Additional discussions were held with stakeholders from Brisbane, Kempsey, Alice Springs and the Torres Strait Islands.

Document review

Documentation about AIATSIS was collected and analysed, including:

- AIATSIS *Statement of Strategic Intent 2013* and past strategic directions and planning documents
- A series of issues papers and case studies prepared by AIATSIS for the Review to provide further information about organisational activities
- Statements of Expectation from the Minister and response from AIATSIS (2010)
- Financial and budget information
- AIATSIS annual staff survey results 2012 and 2013
- Quarterly reports for each AIATSIS division for 2012-13
- AIATSIS Annual Reports 2012 and 2013
- AIATSIS submissions to policy reviews
- the AIATSIS website
- Reports from prior AIATSIS consultancies
- AIATSIS legislation and second reading speeches – 1964 and 1989
- Academic and research papers
- National cultural, research and Indigenous affairs policy directions.

Approach to stage three – key findings

This stage involved analysis of information collected in stage two, preparation of interim findings and testing of findings with various stakeholders.

Qualitative data gathered through interviews, surveys and public submissions were categorised into themes linked to the TOR. These themes were coded into nodes through NVivo for ease of analysis. Quantitative data from surveys and other documentation were also analysed.

Interim findings and preliminary ideas regarding future directions were stress tested separately with representatives from government, the reference group and AIATSIS.

Approach to stage four – reporting

This report was subsequently prepared for review and comment by the reference group, government representatives and AIATSIS. It has been drafted in a format appropriate for public release, should this be desired by the Minister.

A.1 Stakeholders interviewed

The following organisations participated in Review consultations. A number of community researchers were also consulted, but are not identified below.

- Attorney General's Department (incorporating the Office for the Arts—formerly part of the Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport (DRALGAS))
- Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies:
  - Council
  - Research Advisory Committee
  - Research Ethics Committee
  - Finance and Risk Committee
  - Principal
  - Deputy Principal
  - Executive Board of Management (Indigenous country and governance; Indigenous social and cultural wellbeing; Aboriginal studies press; library and audio-visual archive; communications; executive and corporate strategy; chief financial officer; corporate services)
- Australian Research Council
- Central Australian Stolen Generations and Families Aboriginal Corporation
- Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (Commonwealth)
- Department of Health and Ageing (Commonwealth)
- Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (Commonwealth)
- Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (Commonwealth)
- Djabugay Native Title Aboriginal Corporation
- Kimberley Language Resource Centre
- Kimberley Land Council
- The Lowitja Institute
- National Archives of Australia
- National Film and Sound Archive
- National Health and Medical Research Council
- National Library of Australia
- National Museum of Australia
- National Native Title Council
- Native Title Services Victoria
- National Indigenous Research and Knowledges Network
- North Queensland Land Council
- State Library of Queensland

— Torres Strait Islanders' Regional Education Council
— University of Adelaide
— University of Melbourne
— University of Notre Dame Australia
— University of Tasmania
— Yawuru (Yawuru people of Western Australia)

A.2 Key research questions

Review activities focused on collecting information against key research questions developed to address each element of the TOR.

Table A1 **Review questions**

Term of Reference	Research questions
1. AIATSIS current role and functions and future strategic directions, against its legislated objectives	▪ Which of its legislated objectives is AIATSIS undertaking, and how? ▪ How effective is AIATSIS in fulfilling its statutory functions? ▪ Do AIATSIS legislated objectives continue to capture its current and future intended directions? If not, what activities should be included?
2. How AIATSIS meets the needs and expectations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and researchers and whether there is an unmet need	▪ Which communities and researcher groups does AIATSIS seek to service? What do these groups expect AIATSIS to do? ▪ What are the needs and expectations among communities and researcher groups? ▪ Are there gaps between expectations and actual performance, and if so, what is the reason for these gaps (eg. budget, resourcing, internal capabilities, alternate priorities)? ▪ How can AIATSIS more effectively meet stakeholder needs in communities served?
3. AIATSIS role in supporting the Australian research sector, promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies and developing the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers	▪ What role does AIATSIS currently play in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies? Do stakeholders consider this to be an appropriate role? ▪ How does AIATSIS develop the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers? How do other research agencies promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies and Indigenous researchers? ▪ What future role should AIATSIS play in supporting researchers?
4. The nature of its current relationships with universities and a framework for possible future roles in supporting researchers, higher degree by research students, research supervisors and career researchers in areas of Indigenous studies	▪ What role does AIATSIS currently play with universities? What role should AIATSIS play in supporting Indigenous studies and Indigenous students? ▪ What are the strengths and weaknesses of existing activities? ▪ What other activities could be undertaken to support researchers, supervision and higher degree training for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies?
5. The role of AIATSIS in maintaining and promoting the highest standards in ethical research with Indigenous peoples and Indigenous collections management	▪ What role does AIATSIS play in developing and monitoring performance under the *Ethical Guidelines for Research in Indigenous Studies*? What is AIATSIS role relative to other agencies promoting ethical research practice? ▪ What role should AIATSIS play in producing guidelines for ethical research with Indigenous peoples and Indigenous collections management? How does AIATSIS perceive its own role in this area? ▪ What other ethical research processes exist around Australia? Do these embed the *Ethical Guidelines*? If not, do opportunities exist for AIATSIS to improve its impact in this area?
6. The impact and cost effectiveness of the AIATSIS managed grant program (and the Research Grants) and the Indigenous Visiting Research Fellowships employment program	▪ What conditions and processes exist for grants AIATSIS grant programs? ▪ How many applicants applied for grants, and what value of funding was sought? Which individuals or organisations are applying for grants? ▪ Is grants allocation considered a critical role? If so, what types of grants more effectively support AIATSIS forward objectives? ▪ What is the balance of grant allocation between Indigenous researchers and research by non-Indigenous peoples in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies? What would be an appropriate mix in future?
7. The place of AIATSIS in conducting and facilitating research in Indigenous knowledge and community based research	▪ What areas of research are suited to direct involvement by AIATSIS? ▪ What other organisations are involved in conducting and facilitating research in similar areas? ▪ What staff profile (skills & knowledge) and level of funding is required to support knowledge and community based research? How efficient is the research undertaken?

Term of Reference	Research questions
8. The promotional role of AIATSIS in encouraging a greater understanding in the general community of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (including through the provision of information, publications and outreach activities)	▪ Who is the target audience for AIATSIS communications activities? To what extent is AIATSIS reaching its target audience? What methods of communication are most appropriate for future focus? ▪ What media (website, publications, face-to-face) does AIATSIS use for its promotional activities? ▪ What is the impact of AIATSIS promotional work? ▪ How cost-efficient are AIATSIS communications approaches?
9. AIATSIS role in preserving and disseminating information and knowledge about its cultural collection and how the collection can be best utilised and preserved including through digitisation	▪ What is the condition of the collection in relation to its size, location, preservation and asset management? ▪ How does AIATSIS publicise its cultural collection? How can its usage and impact be increased? ▪ How do AIATSIS partners (e.g. museums and other cultural bodies) use, support or complement the collection? ▪ What role should the collection play in future? ▪ How efficient are practices in collections management?
10. Strategies for the expansion, maintenance and management of the digitisation of the cultural resource collection in order to preserve it and make it available to Indigenous communities and individuals and students and researchers	▪ What options exist to further maintain and expand the collection? ▪ What options exist to make the collection more accessible to Indigenous communities and individuals and students and researchers? ▪ What are the costs associated with digitisation of the collection in comparison to the long-term benefits? How can digitisation improve accessibility?
11. Whether current circumstances and demands warrant any changes in structure, governance and/or funding to equip AIATSIS to effectively undertake its mission	▪ What are the current structures, governance, legislative, policy and funding circumstances influencing the way that AIATSIS operates? ▪ What are the barriers and enablers for AIATSIS to effectively perform its role? ▪ How could structures, governance, legislative, policy and funding circumstances be changed to better support AIATSIS to perform in its role? ▪ How does AIATSIS meet funding requirements for alignment with strategic policy, integration, efficiency, effectiveness and appropriateness?

Source: ACIL Allen Consulting 2014

Appendix B List of AIATSIS activities

In pursuing its legislated functions, AIATSIS is involved in a large number of distinct but often interrelated activities. These are outlined in Table B1 and categorised according to their primary fit relating to the functions of research, dissemination, collections and corporate areas. This reflects point in time activities in September 2013.

Table B1 **List of AIATSIS activities**

Research		
Ethics – granting clearance	Research – native title: agreements and decision-making	Language and culture revitalisation
Ethics – guidelines	Research – native title: land use planning and development	Contracts for research tenders – pre and post award management
Ethics – national leadership	Research – native title: land and water management	Research – languages: national Indigenous Languages Survey, (NILS)
Ethics – web resources	Research – native title: legal analysis	International presence – conference attendance and presentations/visits to like organisations
NIRAKN – node leader for history, politics and culture	Research – land and water: joint management	Language outreach – workshops with communities
Collaborative Research Network collaboration – Batchelor Institute	Research – land and water: cultural water management	Research – health and wellbeing: Stolen Generations three country study
ARC collaboration – Blackwords	Research – land and water: climate change governance	Research – health and wellbeing: Stolen Generations research
ARC collaboration – Justice reinvestment	Research – governance: Indigenous dispute management and decision making	Native title – Prescribed Bodies Corporate support
ARC collaboration – War veterans	Research – governance: facilitation and mediation	Native title – legal precedents database
ARC Collaboration – Repatriation	Submissions to legal and policy reviews	Research – collation of all research by AIATSIS 2009 to 2013. Prior audit of research publications
ARC collaboration – Agreements Treaties and Negotiated Settlements project	Conference papers and presentations	Research – climate change adaptation project
Collaboration – Lowitja Institute	Visiting Fellows (eminent adjunct scholars)	Research – health and wellbeing: health: risky behaviours
Collaboration – Humanities Network Infrastructure	Indigenous employment within AIATSIS	Research – health and wellbeing: screening tools
Project partner – Ninti One Cooperative Research Centre for Remote Economic Participation	Pathways – Indigenous visiting research fellowship	Research – health and wellbeing: Indigenous men's health
PFRA research impact working group	Internships	Research – health and wellbeing: health: cancer
Australian curriculum development – languages	Supervision of higher degree students	Research – identity and deficit discourse
Research – native title: post determination environment	Research – seeking external contracts for project work	Research – Education: children's literacy
Research – native title: corporate design and economic activity	Cultural competency guidelines	Research – cultural expression: visual histories
Research – cultural heritage protection		
Dissemination		
AIATSIS seminars	Access & client services – Creating language bibliographies	Online services – Creation of web content, including videos about collection items and processes
Workshops and symposia	Access & client services – Creating subject guides	Collections staff attending and presenting papers and conferences and seminars
National Indigenous Studies conference (biennial)	Access & client services – Liaising with copyright owners and Indigenous cultural and intellectual property owners	Hosting interns and visitors and conducting tours
Native title conference (annual)	Access & client services – Interlibrary loans and document supply for libraries	Publications – ASP – six new titles per annum (trade)

Access & client services – Return of Materials to Indigenous Communities (ROMTIC) (reactive)	Access & client services – Document supply for individuals in Australia and overseas	Publications – ASP e-publication formats
Access & client services – Findin Your Mob family history fee for service	Access & client services – Library orientation and information literacy training for clients and staff	Publishing: Stanner award for Indigenous writers (biennial)
Access & client services – Exhibitions at AIATSIS and offsite	Access & client services – Family History Unit – Link-Up, accredited training course; enquiry service; case reviews for Link-Up organisations; the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Biographical Index (ABI)	Publishing: Teaching resources
Access & client services – Services to onsite users of the Collections	Access & client services – Collections displays at events, e.g. the Native Title Conference	Publishing: Editorial training
Access & client services – Responding to reference requests from internal and external clients	Online services – AIATSIS Library Facebook page	Publications – AIATSIS research publications (Free online)
Access & client services – Responding to remote client requests to access the Collections	Online services – Online exhibitions	Publications – maintain ASP author and subscriber network including- e-newsletter to 200 subscribers, Biannual newsletter to authors/royalty recipients
Collections		
Infrastructure – Management of Mura® catalogue	Collection management – Accessioning material into the collection	Digitisation and preservation – Digitisation of material
Infrastructure – Monitoring of climate-controlled vaults	Collection management – Description of collection items – cataloguing, annotations, analytics, captioning, auditioning	Digitisation and preservation – Ingest of born digital material
Infrastructure – Contributing metadata to Trove and Humanities Network Infrastructure	Collection management – Creation of finding aids	Digitisation and preservation – conservation
Infrastructure – Procurement, repair and maintenance of playback equipment and parts (electronics engineering)	Collection management – Maintenance and development of language, topical and place thesauri	Digitisation and preservation – preservation
Infrastructure – Maintaining and upgrading digital storage capacity	Collection management – Maintenance of collection and collection data, including technical metadata	Digitisation and preservation – Recording and/or webcasting events (photography, sound and video recording)
Infrastructure – Development and maintenance of knowledge management tools (software)	Quality checking of digitised materials	Digitisation and preservation – Creation of copies of materials to client specifications
Infrastructure – Establishment and maintenance of a “Trusted Digital Repository” for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander materials	Collection management – Movement and control of art and artefact collection, including an annual stocktake of items	Creating and updating policies relating to collection development, collection management, preservation and access
Infrastructure – Disaster/accident management	Collection management – Stocktake of languages collection	Volunteer program (under development)
Collection development – Acquisition of items for the collection	Collection management – Conservation	Guiding researchers, Indigenous communities and the general public about the creation and preservation of records
Collection development – Registration and safe storage of materials offered to AIATSIS	Collection management – End processing of items	Collections materials and equipment purchasing
Collection development – Assessment of materials offered to AIATSIS	Collection management – Serials check-in and claiming	Collection cleaning
Collection development – Management of deposits and donations	Collection management – Serial purchasing and payment	IT Project – improve collection digital storage facilities
Collection development – Quarantine management		
Corporate		
Human resources – Payroll administration, recruitment support, Committee Secretariat, case management, performance management scheme, HR policy/legislation advice, induction, Indigenous trainee pastoral care, caucus coordination	Industrial relations including support for Agency Enterprise Agreement bargaining and drafting	AIATSIS Council – administration, meeting organisation and secretariat, management of elections and appointments and other support to Chair and Council members
Human resources – Step-up accelerated career development program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	IT – helpdesk support, first and second level support in and outside office hours, maintain and update ICT and office equipment and VOIP PABX system	AIATSIS membership – administration, services, events and communication. Review of membership development

Human Resources projects – Performance Management Framework; Learning and Development Strategy and implementation plan; and workforce planning	IT Projects – network infrastructure upgrade, online strategy, desktop virtualisation, ICT strategic plan and mobile and web infrastructure improvement	Strategic leadership, planning and direction, including strategic and business planning, participation in Budget processes, input to the Review of AIATSIS, Executive Board of Management and Team Leaders' forum
Registry – including Mail management & disbursement, file co-ordination and file digitisation	Facilities and security – including security passes and keys, cameras, security doors, building systems including air con, waste and general building maintenance	Portfolio liaison including with Minister and office, Department of Education and other related agencies and input to government and Parliamentary reporting processes such as preparation of the Annual Reports and Senate Estimates
Cultural proficiency – leadership including the Towards Cultural Proficiency Program development and implementation, and other cultural proficiency policy, business development and professional development within AIATSIS	Facilities and security projects – future amenities needs, radio frequency identification system for assets and desirable items, environmental management system, physical security review action plan implementation and new paid parking arrangements	Business development – opportunities for commercialisation and/or philanthropic and other funding support

Source*:* AIATSIS 2013

Appendix C Summary of recent national reviews referencing AIATSIS

A number of recent reviews contained recommendations relating to AIATSIS. Background to these reviews is provided, along with key recommendations that were explored in this Review.

Venturous Australia – Building Strength in Innovation: Review of the National Innovation System (Cutler Review)

In 2009, the then Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research commissioned a Review of the National Innovation System. The Review was prompted by 'four powerful circumstances', which were that:

- Australia's existing national innovation system required reappraisal after a generation
- the nature of innovation and people's understanding of it were rapidly changing
- positive outcomes stemming from Australia's innovation policy had stalled, with some indicators suggesting innovation was in decline
- the economic geography of global production was experiencing significant shifts.

The Review considered over 730 submissions, conducted a series of focused workshops, and delivered findings through a green paper titled *Venturous Australia – Building Strength in Innovation: Review of the national innovation system*. The Review examined Australia's current innovation system and made recommendations to stimulate innovation in Australia.

In particular, the Review highlighted Australia's 'unique and valuable assets' including its Indigenous collections. The Review recognises the importance of AIATSIS collections in understanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems, which play a vital role in the future of Australian innovation.

The Review included the following recommendation:

- *Recommendation 7.13:* The role of institutions such as the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) should be broadened and strengthened in recognition of the special importance of preserving Indigenous collections and the unique value of indigenous traditional knowledge and practices within Australia's innovation system.

Our Land Our Languages – Language learning In Indigenous Communities

In 2011, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs inquiry into Indigenous youth in the criminal justice system identified language as an important component of cultural connection, as well as strengthening intergenerational relationships and community building. In response, the Committee Chair approached appropriate Ministers seeking terms of reference for an inquiry into Indigenous languages. In June 2011 the Minister for Families, Housing Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister for Arts jointly referred the inquiry to the House of Representative Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs.

The purpose of the inquiry was to research the relationship between Indigenous languages and improved education outcomes, community wellbeing, and services to close the gap in Indigenous disadvantage. As part of the inquiry, the committee invited submissions from interested organisations and individuals regarding the TOR. The inquiry received 154 submissions and 23 public hearings, which were held throughout Australia.

In September 2012, the committee released its report, *Our land Our Language: Language Learning in Indigenous Communities.* This included 30 recommendations aimed at preserving and maintaining Indigenous languages. The report highlights the importance of recording, storing and accessing language materials to retain and revive Indigenous languages. The report notes that AIATSIS role is limited due to funding constraints, endangering the future of the collection. The AIATSIS grants program was viewed by the Committee as playing a pivotal role in preserving Indigenous languages.

Recommendations of relevance to AIATSIS are:

- *Dedicated Indigenous language archive:* the Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government include in the 2013-14 Budget increased resources for AIATSIS to carry out the storage and digitisation of Indigenous language materials (Recommendation 28); and
- *AIATSIS research funding*: the Committee recommends the Commonwealth Government consult with the Australian Institute of AIATSIS to determine an appropriate and sustainable funding model in order for it to recommence its research grants program in the 2013-14 Budget (Recommendation 29).

The Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Behrendt Review)

The *Review of Australian Higher Education* (*Bradley Review)* (2008) recognised the pivotal role higher education plays in boosting productivity and delivering a 'strong and steady supply of skilled labour'. However, to realise the full potential of higher educational outcomes across the economy, all Australians must be able to contribute and share in its benefits. In 2011, the Australian Government commissioned a *Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People* (The Behrendt Review).

The Review examines how improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educational outcomes can assist economic growth and help to close the gap in Indigenous disadvantage:

> Success in higher education will lay foundations for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander professional class that can contribute to closing the gap and to Australia's broader wellbeing and economic prosperity
>
> *Behrendt et al 2012*

The Behrendt Review was published in July 2012 and provides recommendations aiming to improve the equality between non-Indigenous and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff in accessing and participating in higher education.

The role of AIATSIS in preserving and promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is frequently highlighted throughout the Review. The Review notes the importance of funding AIATSIS as home to the largest collection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and artefacts.

The Review panel argues that due to AIATSIS expertise in guiding ethical research that the Institute should play a more formal role in approving research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Currently, varying methods are used to approve research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. For example, the University of New England has a dedicated panel to consider Indigenous research, while other universities rely on ethics committee processes that may not be specifically designed to consider issues relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people.

Relevant recommendations within this report relevant to AIATSIS are:

- that the Australian Government continue to support AIATSIS to digitise and thus further preserve their collection for future generations (Recommendation 19)
- that AIATSIS provide more formal guidance to publicly funded research agencies, universities and researchers on ethical research (Recommendation 24)
- that the Australian Government undertake a review of AIATSIS to consider how best to maintain AIATSIS unique place in developing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academic and research activities and the relationship it has with universities (Recommendation 28).

Appendix D Results of AIATSIS members survey

D.1 Context

The Review method involved an online survey of AIATSIS members. The survey tool was developed by ACIL Allen Consulting in collaboration with the former DIICRSTE and AIATSIS and was conducted over a three week period between September and early October 2013.

The survey was designed to capture information on:

- the background and composition of the AIATSIS membership
- the member experience
- views about future opportunities for AIATSIS.

The survey was sent by AIATSIS to 530 AIATSIS members of whom 131 replied (24.7 per cent).

D.2 Findings

Table D1 outlines quantitative results from the survey of members. Open text responses regarding membership, strengths, challenges, opportunities and future vision have been themed, along with a selection of illustrative quotations.

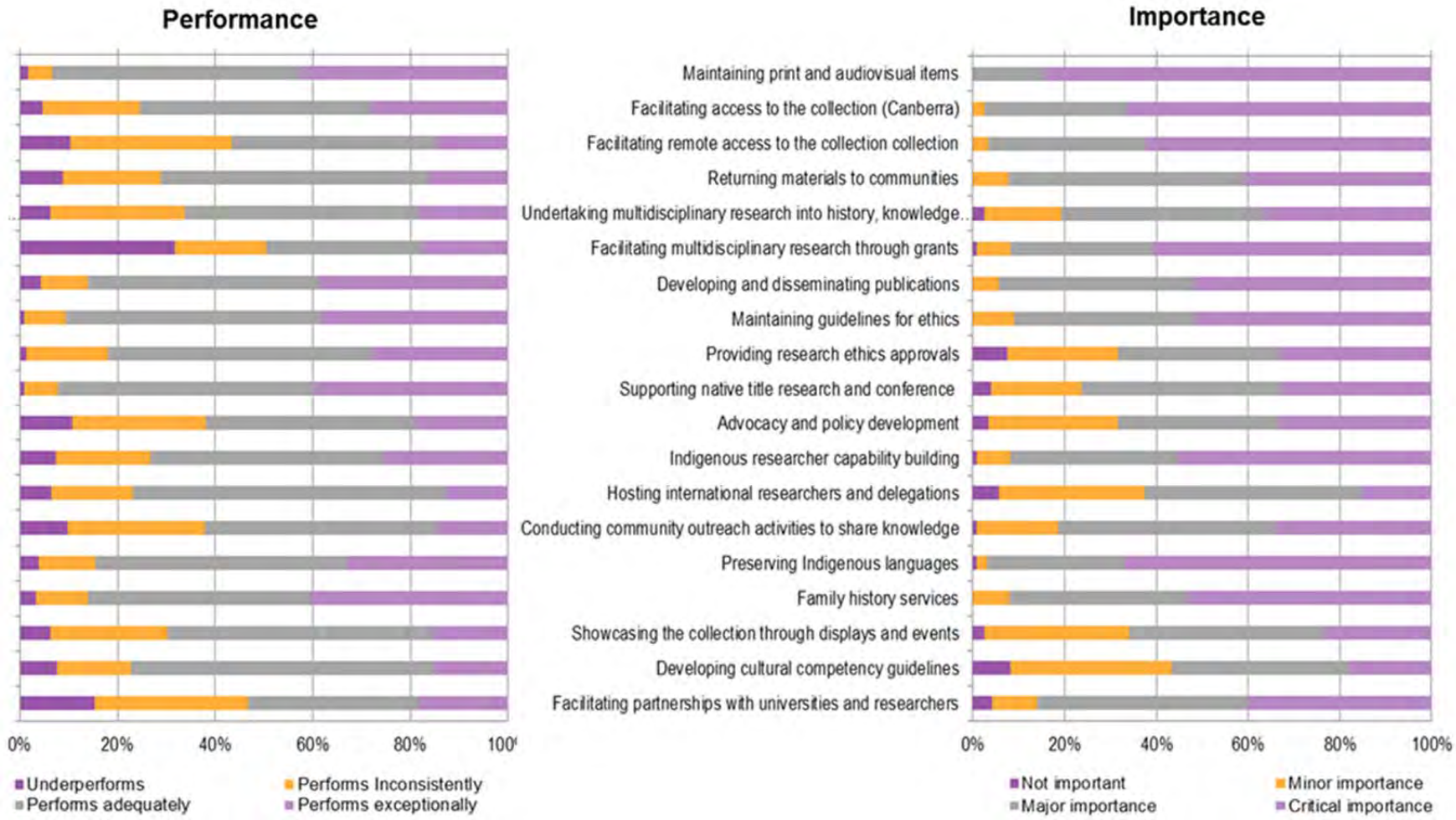
Table D1 **AIATSIS survey results**

Question	Response	Response number	Response per cent
Current profession *N=126* *Responses may sum to more than 100 per cent as some individuals listed multiple current professions*	Academic (higher education)	30	23.8%
	Professor (higher education)	14	11.1%
	Retired	14	11.1%
	Anthropologist	11	8.7%
	Archaeologist	11	8.7%
	Consultants – e.g. Anthropology, Archaeology, Development Law, Social Mapping	9	7.1%
	Researcher – e.g. Linguistics and Musicology	6	4.8%
	Lecturer (higher education)	5	4.0%
	Research Fellow/Officer – e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health	5	4.0%
	Linguist	4	3.2%
	Historian	4	3.2%
	Scientist	2	1.6%
	Museum Curator	2	1.6%
	Lawyer	2	1.6%
	Other: *Librarian, Medico, Museum Director, Public Servant, Publisher, Self-employed, Social Worker, Specialist Nurse, Teacher, Writer*	11	8.7%
Organisations represented *N=82* *Responses may sum to more than 100 per cent as some individuals represented multiple organisations* *Optional response*	University	54	65.9%
	Consultancy	5	6.1%
	Museum	5	6.1%
	Australian/State/Territory Government	3	3.7%
	Private company	3	3.7%
	Other including: *Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO); Professional Historians Association; Indigenous Education Institute; International Federation of Rock Art Organisations (IFRAO); Nursing and Allied Health Rural Locum Scheme (NAHRLS); Pacific-Asia Resource Center (PARC), Tokyo; Rio Tinto; and Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages (VACL)*	14	17.1%
Place of residence *N=129*	Australian Capital Territory	27	20.9%
	New South Wales	33	25.6%
	Northern Territory	8	6.2%
	Queensland	23	17.8%
	South Australia	5	3.9%
	Tasmania	1	0.8%
	Victoria	12	9.3%
	Western Australia	10	7.8%
	Location outside Australia *(Response: Germany, Japan, USA, UK)*	10	7.8%

Question	Response	Response number	Response per cent
Birth year *N=124*	1920-29	1	0.8%
	1930-39	10	8.1%
	1940-49	42	33.9%
	1950-59	44	35.5%
	1960-69	13	10.5%
	1970-79	13	10.5%
	1980-89	1	0.8%
	Average age: 60.5 years		
Length of AIATSIS membership *N=130*	Less than 5 years	24	18.5%
	5 to 10 years	19	14.6%
	10 to 15 years	14	10.8%
	15 to 20 years	24	18.5%
	More than 20 years	49	37.7%
Background *N=130*	Aboriginal	23	17.7%
	Torres Strait Islander	2	1.5%
	Non-Indigenous	105	80.8%
Familiarity with AIATSIS activities *N=127*	Entirely familiar	22	17.3%
	Mostly familiar	89	70.1%
	A little familiar	16	12.6%
	Unfamiliar	0	0.0%
Interaction with AIATSIS over past 5 years *N=127* *Responses may sum to more than 100 per cent as multiple options could be selected*	Depositing material in the AIATSIS collection	49	38.6%
	Undertaking research using the AIATSIS collection	74	58.3%
	Undertaking research in collaboration with AIATSIS researchers	22	17.3%
	Undertaking research using the Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies	59	46.5%
	Undertaking research through the AIATSIS research grants program	12	9.4%
	Undertaking research as an AIATSIS visiting research fellow	4	3.1%
	Supporting the development of AIATSIS publications	36	28.3%
	Undertaking family history research	10	7.9%
	Participating in events, or forums supported by AIATSIS	71	55.9%
	Attending the AIATSIS seminar series in person or via podcast	56	44.1%
	Purchasing or subscribing to AIATSIS/ASP publications	92	72.4%
	Visiting the AIATSIS website	111	87.4%
	Voting in AIATSIS elections	97	76.4%
	Nominating for or holding a position on AIATSIS committees or Council	14	11.0%
	Encouraging another person to become a member	50	39.4%
	None	1	0.8%
	Other (please specify): *Now a Visiting Fellow; Referee for AIATSIS publications; Providing undergraduate interns; Encouraging Aboriginal employees to interact/use AIATSIS archives and resources; Organising Aboriginal employees to visit & access the Institute's facilities; Published in Aboriginal Studies Press (ASP) and AIATSIS journal; Use of MURA; Employment with AIATSIS; Adding to the documentation of recordings.*	20	15.7%

Question	Response	Response number	Response per cent
Primary area of involvement *N=126*	Depositing material in the AIATSIS collection	8	6.3%
	Undertaking research using the AIATSIS collection	30	23.8%
	Undertaking research in collaboration with AIATSIS researchers	5	4.0%
	Undertaking research using the Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies	11	8.7%
	Undertaking research through the AIATSIS research grants program	4	3.2%
	Undertaking research as an AIATSIS visiting research fellow	2	1.6%
	Supporting the development of AIATSIS publications	4	3.2%
	Undertaking family history research	1	0.8%
	Participating in events, or forums supported by AIATSIS	10	7.9%
	Attending the AIATSIS seminar series in person or via podcast	6	4.8%
	Purchasing or subscribing to AIATSIS/ASP publications	8	6.3%
	Visiting the AIATSIS website	10	7.9%
	Voting in AIATSIS elections	9	7.1%
	Nominating for or holding a position on AIATSIS committees or Council	2	1.6%
	Encouraging another person to become a member	3	2.4%
	None	2	1.6%
	Other (please specify): *Working on archaeological sites in areas of traditional Aboriginal interest; Published with Aboriginal Studies Press (ASP); Using Mura; Supporting Indigenous engagement with the enabling sciences and engineering; Helping other people gain access to the collections and research grants; Employment with AIATSIS; No one area is judged as 'primary', activity and involvement is reflected across a range of issues.*	11	8.7%
Subject area involvement *N=125* *Responses may sum to more than 100 per cent as multiple subjects could be selected*	Languages and cultural transmission	47	37.6%
	Health and wellbeing	27	21.6%
	Education and socio-economic Institutions	32	25.6%
	Arts and creative expression	32	25.6%
	Governance, law and justice	28	22.4%
	Land, water and environment	30	24.0%
	Native title and traditional ownership	51	40.8%
	Economics, industry and development	16	12.8%
	Family history	15	12.0%
	Collections and archives	37	29.6%
	Other (please specify): *Cultural heritage management; Cultural Resource Management; Urban places and architecture; Anthropology; Archaeology; Physical and mathematical sciences and engineering;* *Historical studies e.g. Australian pre-European history, colonial history, twentieth century protest history, Aboriginal Mission history, community and local histories*	26	20.8%
Level of satisfaction with benefits of AIATSIS membership *N=126*	Entirely satisfied	35	27.8%
	Mostly satisfied	56	44.4%
	Partially satisfied	25	19.8%
	Not satisfied	10	7.9%
Willingness to pay a subscription fee to be a member of AIATSIS *N=126*	Certainly	22	17.5%
	Most likely	48	38.1%
	Unlikely	36	28.6%
	No	20	15.9%
Whether membership remains relevant to AIATSIS *N=125*	Yes	87	69.6%
	No	10	8.0%
	Undecided	28	22.4%

Figure D1 **Performance and importance of AIATSIS activities**



Source: ACIL Allen Consulting 2014

Question	Response	Unaware of role played by AIATSIS		Not Important Underperforms		Minor importance Performs inconsistently		Major importance Performs adequately		Critical Importance Performs exceptionally		Average rating (out of 4)
Importance of AIATSIS activities ('Importance') *(N=124)*						**AIATSIS performance against its major functions ('Performance')** *(N=120)*						
Maintaining the collection of print and audio-visual items	*Importance*	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	19	15.4%	104	84.6%	3.85
	Performance	0	0.0%	2	1.7%	6	5.0%	61	50.8%	51	42.5%	3.34
Facilitating access to the collection in Canberra	*Importance*	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	2.5%	38	31.1%	81	66.4%	3.64
	Performance	7	6.0%	5	4.3%	22	18.8%	52	44.4%	31	26.5%	2.99
Facilitating remote access to the collection	*Importance*	1	0.8%	0	0.0%	4	3.3%	41	34.2%	74	61.7%	3.59
	Performance	19	16.4%	10	8.6%	32	27.6%	41	35.3%	14	12.1%	2.61
Returning materials to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders communities	*Importance*	5	4.1%	0	0.0%	9	7.4%	60	49.2%	48	39.3%	3.33
	Performance	36	31.0%	7	6.0%	16	13.8%	44	37.9%	13	11.2%	2.79
Internally undertaking multidisciplinary research into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, knowledge and culture	*Importance*	2	1.7%	3	2.5%	20	16.5%	52	43.0%	44	36.4%	3.15
	Performance	19	16.2%	6	5.1%	27	23.1%	47	40.2%	18	15.4%	2.79
Facilitating external multidisciplinary research through the Research Grants Program	*Importance*	2	1.6%	1	0.8%	9	7.3%	38	30.6%	74	59.7%	3.52
	Performance	10	8.5%	34	29.1%	20	17.1%	34	29.1%	19	16.2%	2.36
Developing and disseminating publications through the Aboriginal Studies Press, including the Australian Aboriginal Studies journal	*Importance*	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	7	5.7%	52	42.3%	64	52.0%	3.46
	Performance	0	0.0%	5	4.3%	11	9.5%	55	47.4%	45	38.8%	3.21
Maintaining Guidelines for Ethical Research in Indigenous Studies	*Importance*	1	0.8%	0	0.0%	11	8.9%	49	39.5%	63	50.8%	3.42
	Performance	10	8.5%	1	0.9%	9	7.7%	56	47.9%	41	35.0%	3.28
Operating an ethics committee to approve research in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies	*Importance*	4	3.2%	9	7.3%	29	23.4%	42	33.9%	40	32.3%	2.94
	Performance	30	26.5%	1	0.9%	14	12.4%	45	39.8%	23	20.4%	3.08
Supporting native title through research, conferences and associated programs	*Importance*	1	0.8%	5	4.0%	24	19.4%	54	43.5%	40	32.3%	3.05
	Performance	13	11.1%	1	0.9%	7	6.0%	55	47.0%	41	35.0%	3.31
Playing an advocacy and policy development role on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities	*Importance*	4	3.2%	4	3.2%	34	27.4%	42	33.9%	40	32.3%	2.98
	Performance	33	28.2%	9	7.7%	23	19.7%	36	30.8%	16	13.7%	2.70
Providing opportunities for Indigenous researchers to develop capabilities, including through the Indigenous Visiting Research Fellowships Program	*Importance*	3	2.4%	1	0.8%	9	7.3%	44	35.5%	67	54.0%	3.46
	Performance	24	20.3%	7	5.9%	18	15.3%	45	38.1%	24	20.3%	2.91
Hosting international researchers and delegations	*Importance*	1	0.8%	7	5.6%	39	31.5%	58	46.8%	19	15.3%	2.72
	Performance	40	33.9%	5	4.2%	13	11.0%	50	42.4%	10	8.5%	2.83
Conducting community outreach activities to share knowledge	*Importance*	1	0.8%	1	0.8%	22	17.7%	58	46.8%	42	33.9%	3.15
	Performance	36	30.5%	8	6.8%	23	19.5%	39	33.1%	12	10.2%	2.67
Supporting the preservation of Indigenous languages	*Importance*	0	0.0%	1	0.8%	3	2.4%	37	29.8%	83	66.9%	3.63
	Performance	11	9.6%	4	3.5%	12	10.5%	53	46.5%	34	29.8%	3.14
Providing family history services to reunite Indigenous people	*Importance*	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	10	8.1%	48	38.7%	66	53.2%	3.45
	Performance	22	19.0%	3	2.6%	10	8.6%	43	37.1%	38	32.8%	3.23
Showcasing the collection through onsite displays and events	*Importance*	1	0.8%	3	2.4%	39	31.5%	52	41.9%	29	23.4%	2.87
	Performance	21	17.9%	6	5.1%	23	19.7%	52	44.4%	15	12.8%	2.79
Developing cultural competency guidelines	*Importance*	13	10.5%	9	7.3%	39	31.5%	43	34.7%	20	16.1%	2.67
	Performance	51	43.6%	5	4.3%	10	8.5%	41	35.0%	10	8.5%	2.85
Leading partnerships with universities and researchers undertaking Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies	*Importance*	2	1.6%	5	4.0%	12	9.7%	56	45.2%	49	39.5%	3.22
	Performance	24	20.7%	14	12.1%	*29*	25.0%	32	27.6%	17	14.7%	2.57

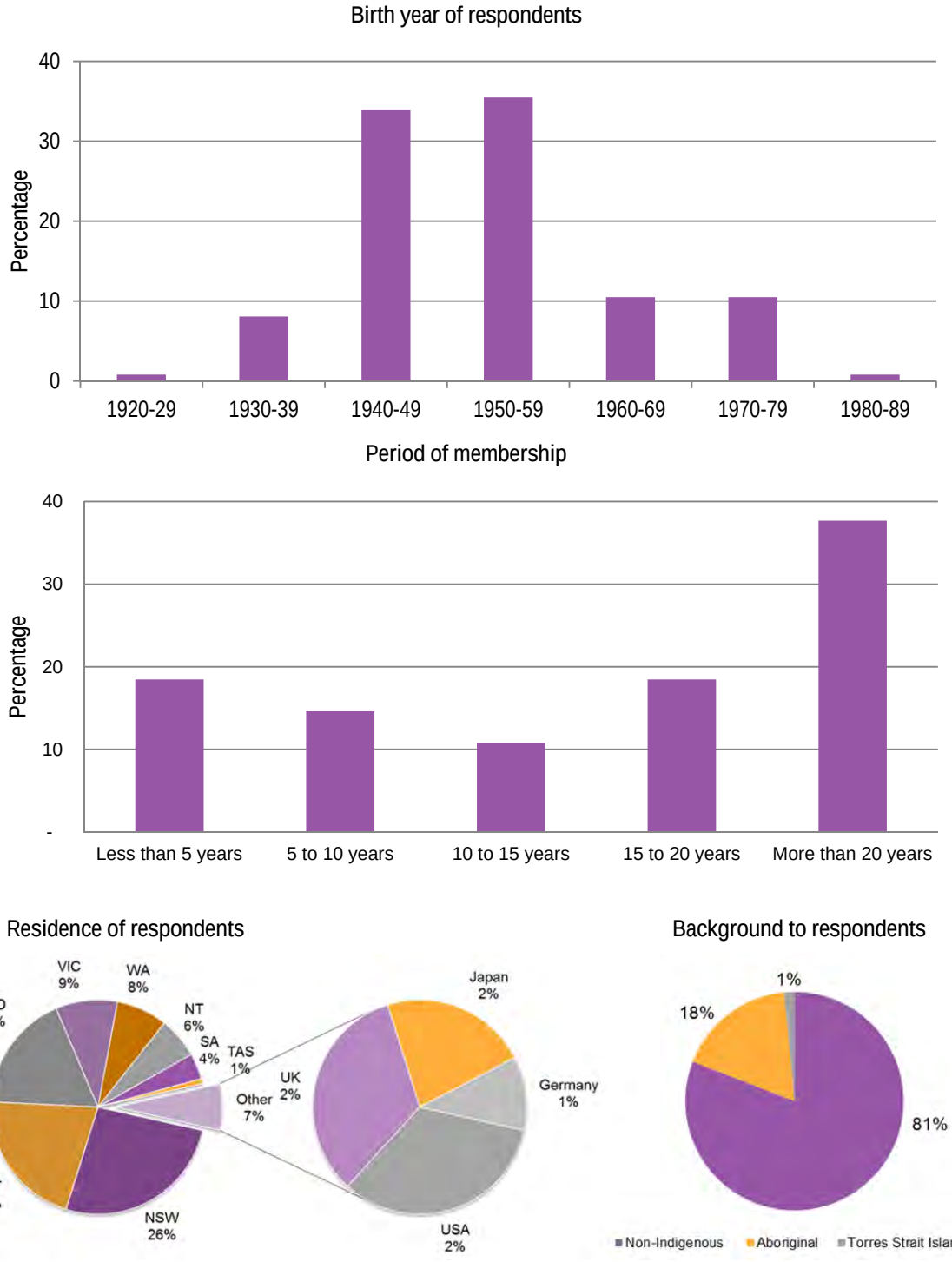
D.3 Analysis of results and qualitative responses

Respondent characteristics

Members who participated in the survey were asked about their age, identity, and location. This information provides context to the responses:

- the average age of respondents was 60.5 years
- 17.6 per cent of respondents identified themselves as being Aboriginal people
- 1.5 per cent of respondents identified themselves as being a Torres Strait Islanders
- 92.2 per cent of respondents live in Australia, and were predominantly from:
  - New South Wales (33 members)
  - Australian Capital Territory (27 members)
  - Queensland (23 members).
- 7.8 per cent of respondents reside abroad, including in the UK, Japan, Germany and USA.

Figure D2 **Respondent characteristics**



Source: ACIL Allen Consulting 2014

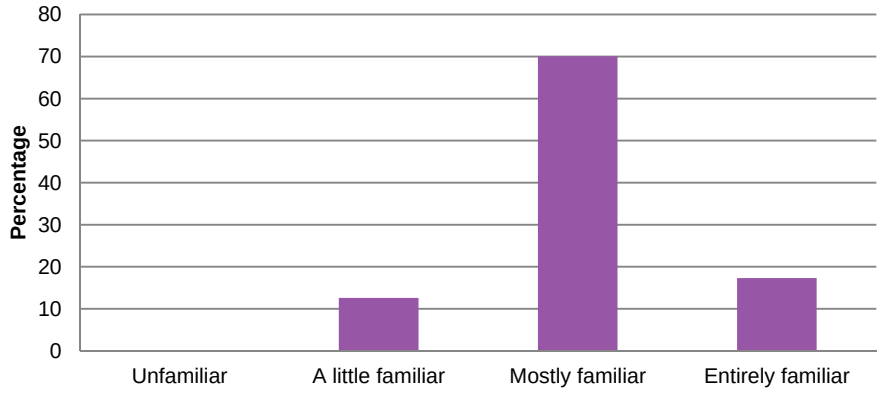
Knowledge and interaction with AIATSIS

Members indicated that they were familiar with the activities undertaken at AIATSIS.

— over 87 per cent were either *mostly* or *entirely familiar* with AIATSIS activities

— 12 per cent were *a little familiar* with AIATSIS activities.

Figure D3 **Knowledge of AIATSIS activities**



Source: ACIL Allen Consulting 2014

When asked to provide a response regarding involvement with AIATSIS over the past five years, respondents noted multiple areas, including research, publications, and depositing materials. On average, each respondent interacted with AIATSIS in six areas.

Members were required to nominate their primary area of involvement with AIATSIS. Results from the survey indicate that AIATSIS members were:

— undertaking research using the AIATSIS collection (30 members)

— undertaking research using the Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies (11 members)

— [participating in events, or forums supported by AIATSIS (10 members)

— visiting the AIATSIS website (10 members).

Membership

This section of the survey gauged feedback on members' views on AIATSIS membership and strategic directions for membership in the future:

— the majority of respondents have been members of AIATSIS for over 15 years

— 18 per cent of respondents have been a member for less than 5 years

— 14.6 per cent of respondents have been a member between 5 and 10 years

— 10.7 per cent of respondents have been a member between 10 and 15 years

— 18.5 per cent of respondents have been a member between 15 and 20 years

— 37.6 per cent of respondents have been a member for more than 20 years.

In relation to satisfaction with membership, responses indicated that:

— over 70 per cent were either *mostly* or *entirely satisfied* with their membership

— fewer than 30 per cent were either *partially* or *not satisfied* with their membership

Members were divided on whether they were willing to pay a fee for AIATSIS membership:

- 55 per cent would *certainly* or *most likely* pay for their membership
- 45 per cent *would not* or *would be unlikely* to pay for membership.

The majority of respondents indicated that AIATSIS membership remains relevant:

- 70 per cent believe AIATSIS membership is still relevant
- 30 per cent believe AIATSIS membership is not relevant or were *undecided*.

Figure D4 **Benefits of AIATSIS membership**

Source: ACIL Allen Consulting 2014

Benefits of membership

In relation to the benefits of being an AIATSIS member, respondents provided the following comments. These have been drawn into response themes based on major recurring views.

Question	Theme	Illustrative comments
What are the major benefits of being an AIATSIS member? *N=118*	**Accessing information**	"It's a way to stay in touch with latest research developments, community activity, publications about and by Indigenous people and cultures and to keep in touch with growing Indigenous expertise in a range of areas"
		"Keeping up to date with ideas and policies in Indigenous research"
		"Conferences, where people can meet and link"
		"Ability to keep abreast of developments in the general field of Indigenous Studies and receipt of relevant publications, such as *Australian Aboriginal Studies*"
	Lifting personal status	"I benefit from being able to list the membership on my CV"
		"Enhances my status as an ethical researcher when dealing collectively or separately with my major clients (mainly the mining industry), government organisations and Aboriginal organisations"
		"it conveys to my Indigenous colleagues that I have a genuine interest in Indigenous matters, and I am supportive of organisations dedicated to such affairs"
	Voting rights	"Being able to vote on Council and committee membership"
	Access to cultural collection	"Access to published and other information made available through AIATSIS"
		"Access to a peerless collection of archival research materials pertaining to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people"
		"Opportunity for further research and access to the collection"
		"The benefit for me have (sic.) been access to restricted manuscripts"
	Sense of belonging and networking	"Keeping in touch with colleagues in different areas of interest"
		"Contact with other people working in the field"
		"The scholarly community and its engagement with 'community' needs is important"
		"Connection to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues"
	Access to discounts	"Getting news of AIATSIS activities and discounts on AIATSIS publications"
	Lack of clear benefits	"I don't see any particular benefits to membership. More like a responsibility to be involved and active in the institution that has the lead role in Aboriginal research"
		"There are no apparent benefits. I remain a member only because I think the mission of AIATSIS is important and I wish to support it"
		"Other than a sense of belong (sic.) to a body there is no other benefit"
		"To be truthful I haven't noticed any benefits to membership that I did not already receive as a non-member. However, I fully believe in the importance of the organisation and in membership"

Improving AIATSIS membership

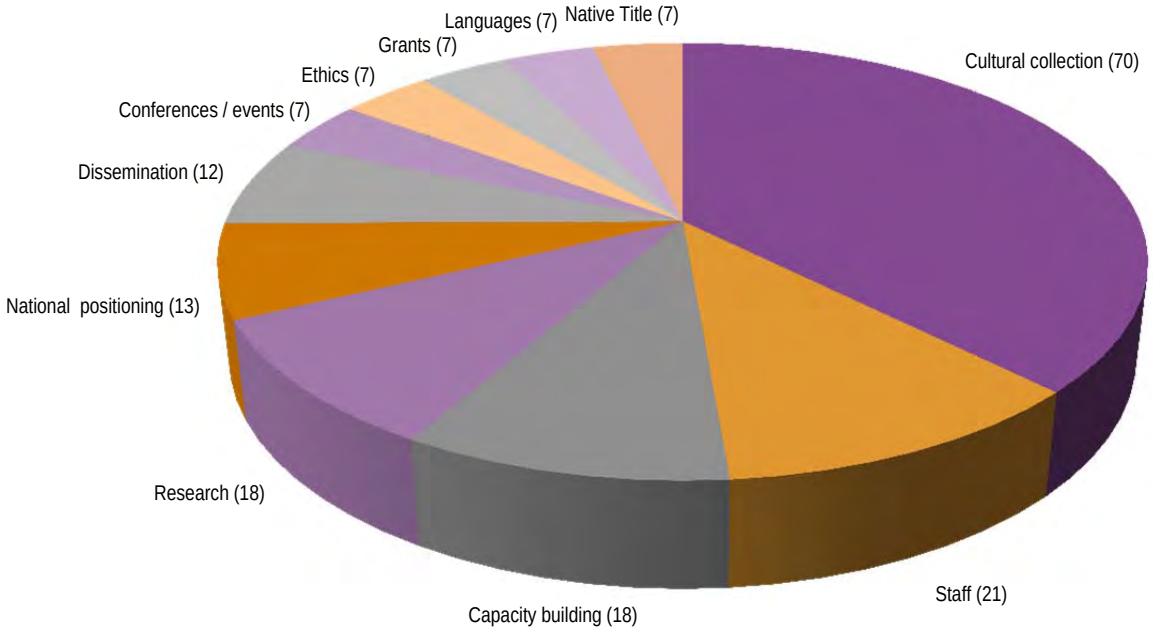
In relation to ways that membership of AIATSIS could be improved, respondents provided the following comments, which have been drawn into response themes.

Question	Response	Quotes
In what ways could membership of AIATSIS be improved? *N=87*	**Extend beyond Canberra**	“More events outside Canberra. Until recently I lived and worked in Sydney and was unable to attend most events in ACT due to work commitments”
		“I envy those living in Canberra who are able to attend seminars regularly. Occasional meetings in other centres such as Adelaide would be appreciated. The establishment of regional chapters of AIATSIS?”
		"AIATSIS also needs to work harder to offer tangible benefits to members living out of the ACT - e.g. through access to digitised library collections etc."
		“Not forgetting that most members do not come from Canberra and would like to be involved, at least, periodically, especially through conferences"
	Networking	“Encouraging member integration - encouraging more community members to come and use the facilities"
		“I would like to know more on the other members, maybe get some mentoring from people. I would also like to be able to find the people in the Institute”
		“The level of communication to members (as opposed to the general public) about AIATSIS activities and products needs to be improved”
	Membership as fee for service	"I would pay a subscription fee for a service that included the journal”
		“I think there could be two levels of membership: a membership which is willing to support AIATSIS both financially and more generally; and a membership which is more deeply involved and committed to Indigenous research, activity and cultural engagement. This would help a move towards widening the scope of the organisation, which I believe would be healthy”
		"If membership had a cost (there would have to be categories of membership) then it would be more highly valued and members would feel more ownership. The cost could include the journal which would then gain a much wider readership as well"
		“I would be prepared to pay a subscription fee to be a member of AIATSIS if this would help timely access to digitised materials”
	Contribute more	“I think members should be used more, e.g. in assessing grants”
		“Members would appreciate more interaction with AIATSIS”
		“Non-Indigenous members need to feel better incorporated/valued - they used to but it has increasing become an ATSI organisation for ATSI people”
		“There could be clearer avenues for members to contribute to research quality – e.g. reviewing publications; facilitating collaborations among members in research and communication; supporting emerging indigenous researchers”
		“AIATSIS perhaps needs to make more demands on its members rather than offer them more. Members may feel more involved if requested to carry out defined tasks such as developing position reports on key research topics. If AIATSIS were in this kind of way taking more of a lead role in developing ideas for, for example, ancient DNA research, it would probably get more support”
	Information	“Outcomes of Research Grant allocations should be circulated to members (at least for the discipline/s they nominate) and updates, progress reports on the projects that are funded”
		“Better communication of the results of research being undertaken by staff and fellows there”
		“Extended Library and Archival hours for members would be most appreciated”
		“A closed members page at the AIATSIS website would be nice to have”

Strengths of AIATSIS

Through open text responses, members outlined their perspectives on the strengths of AIATSIS. The number of responses provided by members against key Review themes is shown in Figure D5. Note that many respondents identified multiple strengths. Illustrative comments are provided in Table D2.

Figure D5 **Strengths of AIATSIS**



Question: What do you consider to be the strengths of AIATSIS? Total responses = 111
Other responses: organisational partnerships (6); family history (3); digitisation (2); repatriation (1); decision-making (1); membership (1)
Source: ACIL Allen Consulting 2014

Table D2 **Strengths of AIATSIS**

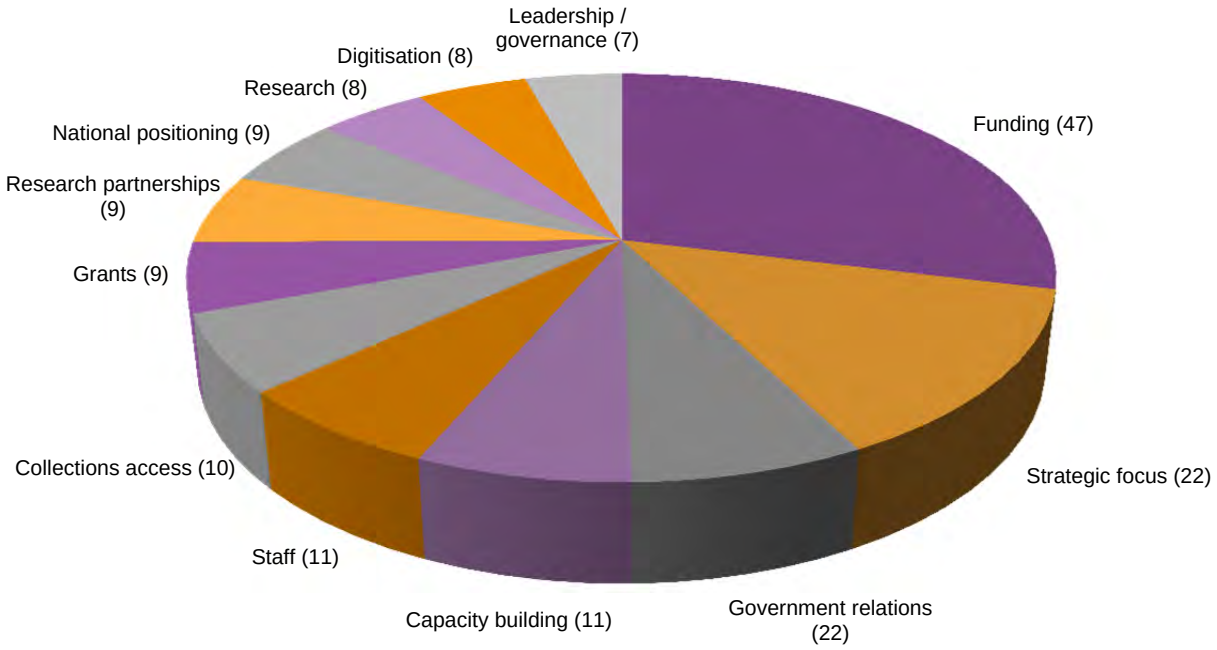
Question	Theme number of response	Illustrative comments
What do you consider to be the strengths of AIATSIS? *N=111*	**Cultural collections** (70)	"The collection is the stand out strength of AIATSIS. It is a world leader in this regard. All other functions are carried out more effectively by larger agencies and there is little point in AIATSIS duplicating this work at the expense of its unique role in the study and celebration of traditional societies - with their languages, art, material culture, and unique archaeological records of 50,000 years of autonomous cultural development"
		"It's collections, management of collections and access to the collections"
		"The fact that over the years subject specialists have been involved in all aspects of the collections and the detailed annotations have allowed generations of researchers and Aboriginal people to access the full range of - often obscure – documentation"
	Staff (21)	"The staff who know those collections and/or are deeply educated in the way of Aboriginal societies"
		"The professional commitment of staff"
	Capacity building (18)	"Support and opportunity towards developing Indigenous Researchers"
		"Range of research opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers and families"
		"Very open and supportive of Aboriginal people - hard-won over years of distrust of academic research. Aboriginal involvement at the steering level is really very high, and this is important for many reasons, including training and developing Aboriginal community leadership"
		"The fact it has now had Indigenous directors for some time, and good indigenous representation on its advisory bodies"
	Research (18)	"It's broad base of research and it's accessibility to all"
		"Providing a widely based forum for research into Indigenous Australian culture and related issues"
		"Fostering research by universities and other cultural institutions with Indigenous communities across Australia"
		"High level of scholarly excellence in native title"
		"The strengths seem to be shifting but at one time AIATSIS was particularly active in Native Title research"
	National positioning (13)	"It is a collecting and cultural preservation institution without peer"
		"Its ability to act as a focal point for Indigenous Studies nationally, through events, networks, committees, grants program etc."
		"An invaluable resource for Indigenous peoples and the nation as a whole"
		"Providing leadership and a national profile for research on Aboriginal issues"
		"It is a national body of people and a centre committed to collecting, maintaining and enhancing the rich body of knowledge of the culture, language and history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people"
	Ethics (7)	"Leadership in ethical guidelines for research with Indigenous peoples"
		"Serving as a key reference point for guidelines in ethical standards in research"
	Grants (7)	"The external grants program was a great strength that has sadly been lost"
		"Supporting research through the Research Grant Scheme"
		"The research grants program…..are the unique features of AIATSIS, in that these are not replicated by any other University or Indigenous language centre"

Source: ACIL Allen Consulting 2014

Challenges facing AIATSIS

Through open text responses, members outlined their perspectives on the challenges facing AIATSIS. The number of responses provided by members against key Review themes is shown in Figure D6. Note that many respondents identified multiple challenges. Illustrative comments are provided in Table D3.

Figure D6 **Challenges facing AIATSIS**



Question: What do you consider to be the challenges facing AIATSIS? Total responses = 113
Other responses: education of public (5); return of materials/outreach (3); audio-visual collection (3); collections opening hours (3); languages role (2); staff remuneration (2); infrastructure (2); IT resources (2); collections preservation (1); limiting advocacy (1); improving catalogue (1); and improving seminar quality (1).

Source: ACIL Allen Consulting 2014

Table D3 **Challenges facing AIATSIS**

Question	Theme Number of responses	Illustrative comments
What do you consider to be the challenges facing AIATSIS? *N=113*	**Funding** (47)	"It lacks enough money to provide an adequate research grants program. It lacks sufficient funds to manage its collections properly especially in the field of digital technology"
		"The waxes and wanes of government funding - the uncertainty of funding"
		"Lack of funding to provide adequate services"
	Strategic focus (22)	"Remaining connected and relevant given the level of community and government indifference in Australia around Indigenous issues"
		"Too much in house research makes them insular - need to go back to funding researchers and less on employing them - but employ people who can better support, facilitate, mentor and disseminate - more of an umbrella body"
		"Confused identity (a research centre? A collections institution? An Aboriginal organisation?) that dilutes focus and energies in too many competing directions"
		"AIATSIS needs to strip down its activities and concentrate on those things which only AIATSIS can do. The collection, especially digitisation and making material accessible in good time, needs a lot of work"
	Government relations (22)	"Being swamped by the government"
		"Becoming too close to government"
		"Strengthening independence from politics"
	Capacity building (11)	"Developing indigenous research capacity, especially in history, political science, cultural studies"
		"Train more indigenous researchers"
		"Not alienating non-indigenous researchers and supporting Indigenous research across the board irrespective of race. At the same time, supporting quality research by Indigenous researchers"
		"Lack of support towards indigenous people"
		"Tensions between fostering community engagement and/or Indigenous researchers and/or all university and other researchers in access to increasingly pressured resources"
	Staff (11)	"Adequate resourcing and attracting competent highly motivated staff"
		"Lack of funds and qualified staff"
		"Underfunding and understaffing to adequately (1) sponsor research and (2) curate and facilitate access to collections"
		"The loss of institutional knowledge because of a 'changing of the guard' in staffing. The challenge of employing more Indigenous staff while maintaining high-quality experience and professionalism"
		"Attracting and keeping staff of depth and knowledge and serious commitment to excellence in research, community contact and dissemination of knowledge"

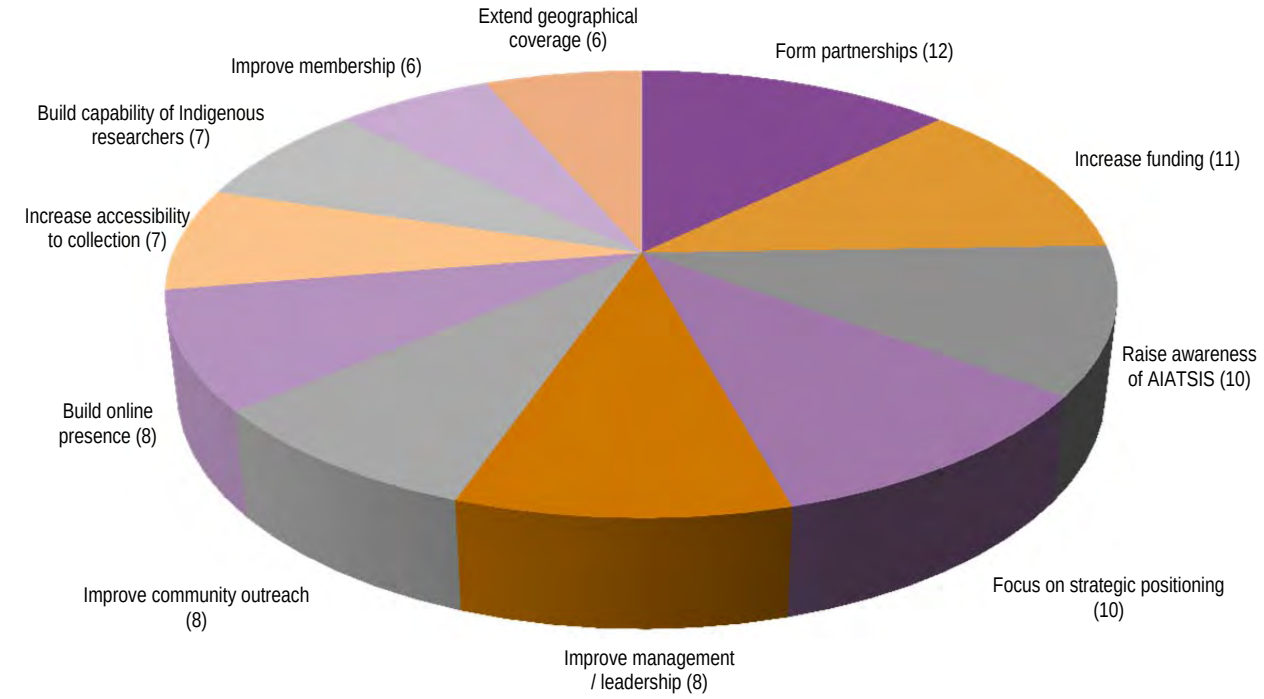
Question	Theme Number of responses	Illustrative comments
	Collections access (10)	"Funding cuts mean the library opening hours are limited, which is a serious problem for researchers like me visiting from interstate"
		"Breaking the strangle hold of Canberra based experts and allowing other people to have access without endless questions and at times mistrust in addition allowing access to material that one may have deposited with the institute"
		"The delays in responding to patrons' requests for audio-visual materials are outrageously long, and also inconsistent in terms of who is charged what. The barriers put in the way of access are also very high. These delays and barriers reduce people's interest in using AIATSIS resources, recommending deposit in AIATSIS to other people, and have generally created a feeling that AIATSIS is underperforming"
		"Improving access to all aspects of the collection, especially the non-library aspects - films, photos and recordings"
		"Facilitating efficient access for both researchers and community members seems to be a huge challenge, but wouldn't be with sufficient resources"
	Grants (9)	"It lacks enough money to provide an adequate research grants program"
		"Cessation of grants scheme: terrible blow to research"
		"Getting the grants going again because without them the Institute is losing connections to the academic world and many of the people who are documenting Aboriginal cultural heritage (especially PhD students)"
		"The axing of the grants program was deeply disappointing"
	Leadership and governance (7)	"Lack of leadership has led to loss of morale and loss of direction"
		"There is a need for…..intellectual leadership, for daring ideas"
		"Attracting and keeping staff of depth and knowledge and serious commitment to excellence in research, community contact and dissemination of knowledge"
		"The loss of institutional knowledge because of a 'changing of the guard' in staffing. The challenge of employing more Indigenous staff while maintaining high-quality experience and professionalism. Do not sacrifice competence for ethnicity! The Institute needs to attract well qualified, professional and competent staff - irrespective of whether they are Indigenous or not"

Source: ACIL Allen 2013

Opportunities for AIATSIS

Through open text responses, members outlined their perspectives on the opportunities for AIATSIS. The number of responses provided by members against key Review themes is shown in Figure D7. Note that many respondents identified multiple opportunities. Illustrative comments are provided in Table D4.

Figure D7 **Opportunities for AIATSIS**



Question: What opportunities exist for AIATSIS to improve its performance? Total responses = 98
Other responses: digitisation (5); grant reinstatement (5); publications (4); languages (4); policy leadership (4); events and seminars (3); international connections (3); acquisitions to collection (2); staff quality / performance (2); strategic research (2); exhibit / display collections (1); and training role (1).

Source: ACIL Allen Consulting 2014

Table D4 **Opportunities for AIATSIS**

Question	Theme Number of responses	Illustrative comments
What opportunities exist for AIATSIS to improve its performance? ***N=98***	**Form partnerships** (12)	"Increasing international collaboration with Indigenous research groups and organisations across the world"
		“Connect with universities and Aboriginal communities, also international connections with other Indigenous research centres”
		"More cooperation with counterpart institutions in other countries"
		"Partnerships with other cultural and educational establishments"
		“Better communication and engagement with members outside Canberra and in other institutions”
		“Needs to create research networks so that more people feel like they are an active part of the AIATSIS activities”
		“Links to professional academic bodies such as anthropology, archaeology and history associations to undertake joint events and provide mutual support”
	Increase funding (11)	“More community outreach and funding for health and wellbeing research across disciplines”
		“Needs to advocate more strongly for the reinstatement of funding and grants”
		“I think it performs its function effectively and don't know what is needed to improve them apart from extra funding”
		“Access and digitisation of the AV collection needs clear direction and more funding”
		“I was astonished to experience the problems with staffing in the Library. It needs to have sufficient funding to maintain and increase services”
	Raise awareness of AIATSIS (10)	“There are a range of opportunities for AIATSIS to broaden its support base and engage the wider community”
		“A wider understanding of the Institution both in academic circles and the wider public”
		“AIATSIS must become more relevant to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities if it is to survive. It should be a well-known centre for information dissemination. As it is, it is rarely heard of in the media, and makes few public comments on matters of current debate in the mainstream media”
	Focus on strategic positioning (10)	"The Institute should make the collections its core business and concentrate on renewing internal processes to facilitate world class research and community engagement with those collections”
		“It needs to reset its vision and be consistent with what it was originally established to do, not try to reproduce what Universities are doing”
		“The Institute should make the collections its core business and concentrate on renewing internal processes to facilitate world class research and community engagement with those collections”
		“Stronger recognition of role of knowledge in closing the gap - informing policy options and generating innovative solutions; could for example start a series of evidence based reviews on pertinent policy issues”
		“AIATSIS needs to focus on its strengths and on the things that make the agency most distinctive: all of these hinge on the library collections, the material culture collections & the AV collections”
	Improve management / leadership (8)	“Council terms and should be limited to two terms four year terms, reorganised to ensure overlap and possibly have a Chair designate to that there can be an understudy for a year before taking over”
		“Change of leadership and fresh ideas and energy are required”
		“New board, get better engaged with the emerging new wave of effort in higher education”

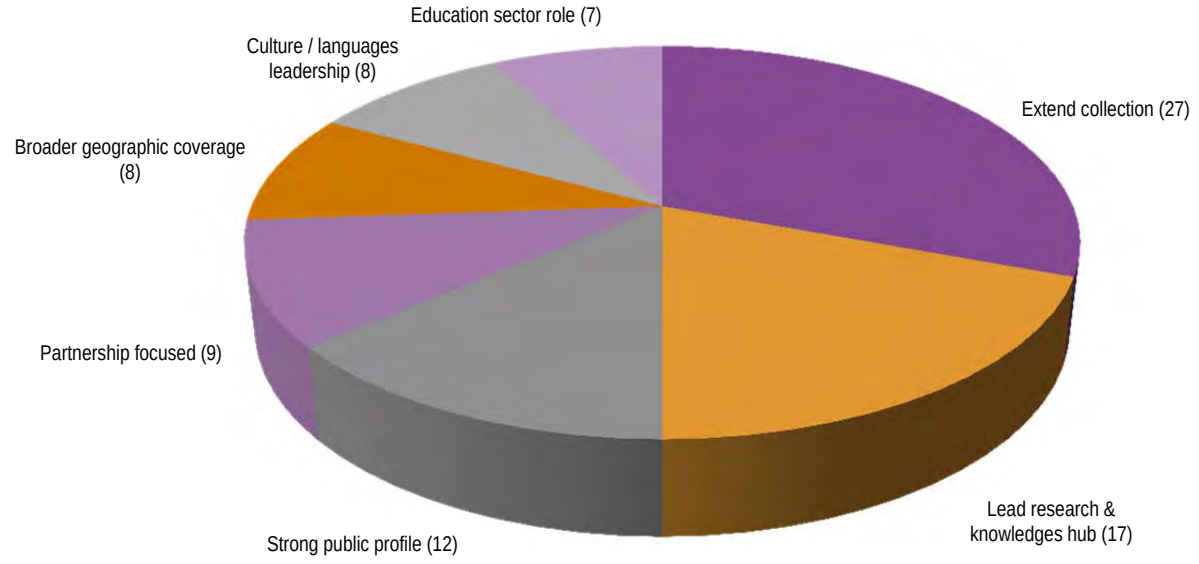
Question	Theme Number of responses	Illustrative comments
	Improve community outreach (8)	"Not forgetting that most members do not come from Canberra and would like to be involved, at least periodically, especially through conferences"
		"Scale back ACT-focused activities and internal research programmes and use funds to support collaborative research initiatives with communities and researchers across Australia"
		"The research section of the Institute should be reconfigured to facilitate projects that deal with the collections, wherever possible in conjunction with community-based stakeholders"
	Build online presence (8)	"Building networks that support AIATSIS through social media and informal connections"
		"The publication agenda could be revolutionised to become an Open Access ePress. While this would nominally reduce reported income, the increase in worldwide reach and influence would more than compensate"
		"Increasing online access especially digitalisation of visual & archival materials, where open access is appropriate"

Source: ACIL Allen 2014

Future vision for AIATSIS

Through open text responses, members outlined their perspectives on a future vision for AIATSIS over the next 5-10 years. The number of responses provided by members against key Review themes is shown in Figure D8. Illustrative comments are provided in Table D5.

Figure D8 **Vision for AIATSIS**



Question: What is your vision for AIATSIS over the next 5-10 years? Total responses = 101
Other responses: outreach / community role (6);grants (6); visiting place for knowledge (5); seminars and events (4); promote female staff (3); publications (2); leadership / management (2); improve stakeholder confidence (1); diversify membership (1); family history (1); revise ethics (1); form university (1); and anthropology / archaeology role (1)

Source: ACIL Allen Consulting 2014

Table D5 **Future vision for AIATSIS**

Question	Theme Number of responses	Illustrative comments
What is your vision for AIATSIS over the next 5-10 years *N=101*	**Extend collection** (27)	"Continue in the same way (or stronger) growing its collection and proving resources for community led and collaborative research"
		"Enough funds for curatorial work on collections that are in urgent need of restoration (film, sound)"
		"The Institute should continue to acquire and make accessible (as appropriate) the materials generated in world class research and look to do so with as great efficiency as possible"
		"To be the world's leading centre and repository for Australian Indigenous knowledges"
	Lead research and knowledges hub (17)	"Continue as an area of excellence in research and Indigenous Studies"
		"Restoration of the research grants program to its status as a major supporter of individual and small group research into Indigenous issues"
		"Develop a greater public profile and voice as a centre for fearless investigations that are not censored or bound by simplistic identity politics. Embracing open research that cannot necessarily in advance predict the kinds of 'benefits' that may arise from projects"
		"Become a major showcase of Aboriginal contributions to Australian society and world culture through all the arts and through education and academic excellence"
		"My vision would be to make the Institute a place that encourages visitors by providing more welcoming spaces, study areas, group discussion areas - common room/coffee area"
		"To be a true meeting place and forum for interaction between indigenous people, and between indigenous-non indigenous people"
	Strong public profile (12)	"That it grows in strength and engagement with the wider community and that it has better success in the work it does"
		"Restore status as international leader in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies by focussing on leading policy/ethical framework development and maintenance, continue to digitise and make the collection more open and available to Indigenous communities and researchers and sponsor research initiatives with competitive grant funding"
		"To be known outside the Koori Community and to be respected inside the community"
		"Greater outreach to the wider community"
		"An institution with a stronger public profile that is recognised as tackling current issues and debates in a collaborative fashion among Indigenous and non-indigenous researchers and institutions"
		"The leading research and cultural organisation in Indigenous Affairs in Australia"
	Partnership focused: (9)	"I see an AIATSIS that maintains its independence but continuously works with cognate bodies such as universities, schools, colleges, and other independent bodies"
		"Enter into partnerships with universities and other institutions with sizeable Aboriginal Studies programs in whatever disciplines"
		"Get many more sectors in the community engaged in activity at AIATSIS, and broaden its support base"
	Broader geographic coverage (8)	"I envisage AIATSIS with more outreach services to the Aboriginal community outside Canberra having offices in towns such as Broome and Alice Springs"
		"An Institute that values its collection, which is unique, and which makes it more accessible, especially to researchers and communities outside of Canberra"

Question	Theme Number of responses	Illustrative comments
		"Become the world leader and authority on the recovery of Australia's Indigenous languages and their history"
	Culture / languages leadership (8)	"To be a leader internationally for language and family history, to be a role model for other Aboriginal organisations"
		"I think the language programs need more staff and funding so that government will accept their advice before designing government programs in Indigenous languages"
		"A greater attention to education and developing resources to support our primary, secondary and tertiary educators"
	Education sector role: (7)	"To continue and expand its present activities and make them as widely known at possible to both Indigenous and other Australians, including schools and universities to better inform the general Australian public about our unique first Australians"
		"An Australian community that better understands Indigenous issues"

Source: ACIL Allen Consulting 2014

Appendix E Summary of public submissions

This chapter provides a summary of the major areas of comments by respondents through the public submissions process. The major comments by respondents wishing to remain anonymous are included, but the name of the respondents has not been shared.

Table E1 **Summary of public submissions**

Submission	Major points
Abm Elgoring Ambung	**Role** ▪ AIATSIS plays a pivotal role in the development of the Kowanyama community as well as providing an educational reference point, which allows cultural and traditional knowledge to be passed on to future generations.
Angus Frith	**Native Title** ▪ *Compromised Jurisprudents* is an invaluable aide memoire and legal summary for native title legal practitioners, as it summarises the law of native title case by case, which assists the location of appropriate citations in submissions or argument.
Australian Catholic University (ACU)	**Ethics** ▪ AIATSIS should be commended for its leadership and guidance provided through their ethical guidelines in research for both staff and students. AIATSIS' ethical guidelines allow communities to build their knowledge and empowers them to preserve their knowledge in a sustainable and respectful manner. ▪ AIATSIS could play a leading role in ethical guidelines by strengthening their relationship with universities to adopt their guideline when research relates to Indigenous peoples. ▪ ACU supports recommendation 24 of the Behrendt report, which would provide AIATSIS with formal guidance on ethical research practice. **Capacity building** ▪ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies are not always regarded as key research areas. This provides AIATSIS with an opportunity to promote and support Indigenous research. ▪ Indigenous researchers would benefit from having support from supervisors who have a strong background in their area of research. **Promotion** ▪ AIATSIS could explore social media avenues to gain attention among the younger generation. **Governance** ▪ AIATSIS must have bipartisan support and ongoing resources to maintain its independent brief to progress Indigenous research practice.
Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS)	**Policy and advocacy** ▪ AIATSIS' expertise in developing policy solutions, program design and evaluation should be recognised and formalised in Government decision-making. **Research** ▪ AIATSIS should receive increased funding to strengthen across six key research areas. ▪ AIATSIS should be included in strategic planning and made eligible for the research sector funding. **Capacity building** ▪ AIATSIS services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should be strengthened through the provision of greater resources for outreach programs, such as returning materials to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and facilitating visits to AIATSIS. ▪ Support along the lines of Indigenous Visiting Research Fellowship program should be funded on a permanent basis through appropriation funds. **Family history** ▪ AIATSIS family history services be available to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and directly funded by increased appropriation to a level that meets demand. **Community** ▪ AIATSIS should be resourced to service local community based initiatives by providing greater outreach and support for collections management and training as well as the curation of digital collections for return or integration with community knowledge centres. **Partnerships** ▪ AIATSIS should receive additions to its appropriations to support the development of AIATSIS as a Centre of Excellent for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researcher development, providing ongoing support to NIRAKN and expanding its scope at the close of this competitive funding round. ▪ AIATSIS should have sufficient funds within its appropriations to continue to support traineeships and career development awards into the future. **Ethics** ▪ GERAIS be adopted as the standard for research across research ethics committees. ▪ AIATSIS should be resourced to provide ethics services and advice to universities, government and private sector research, and to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities engaging with

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	research projects. **Grants** ▪ AIATSIS Research grants Program should be reinstated to a sustainable funding level, for example $5 million per annum with appropriate administrations funds (10%). **Promotion and publication** ▪ A new First Peoples' precinct should be developed, incorporating existing and new infrastructure needs of AIATSIS, conference facilities and exhibition space, and could include the proposed national keeping place. ▪ The Aboriginal Studies Press role should be expanded to support the development of AIATSIS sourced educational materials, including a new edition of the Encyclopaedia and Map of Australia. ▪ AIATSIS should be funded to develop packages of material to support the Australian curriculum. ▪ AIATSIS should continue to play a leadership role in publishing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors and subject matter. **Cultural collection** ▪ AIATSIS funding should be supplemented to: ◆ Engage sufficient conservation staff to ensure that the collection is in optimum condition for longer-term preservation; ◆ Ensure that preservation/digitisation is incorporated as core business and is funded to meet the 2025 deadline for magnetics media preservation; ◆ Provide appropriate collection management staffing levels to ensure that the whole collection is described, catalogued and findable; ◆ Provide ICT infrastructure to allow storage and management of the born and created digital collections, for innovative delivery of online content and for engagement with communities in crowd-sourcing activities; ◆ Return the full opening hours for the library and AVA Access Unit, to reduce turnaround time for requests significantly and to return materials to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in a timely manner; and ◆ Offer collections based fellowships. **Governance** ▪ Remuneration of both the Council Chair and Council members should be raised to an appropriate level, commensurate with other Australian Government statutory authorities. **Funding** ▪ AIATSIS operational base appropriation should be increased to $46.3 million per annum to enable AIATSIS to fulfil its functions in providing leadership in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies.
Australian Anthropological Society	**Grants** ▪ AIATSIS grant funding was modest yet provided vital research that would not have otherwise been undertaken. ▪ The grants program was also important as it allowed researchers to return to the community and in doing so fostered community-based research projects in rural and remote areas. ▪ The networks and relationships developed between grant researchers and AIATSIS have been lost with the suspension of the grants programs. ▪ If the grants program were to be reinstated it would benefit from acknowledgement by researchers of AIATSIS as the funding source, similar to the approach taken by Co-operative Research Centres.
Australian Archaeological Association	**Research** ▪ It is unclear from AIATSIS' six research areas where archaeology fits within these disciplinary themes. ▪ Archaeology should be reinstated as one of AIATSIS' key research themes. **Grants** ▪ The grants program provided funding for research that did not fit in with the mainstream avenue for funding and therefore promoted unique research projects, in particular smaller-scaled projects. ▪ The grants program also provided funding to researchers outside the university system (e.g. museum researchers, public agency researchers and community-based archaeologists). ▪ The AIATSIS grants program was very cost effective when compared to larger grant schemes. ▪ Research funded by the grants program made significant contributions to publications and peer reviewed journals. **Research** ▪ Archaeological research has been undertaken in collaboration with communities and traditional owner groups and has allowed communities to directly control research on their cultural heritage. This approach has supported high-quality collaborative research outputs of immediate relevance to communities.
Charles Darwin University	**Promotions** ▪ It is clear within CDU that there is a lack of awareness of AIATSIS among its researchers. Significant effort is needed to promote the role of AIATSIS, particularly among universities and research organisations. ▪ More needs to be done to promote the role of AIATSIS in areas that have a high proportion of Indigenous people. For example, there is limited visibility of AIATSIS in the Northern Territory.

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	Partnerships ▪ AIATSIS needs to engage in strategic partnerships with universities who engage with urban, rural and remote communities. ▪ There is a role for AIATSIS to assist RHD students during the period of candidature, which could be negotiated with universities. **Ethics** ▪ AIATSIS is the leader in the development and maintenance of ethical standards via their ethical guidelines. **Grants** ▪ The grants program plays an important role in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research as it provides funding to those projects that are inconsistent with the requirements under ARC and NHMRC grant funding. ▪ With the suspension of the grants program there is little evidence of AIATSIS actively engaging or supporting Indigenous researchers at universities at a national level. The grants program played an important role in developing the capacity of RHD and early career research students. **Research** ▪ The Institute is well positioned to be a national leader in the provision of professional development programs for Indigenous community-based researchers, their organisations and communities. **Publications** ▪ Substantial delay is experienced between submitting and publishing manuscripts by the Aboriginal Studies Press. This is seen as a likely outcome of the lack of funding given to AIATSIS. ▪ The lag between submission and publication will ultimately impact on AIATSIS effectiveness in this function. **Cultural collections** ▪ AIATSIS is not effectively providing access to its cultural collections. Materials sent to AIATSIS are often not seen as accessible to those who submitted them. Additionally, there is a significant delay in accessing requested materials. ▪ Communities and researchers are less likely to deposit their material as they unsure whether and when they can access it. **Digitisation** ▪ Digitisation is a top priority for AIATSIS. However, it is not possible with current funding levels. ▪ Currently, a number of different organisations are undertaking digitisation of their collections. There is a role for AIATSIS to coordinate and lead this initiative and be funded accordingly. **Governance** ▪ Becoming a member is cumbersome and overly bureaucratic, which has led to poor membership rates. A way to overcome this would be for potential members to submit a CV to be assessed by the Research Advisory Committee against membership criteria. ▪ A reduction in the number of ministerial appointments to Council would provide better opportunities for more Indigenous members to seek election.
George Villaflor	**Role** ▪ AIATSIS occupies a unique position in Australia. In particular, it plays an important role in the intellectual growth of Australians with Indigenous history and future relationships with other Australians. ▪ AIATSIS plays a key role in fostering relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers. **Cultural collection** ▪ Ensuring that the collection is properly maintained should be the main priority for AIATSIS. **Research** ▪ AIATSIS needs to increase its efforts in fostering and encouraging Indigenous researchers. ▪ AIATSIS should be able to compete in private research areas. ▪ All research on Indigenous issues vital to the Government should be directed only through AIATSIS. Therefore the research component of AIATSIS should be increased with more Indigenous researchers. **Policy and advocacy** ▪ The research undertaken at AIATSIS plays an important role in providing independent advice to the Government, which shapes policy and programs of relevant to Indigenous Australians. **Promotion** ▪ Funding for AIATSIS' promotional activities should be vastly increased. **Digitisation** ▪ There needs to be a substantial increase in the effort to digitise AIATSIS cultural collections and it should be funded appropriately. ▪ All community art acquired by AIATSIS should be digitised and returned to communities. **Governance** ▪ AIATSIS should always be led by an Indigenous person. ▪ Members of the council should have their term of membership on the Council spelt out and they should be able to select their own Chair of the Council.

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Griffith University	**Partnerships** ▪ Currently, AIATSIS role in supporting universities is limited to grants (until recent suspension) and research ethic guidelines. This could be expanded to include targeted grants to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers or topics with connections to communities, and training to RHD students to showcase the benefits of research to Indigenous students. ▪ There is the potential for AIATSIS to play an important role in supporting universities to build capacity through effective grant administration and publishing research outcomes. ▪ Outcomes of partnerships with universities would include: (i) greater support networks for RHD and early career researchers; (ii) leadership and career training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers; and (iii) developing national standards of competencies for supervisors of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander RHD students. **Ethics** ▪ The ethical guidelines, review and approvals could be improved if they were more streamlined. Currently, there are multiple ethic review processes which lead to delays in achieving project milestones, which can discourage researchers undertaking Indigenous research projects. **Grants** ▪ If grants are to be reinstated, there should be both qualitative and quantitative measures of their impact. **Research** ▪ AIATSIS should concentrate it research on education, social sciences, humanities, mathematics, science and Indigenous knowledge's. It should not include clinical health and wellbeing research, which is currently undertaken by NHMRC.
John Mansfield	**Cultural collections** ▪ Bureaucratic processes act as a significant barrier to accessing requested materials in a timely manner. ▪ The time taken to access materials reduces the likelihood of academics making future deposits to AIATSIS.
Jon Altman, Australian National University	**Funding** ▪ Appropriate, realistic and sustainable funding needs to be introduced to allow AIATSIS to reinstate the grants program, preserve and improve access to the cultural collection, and digitise the collection. ▪ AIATSIS currently receives funding from numerous Australian Government departments, exposing the Institute to 'bureaucratic politicking' and excessive accountability mechanisms. **Partnerships** ▪ AIATSIS has a strong relationship with ANU, made possible by their co-location. As such, AIATSIS has played a key role in developing young researchers who move between AIATSIS and ANU either by gaining access to the grants program (previously), in using the Reading Room and Library or in employment. **Grants** ▪ The suspension of the grants program has meant a loss of influence and leverage for AIATSIS. ▪ Unlike other research grants, AIATSIS research grants had a degree of flexibility, which supported community based research. This complements rather than competes with ARC grants. **Policy and advocacy** ▪ AIATSIS, through extensive research, provides well thought out submissions to parliamentary inquiries. This is most evident through its Native Title Research Unit, which has produced work that complements the activities undertaken at the Indigenous Law Centre (UNSW) and the Jumbunna Indigenous House of learning at UTS. **Research** ▪ A proportion of the research undertaken at AIATSIS is completed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The research therefore has a distinct Indigenous viewpoint as well as building Indigenous researcher capabilities. **Promotions and publications** ▪ AIATSIS' Mura catalogue, Aboriginal Studies Press and website are excellent resources for researchers and the wider public (including those in regional and remote communities). **Digitisation** ▪ More emphasis needs to be placed on storing already digitised material. Without this emphasis, AIATSIS runs the risk of these items not being included in the collections. **Membership** ▪ Membership of AIATSIS needs to be revived, especially among the younger Indigenous population.
Libraries ACT	**Cultural collection** ▪ Preserving AIATSIS cultural collections is pivotal. AIATSIS access protocols are an 'industry norm', a recognition of the particular provenance of the collection, and a means of supporting the collection items. AIATSIS has a responsibility in this area but access conditions are a matter of ongoing review in the industry. ▪ Access to AIATSIS' cultural collections would be more effective if opening hours were extended. **Geographical considerations**

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	▪ The co-location of AIATSIS' many services supports organisational efficiencies within the Institute. **Promotion** ▪ AIATSIS meets its responsibilities to encourage a greater understanding about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. For Libraries ACT this is made possible via: ◆ Access to the AIATSIS library and reference services, inter-library loans and document delivery; ◆ Development of our lending and heritage collections (e.g. by accessing the Mura catalogue records); ◆ Professional and organisational development; and ◆ Loan of exhibition materials to mark significant days.
Laynhapuy Homelands Aboriginal Corporation	**Capacity building** ▪ To increase the capacity Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers and increase community knowledge, AIATSIS should include initiatives such as bursaries to allow researchers to travel and participate in regional and metropolitan programs and greater outreach activities. **Promotion** ▪ AIATSIS undertakes a significant amount of promotional activity, which is encouraged by Laynha. ▪ Layhna sees an opportunity to assist AIATSIS by contributing to its collection, for example, audio-visual materials created with Yolngu in the homelands. ▪ As the National Broadband Network is now available in Yolngu, it may be possible for direct interface between remote Yolngu communities and AIATSIS resources.
Professor Marcia Langton	**Communities** ▪ At AIATSIS the approach to preservation and maintenance has shifted away and its primary focus has shifted from the 'authoritative researcher' to community capacity building **Funding** ▪ It is not possible for AIATSIS to adequately meet expectations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities due to the limited and uncertain levels of funding. ▪ Falling funding levels have made it difficult for AIATSIS to continue building the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers. **Legislation** ▪ Under the Act, AIATSIS should be required to partner with universities and similar research institutions, to ensure its staff are part of the wider research community. Under the Act, AIATSIS should be required to prioritise its research into Australian languages and performance (e.g. song and dance) due to the irrecoverable losses associated with extinction. **Ethics** ▪ The ethical guidelines provided by AIATSIS are effective and should be recommended as they have been tested in communities. **Grants** ▪ The suspension of the grants program is a significant loss to AIATSIS and has negatively impacted the research output from a large community of researchers. ▪ The suspension of the grants program has halted innovative research conducted at a community base level. ▪ It is recommended that the grants program is reinstated. **Digitisation** ▪ AIATSIS' ability to digitise its collections and make them available is acting as a barrier for the Institute to promote Indigenous people, their culture and history. ▪ The digitisation of the Institute's collection should be a top priority. **Governance** ▪ The new governance structure has meant that the once robust and strong relationship between the Council and its members has been diminished. ▪ To improve the relationship, AIATSIS should reinstate research events. **Strategic directions** ▪ To increase Indigenous access to collections, within the Institute's Act it should be noted that AIATSIS must partner with Indigenous community archives, knowledge centres and public collecting institutions.
Michael Williams	**Governance** ▪ One of AIATSIS key distinguishing features is that is has a Council that is largely comprised of Indigenous people. ▪ Council members have a collective skills set and vast experience which make for a strong, diverse and complimentary Council. **Legislation** ▪ In the current day there may be a need for a 'revamp' of AIATSIS legislation, which determines its core research fields. **Staff** ▪ Staff at AIATSIS are passionate and bring a great work ethic, therefore output at the Institute 'punches above its weight'. **Capacity building**

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	▪ Capacity building of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers is made possible by the Institute's collections and library, in conjunction with the generosity of staff. **Partnerships** ▪ AIATSIS should focus on positioning itself in the higher education sector and establish itself as a research partner among universities. **Ethics** ▪ AIATSIS is the leader in terms of its research ethical guidelines, which complement the broader research ethics domain. **Geographical location** ▪ AIATSIS should support Visiting Research Fellows who have low mobility and who wish to stay in their community while undertaking research. **Promotion** ▪ AIATSIS should be more widely known among the Indigenous scholarly community as well as Australians generally. AIATSIS is an important institution and should therefore feature more heavily in representation by Australia internationally. **Grants** ▪ The suspension of the grants program inhibits the ability of AIATSIS to continue building the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, as well as including Indigenous communities in research. **Strategic directions** ▪ AIATSIS should continue to perform its current functions, including maintaining a place where Australians and First Nations feel confident in depositing material for future generations.
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Consortium (NATSIHEC)	**Partnerships** ▪ AIATSIS has informal partnerships with universities, however, AIATSIS would benefit from making these relationships more formal (e.g. 'on the road seminars' or training). **Ethics** ▪ There is the potential for AIATSIS to play a stronger role in promoting and supporting the use of their ethical guidelines for ethical research among universities across Australia. **Grants** ▪ AIATSIS' decision to suspend the grants program represents a significant loss for RHD students and early career researchers. ▪ Although NHMRC and ARC target Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples there is still room for the research within AIATSIS' grants program (e.g. neither NHMRC or ARC offer small scale grants). ▪ A future grants program could offer targeted funding for journal publications to incentivise higher levels of publications among researchers. **Digitisation** ▪ Today, journal articles are widely available online and therefore it is logical that AIATSIS collections are also available online.
National Congress of Australia's First Peoples	**Role** ▪ AIATSIS is highly valued among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as it is the only collection that is solely dedicated to preserving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. ▪ AIATSIS should be formally recognised by Government as an organisation that contributes to fulfilling the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. ▪ AIATSIS plays a vital role in reconnecting communities with their cultures and histories via their collection and community outreach programs. **Funding** ▪ AIATSIS is unable to successfully fulfil its legislated functions due to funding constraints – low funding levels have had severe impacts on the Institute (e.g. the suspension of the grants program and the uncertainty surrounding digitisation). ▪ AIATSIS should be given a bipartisan long-term funding agreement sufficient to allow it to fulfil all its existing and any new statutory functions to a high level. **Grants** ▪ Congress supports the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs that the Australian Government should determine an appropriate and sustainable funding model in order for it to recommence its research grants program. **Community** ▪ AIATSIS community visits are particularly important in reaching out to older people who are full of knowledge but may be unable to get to AIATSIS in Canberra. As such, it is of concern that budget cuts have reduced the number of outreach programs. **Governance** ▪ The AIATSIS Council should be comprised entirely of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and consider instating an equal number of men and women. **Languages** ▪ Congress agrees with Recommendation 28 of the *Our Land Our Languages* report regarding an increase in resources for AIATSIS to carry out the protection and digitisation of language materials. ▪ AIATSIS requires more funding to protect and disseminate knowledge of languages to Aboriginal

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	and Torres Strait Islander communities and among the general community (e.g. funding for storage and digitisation of language materials). **Research** ▪ One of AIATSIS key strengths is its research unit. However, following funding cuts, AIATSIS' position as a leader in this respect has declined. As such, AIATSIS should consider expanding the number of research areas it undertake (e.g. social fields). **Ethics** ▪ Congress agrees with the recommendation made in the Behrendt report, which states that AIATSIS should extend its role to provide more formal guidance to universities on ethical research practice.
National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)	**Ethics** ▪ NHMRC is interested in continuing to work closely with AIATSIS on matters related to research ethics. ▪ AIATSIS is currently undertaking an evaluation of two NHMRC research ethic guidelines, both of which were overdue for a review (*Evaluation of value and Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research* and *Keeping Research on Track: A Guide for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples about Health Research*). **Partnerships** ▪ There are potential synergies between NHMRC's People Support schemes that include Indigenous specific schemes and AIATSIS' Indigenous Visiting Research Fellowship. ▪ A future grants program could see a shared peer review between AIATSIS and NHMRC. ▪ NHMRC and AIATSIS have links to national and international networks which could enhance and contribute to each other's network (e.g. AIATSIS is a partner of the ARC and Lowitja Institute, and NHMRC is a Tripartite Agreement with Canada and New Zealand and other international networks).
National Museum of Australia (NMA)	**Relationship with AIATSIS** ▪ The relationship between AIATSIS and NMA extends across several decades and has assisted the Museum in advancing relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, their interests and individuals. ▪ A Memorandum of Understanding was created between the two organisations in 2010 to establish a framework for the relationship. ▪ To date the joint work between the two organisations has included: (i) use of each other's collections; (ii) joint presentations at NAIDOC week; and (iii) provision of facilities for Museum staff. ▪ There is scope for further collaboration and engagement between the two organisations. **Partnerships** ▪ There may be possibilities for AIATSIS and NMA to collaborate in their displays and research programs, along with shared services in IT, Human Resources, cleaning and security. ▪ To enhance collaboration, the fee-for-service arrangement between the two organisations should be abolished. ▪ It is NMA's intention to develop a year-long program of events with AIATSIS, in order to meaningfully promote and fortify each other's programs in the future. ▪ AIATSIS could extend its reach and influence by partnering with similar organisations. This would support AIATSIS in maximising the public benefit of its collections and programs. **Cultural collection** ▪ AIATSIS's collection is complementary to NMA's collections of Indigenous artefacts. ▪ Staff limitations at AIATSIS have made it more difficult to access requested materials within an appropriate timeframe (e.g. several months). This suggests additional resources are required. ▪ More streamlined protocols relating to access to the collections need to reviewed to make them more streamlined. This in turn would improve accessing to collections on a wider scale. **Digitisation** ▪ Due to the similarities in collections, AIATSIS and NMA should collaborate in the process of digitisation. This would allow for real efficiencies and cost savings. **Grants** ▪ The suspension of the grants program will have significant implications for research into Material Culture, Aboriginal history and Indigenous Archaeology. ▪ The grants program was vital to those researchers who worked outside universities (e.g. community based researchers and independent scholars) who are not eligible for grants from ARC.
National Native Title Council (NNTC)	**Native Title** ▪ AIATSIS native title research unit would benefit from additional representation from Native Title Representative Bodies and Native Title Research Advisory Committee. ▪ NNTC is concerned about the overlap of functions between service providers such as AIATSIS, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (previously FaHCSIA) and the Aurora project in the field of native title research. There needs to be a rationalisation of roles and functions for these organisations ▪ There needs to be an investigation into the duplication that currently exists in order to assist in coordinating the efforts by those organisations engaged in native title research. **Policy advocacy** ▪ AIATSIS has expanded its functions and become more involved in the development of policy and

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	legislative reform. ▪ AIATSIS research role in native title should be supportive of the work already undertaken in this area by NNTC and its member organisations, who are best placed to provide commentary on policy development.
Dr Nick Theiberger	**Digitisation** ▪ The digitisation of AIATSIS collection would benefit if the Aboriginal Studies Electronic Data Archive (ASEDA) were generalised to other AIATSIS holdings. AIATSIS has instead 'dismantled' the ASEDA collection. ▪ There are a number of key collections that would benefit from digitisation and allow access to those outside of Canberra (e.g. Bates, Tindale, Thompson and Matthews papers).
Ninti One	**Grants** ▪ The grants program played a key role in the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, in particular for those living in remote areas. ▪ The grants program also allowed for more diverse community based research to be undertaken, which was made possible by being able to reach out to communities (unlike the university sector). ▪ To continue building the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, the grants program needs to be reinstated and have a stronger focus on funding community based research projects. **Geographical considerations** ▪ AIATSIS needs to take into account the needs of Visiting Research Fellows who have low mobility (e.g. those residing in regional and remote communities) and who may not wish to travel to Canberra. For example, AIATSIS could foster relationships with institutions that have staff in remote areas of Australia. ▪ AIATSIS also needs to increase the access to its cultural collections for those who are not based in Canberra via online databases and resources. At present it is difficult to access the wealth of information currently located at AIATSIS without a physical visit. **Partnerships** ▪ AIATSIS would benefit from increasing the number of partnerships with research institutions to increase awareness and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies. **Ethics** ▪ AIATSIS is a leader in providing ethical standards and practices for research. It also has the most advanced protocols for cultural collection managements and access. ▪ AIATSIS should take a leadership role in developing and implementing ethical guidelines at a national, state and community based level. **Digitisation** ▪ The digitisation process is slow and putting the cultural collection at risk. ▪ Digitisation requires more government funding to help AIATSIS preserve and make its collections accessible. ▪ Currently, there is not national strategy for digitising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander collections. Therefore AIATSIS should look into becoming the lead Australian cultural agency responsible for the coordination of digitisation and online projects. **Funding** ▪ For AIATSIS to successfully achieve its legislated functions, the level of funding needs to be increased. Specifically, additional funding is required for: digitisation; accessing cultural collections; reigniting the grants program; establishing outreach programs; and increasing collaboration with remote researchers.
Peter Van De Miele	**Advocacy and policy** ▪ 'AIATSIS played a pivotal role in assisting Treasury in developing the Government's policy position on the tax treatment of Native Title benefits received by Australian Indigenous communities, that sought to address issues of certainty by members of those communities.'
Phil Duncan	**Funding** ▪ AIATSIS is an organisation that requires adequate funding to maintain its long term future.
Queensland University of Technology	**Cultural collection** ▪ AIATSIS cultural collections, including its library, audio-visual archive and cultural resource collections make significant and valuable contributions to researchers. **Promotion and publications** ▪ There is potential for AIATSIS to play a bigger role in promoting its collection and disseminating knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and lifestyles. For example, AIATSIS research and collections are an important resource for schools and universities. ▪ AIATSIS could closely follow the model of the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, which is responsible for educating the public about the life, languages, history and arts of Native American peoples. **Capacity building** ▪ AIATSIS is well positioned to support the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers as a well-received and a respected Institution.
Dr Robert Mailhammer	**Cultural collection**

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	▪ Without AIATSIS cultural collection (e.g. linguistic, cultural and anthropological documentation), much of the research undertaken regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and lifestyle would not be possible. **Policy and advocacy** ▪ AIATSIS social role as an advocate for the rights and wellbeing of Indigenous Australians through spreading knowledge about Indigenous history, languages and cultures is fundamental to the social peace in Australia.
Professor Tasaku Tsunoda	**Research (languages)** ▪ Research undertaken by AIATSIS has long term benefits for the community and therefore the review needs to take into account the long term performance of AIATSIS and not immediate results. Examples of long term benefits in the field of research at AIATSIS include: ◆ When Kimberley Language Resource Centre (KLRC) was established in 1984 to undertake research into the Djaru languageTasaku Tsunoda's research was used to form the basis of activities by the centre; and ◆ The Gabilgba language was not lost as it was recorded by Tasaku Tsunoda who lodged the relevant paperwork with the then AIAS, which is now an invaluable resource to that community. **Ethics** ▪ The ethical guidelines are among the best ethical codes available to linguists today.
University of Melbourne	**Cultural collections** ▪ AIATSIS collections are vital and should be maintained as an archive that conforms to international best practice in curation, in particular for digitised items. However, at present, AIATSIS does not have adequate funding for this to occur. ▪ Limited access to AIATSIS collections results in delays for communities seeking to access materials concerning languages and culture. ▪ The University is concerned by the inability of communities to repossess deposited items. **Digitisation** ▪ AIATSIS inability to keep up with the same level of digitisation occurring across the world is shown by a growing trend for researchers using alternative digital archives, due to their greater accessibility. ▪ The University supports Recommendation 28 of the *Our Land Our Languages*, which sets out the priority for the digitisation of Indigenous language and cultural materials. **Grants** ▪ The research grants program helped AIATSIS to establish a strong research network and build connections with communities. ▪ This relationship helped AIATSIS gain trust among the communities and in turn, promoted deposit of materials to the collection. ▪ The University recommends the reinstatement of the grants program. **Promotion and publication** ▪ The University is concerned by the delay between submission of work and its publication through the Aboriginal Studies Press, Native Title Research Unit and Aboriginal Studies Journal. ▪ The Mura catalogue, AUSTLANG database, OZBIB and online exhibitions are well regarded. **Strategic directions** ▪ AIATSIS needs a vision and the capability to engage with local community repositories. The relationships formed with communities must be a top priority for the Institute because of the ethical considerations for researchers who interact with communities through AIATSIS collections.
Agreements, Treaties and Negotiated Settlements Project	**AIATSIS role in the Agreements, Treaties and Negotiated Settlements** (**ATNS project** ▪ AIATSIS has been a partner investigator in the latter two phases of the project. ▪ AIATSIS contributes in-kind support and associated administrative and logical services. ▪ The ATNS project has benefited from AIATSIS regular constituency, which capture some different elements from those of the ATNS project as a whole. **Staffing** ▪ AIATSIS has provided excellent research input into native title and tax reform over the last few years. The major tax and legal regulatory changes would not have been possible without AIATSIS staff. ▪ AIATSIS has provided important work on the development of the Indigenous Community Development Corporation through the Taxation of Native Title and Traditional Owner Benefits and Governance Working Group. **Partnerships** ▪ AIATSIS conducted a symposia and workshops during the ATNS Project earlier this year, which focused upon the impact that the extractive industry continues to have upon Indigenous societies both within Australia and internationally. ▪ Information provided by AIATSIS supports the ATNS project to bridge the gap between academic understanding of the complexities of native title research and making it accessible to the lay person, thereby raising awareness of these issues.
University of Newcastle	**Ethics** ▪ AIATSIS ethical guidelines are a valuable resource when working with and researching Aboriginal

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	and Torres Strait Islander communities. ▪ The provision of ethical guidelines is an essential element of AIATSIS and therefore should be revised and updated on a regular basis. ▪ AIATSIS ethical guidelines should be widely promoted and become the standard of practice for researchers engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. **Research** ▪ More emphasis should be placed on supporting and attracting Research Higher Degree (RHD) students and early career researchers. ▪ To increase the number of RHD students, AIATSIS could offer incentives to publish their research or become more involved in research projects. **Partnerships** ▪ AIATSIS would benefit from engaging in research partnerships with similar institutions such as the National Indigenous Research and Knowledges Network (NIRAKN). ▪ AIATSIS partnerships with universities could be strengthened by defining the unique needs of each institution. ▪ Through more significant interaction with universities, AIATSIS would have the ability to further support RHD students. This would expose RHD students to renowned Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers. **Grants** ▪ The suspension of the research grants program was a significant loss to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research. ▪ The suspension of the grants program is compounded by the limited success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early career researchers to gain access to funding from the ARC, Discovery Early Career Researcher Award (DECRA) and Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT). **Cultural collection** ▪ Books available for purchase from the Aboriginal Studies Press and articles sourced from AIATSIS' Mura catalogue provide culturally appropriate resources to teach and undertake Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies. ▪ Access to the materials online can be difficult and is often a lengthy process, which ultimately has a negative impact in undertaking timely research and education activities. **Strategic directions** ▪ AIATSIS should play a key role in increasing the interaction among researchers within similar fields by hosting more workshops and/or national conferences.
University of Notre Dame Australia	**Research** ▪ AIATSIS should develop and maintain a program of short-medium Visiting Research Fellowships of 3-6 months and enable some research fellowships to be completed in regions where researchers are located, or within partner institutions. **Publications** ▪ The Aboriginal Studies Press and AIATSIS research publications are highly regarded within the academic sector, as is the biannual AIATSIS Conference and the annual National Native Title Conference. However, more focus should be placed on marketing and disseminating the valuable products it produces. **Ethics** ▪ AIATSIS ethical guidelines are a valuable resource for Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers and have provided national leadership in regard to ethical practices and protocols. ▪ The ethical guidelines have not been properly incorporated into the university's ethical guidelines for research; this should be a future priority of AIATSIS. **Capacity building** ▪ To improve the capacity of Indigenous researchers, AIATSIS could develop research skills training and workshops with the National Indigenous Research and Knowledges Network (NIRAKN) with a focus on those groups who would benefit from national skills development workshops in Canberra. **Digitisation** ▪ Digitising the collection is of high importance, however, digitisation at AIATSIS has only just begun and is likely to require over a decade of work before it is complete. ▪ AIATSIS should complete a review of its collections' unique heritage value under the UNESCO guidelines to promote its value and attract private funding. **Grants** ▪ The grants program should be reinstated. Additionally the new grants program should enable regional community members to conduct preliminary site visits and research projects to ascertain the extent of their people's knowledge being held in the AIATSIS archives. **Geographical considerations** ▪ AIATSIS does not use its location in the heart of Canberra to its full potential. AIATSIS should invest in creating exhibitions that attract passing audiences (e.g. those going to the National Museum of Australia) as well as exhibitions that travel to regional and cultural centres across Australia. **Policy and advocacy** ▪ AIATSIS has played a key role in influencing policies regarding native title, language preservation, and health and heritage. However, it has not performed well in other areas such as education,

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	wellbeing, economic development, and housing and governance. **Grants** ▪ AIATSIS should review its suspension of the grants program in order to develop a business case to be put to the AIATSIS Council with clear objectives of the research output for small community based projects (e.g. between $10,000 and $30,000). **Partnerships** ▪ AIATSIS needs to enter into partnerships with regional universities in order to support research projects and to access funds for communities and community based organisations (e.g. Notre Dame's Nulungu Research Institute). **Research** ▪ AIATSIS is most effective when it focuses on a single theme or discipline and links community groups within this field with relevant programs of activity that lead to improved research outcomes. **Governance** ▪ AIATSIS membership needs to be broadened to assist AIATSIS in fulfilling its national role (e.g. open to individuals, organisations and representative bodies).
University of Western Sydney	**Role** ▪ The key roles for AIATSIS are to identity maintenance and projection, collection and management of key documentation, supporting researcher, particularly Indigenous researchers, and dissemination of research to increase the awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. **Partnerships** ▪ AIATSIS' research sector would benefit from developing formal relationships with universities, who have well established research initiatives currently underway. ▪ AIATSIS could play a key role in supporting Indigenous researchers/RHD students through its facilities, knowledge and collections. Additional suggestions for AIATSIS' role in universities include: ◆ Establishing a tertiary programs officer to maintain contact with the key players within universities; ◆ Offer co-supervision for particular candidacies; ◆ Act as a consultant for intellectual property issues in research practice, which involves cultural objects and heritage; and ◆ Hold workshops and other event to improve networking connections. **Capacity building** ▪ AIATSIS emphasis on supporting Indigenous researchers has reversed the typical relationship where 'Whites study Blacks'. **Grants** ▪ If the grants program is to be reinstated it would benefit from being more targeted so as to support research excellence. ▪ A future grants program would benefit from partnering with other researchers (e.g. ARC) as a Linkage partner. **Digitisation** ▪ There should be scope for AIATSIS efforts in digitising to expand. The key to addressing issues surrounding access to AIATSIS' collections is to digitise. ▪ Indigenous knowledge is now being made available across multiple databases (e.g. Ara Iritja and Community Stories) and AIATSIS needs to make sure that it remains relevant within this area.
Dr Zane Ma Rhea, Monash University	**Role** ▪ A specific funding base that enables AIATSIS to engage with the whole education sector, not just universities, should be introduced into AIATSIS legislated functions. . **Ethics** ▪ The ethical guidelines are the most revered guidelines among researchers undertaking research regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies. ▪ AIATSIS, in partnership with National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), should play a national leadership role in promoting ethical guidelines. This will ensure best practice when undertaking research regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. ▪ AIATSIS should collaborate with universities in developing and implementing appropriate ethical guidelines. **Advocacy and policy** ▪ AIATSIS should be recognised as having a prominent role in the education sector. This would allow AIATSIS to have an influence in advising governments on future policies in the area. **Digitisation** ▪ More funding is needed for the digitisation of cultural collections, which would allow for improved access. ▪ Both researchers and AIATSIS would benefit from aligning the digital collections with the Australian Curriculum, so as to allow researchers better access to appropriate materials. ▪ Collaborating with a relevant organisation would assist AIATSIS in digitising its vast cultural collection.
Name withheld	**Staffing**

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	▪ AIATSIS is an independent body that sits outside the higher education system. Being independent allows AIATSIS to effectively undertake a wide range of research; however, it has a negative impact on the Institute's ability to attract high calibre staff. Therefore, more effort is required to integrate AIATSIS into the higher education system. **Strategic directions** ▪ Adopt a model closely aligned with the National Library of Australia (NLA), which provides library services and fellowships for scholars where they can host seminars and conferences and have their own publication programs. ▪ Integrate into the higher education system, while maintaining independence.
Name withheld	**Grants** ▪ The suspension of the grants program has a number of long-term impacts, including a reduction in the diversity of research being carried out. It also removes the sole source of funds for small research projects initiated by Aboriginal communities. ▪ The suspension of the grants program will lead to a reduction in the independence of post-graduate researchers who will be forced into larger hierarchical research teams. ▪ In particular, the suspension of the grants program has had significant implications for archaeologists whose only other source of funding comes from ARC grants. **Strategic directions** ▪ Archaeology should be recognised as one of the Institute's disciplinary areas, namely 'Aboriginal history, archaeology and material culture'.
Name withheld	**Grants** ▪ It is of great disappointment the grants program was suspended. This will be to the detriment of future anthropology work regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. ▪ It is recommended that AIATSIS reinstate the grants programs that they have had since the 1970s.
Name withheld	**Grants** ▪ The grants program previously provided an invaluable role in supporting higher degree and Indigenous community based research. Its suspension was therefore a major blow to those engaged in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research. ▪ The suspension of the grants program has severely impacted the AIATSIS' ability to meet its legislated functions. **Ethics** ▪ AIATSIS ethical guidelines have been crucial in developing equitable research and collections-management cultures here and around the world. ▪ The Institute's reduced capacity to promote and monitor ethical research is a loss to all research organisations. ▪ Engaging and collaborating would assist AIATSIS in promoting, developing and implementing its ethical guidelines into research organisations. **Digitisation** ▪ AIATSIS should play a leading role in coordinating the effort, at both the national and international levels, for digitising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander collections. ▪ AIATSIS would benefit from collaborating with universities, libraries, and museums in the digitisation of collections as currently it plays a very small role in this area. **Publications** ▪ AIATSIS maintains a comprehensive publishing program, which aligns with its legislated functions. ▪ AIATSIS publications are revered, including the Aboriginal Studies Press and the Australian Aboriginal Studies Journal. ▪ AIATSIS' publishing program is an important resource for universities and has been a major achievement for the Institute. However, this has come at the expense of other important AIATSIS functions. ▪ AIATSIS could partner with prominent organisations instead of doing it on its own, which at present is being undertaken at the expense of other areas within the Institute.
Name withheld	**Role** ▪ Current legislated functions make it difficult for AIATSIS to address current and future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders priorities and issues. ▪ Research should no longer dominate AIATSIS' agenda. **Policy and advocacy** ▪ AIATSIS should play a bigger role in driving government policy in areas relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research. **Ethics** ▪ AIATSIS should be responsible for ensuring ethical research is conducted at universities and ensuring that research results are given back to communities. ▪ Human Research Ethics Committees (HREC) assess ethics applications closely following NHMRC's ethical guidelines. However, HRECs also approve projects that relate to areas other than health and medicine. Therefore a number of initiatives should be implemented to increase AIATSIS' influence in this area (e.g. develop an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific ethics appraisal form for HRECs).

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	Capacity building ▪ Opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at AIATSIS are largely unknown. More should be done to promote community based Indigenous researchers. ▪ To improve AIATSIS' role in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers there needs to be an increase in the recognition and status of traditional knowledge in research and an increase in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research capacity through major funding streams. ▪ AIATSIS' Visiting Research Fellowship program could be improved by providing extensive services to Indigenous researchers in community settings. **Grants** A future grants program should support project activities undertaken by communities. **Research** ▪ AIATSIS needs to evaluate the areas that it is currently researching and assess their influence on addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander priorities and issues. ▪ AIATSIS needs to review its function in conducting research (e.g. increased policy development, repetitive research and applied research). **Policy and advocacy** ▪ AIATSIS needs to play a key role in increasing the awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and communities in the context of pre and post-colonial occupation. It could do this include through use of the media, politics (make Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs a key issue for governments) and education. **Governance** ▪ There needs to be more coordination between the several Government departments that support AIATSIS.
Name withheld	**Research** ▪ Much of the research undertaken at AIATSIS does not focus on Aboriginal intellectual traditions. However, this should be maintained as a primary focus as it is of lasting value. **Cultural collection** ▪ Access to AIATSIS' cultural collection can be a lengthy process and as a result, AIATSIS is not meeting the expectations of researchers. Researchers often make other arrangements if access processes take too long. **Digitisation** ▪ It is not evident via the Mura catalogue whether an audio-visual item has been digitised. ▪ At this stage, the digitisation for audio-visual items is very slow, with no audio-visual items available online. **Partnerships** ▪ There are limitations for AIATSIS being a non-teaching research institute. Mentoring and supervision are appropriate but should be viewed as ancillary services to the teaching environment provided by universities. **Grants** ▪ The suspension of the grants program has meant AIATSIS staff are at risk of being out of touch with research trends and needs, and researchers themselves. **Digitisation** ▪ Digitisation provides an opportunity for access to the wider public who are not based in Canberra. ▪ AIATSIS has rejected offers to collaborate in undertaking digitisation (e.g. ISO Language codes, UNESO Engagement Language atlas). At the same time, overseas funding for research into Australian languages and cultures has increased. As a result, research findings are increasingly being stored in international databases.

Source: ACIL Allen Consulting 2014