



Friday, 7 December, 2018

## **AIATSIS statement on the recommendation of the establishment of a National Resting Place**

Professor Michael McDaniel, Chairperson of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), welcomed the recent release of the final report of the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition Relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

Professor McDaniel said as the only national institution with an exclusive focus on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander story of Australia, the recommendations regarding truth-telling are particularly pertinent for the work of the Institute.

“AIATSIS welcomes the Committee’s recommendation that ‘the Australian Government consider the establishment, in Canberra, of a National Resting Place, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander remains which could be a place of commemoration, healing and reflection,’” Professor McDaniel said.

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians should be able to care for and visit ancestral remains in a central and more culturally appropriate place than a museum vault. We strongly believe a national resting place will be a place for pilgrimage, where all Australians can gather for reflection, for education, and for learning.

“Such a national resting place is a critical component of an iconic and enduring institutional representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ unique place as central to the national story. It would provide tangible recognition of Indigenous Australians as a unique and indispensable constituent part of modern Australia.

“The first story of this nation, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander story, is 65,000 years old, our nation home to the oldest continuing culture in the world. This is a story all Australian’s should feel immense pride in. Our cultures, histories and knowledge need to be celebrated. At the same time, the turbulence and trauma of the last 250 years cannot be hidden, and is not something we should not shy away from.

“The truth of our experience needs to be brought to the fore and acknowledged meaningfully. We would fully support the establishment of such a nationally significant centre that would create a welcome focal point to assist in the healing process.”

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