

CHAPTER 4

Corporate governance, management and accountability



Highlights 2005–06

- major enhancements to information technology (IT) network completed, including the new Digital Asset Management System (DAMS)
- new Institute website launched with added functionality
- building refurbishments completed successfully
- proportion of Indigenous staff increased to 34 per cent

Overview

Enabling legislation

AIATSIS operates under the *Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Act 1989* (the Act).

Responsible minister

The responsible minister is the Minister for Education, Science and Training, the Hon. Julie Bishop, MP.

Council

Under section 43(1) of the Act, the Minister may ask the Council of the Institute to provide advice on aspects of the culture, history and society of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders. The Council consists of

- four people elected by the members of the Institute in accordance with the Institute rules, being people who are themselves members of the Institute
- one person appointed by the Minister, being a person who is a Torres Strait Islander
- four other people appointed by the Minister, being people who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders.

All Councillors are non-executive members and hold office on a part-time basis.

Membership of the Council and the term of each appointment during 2005–06 are set out in Table 4.

Table 4: Elected and appointed Council members and terms

Elected members	
Professor Michael Dodson, AM	16 May 2004–15 May 2006 16 May 2006–15 May 2008
Professor Larissa Behrendt	16 May 2004–15 May 2006
Dr John Maynard	16 May 2006–15 May 2008
Emer. Professor Robert Tonkinson	16 May 2004–15 May 2006 16 May 2006–15 May 2008
Mr Michael Williams	16 May 2004–15 May 2006 16 May 2006–15 May 2008
Appointed members	
Mr Eric Bedford	24 May 2005–23 May 2007
Ms Jackie Huggins, AM	24 May 2005–23 May 2007
Ms Natascha McNamara, AM, MBE	24 May 2005–23 May 2007
Ms Raymattja Marika	24 May 2005–23 May 2007
Professor Martin Nakata	10 November 2003–9 November 2005

Professor Behrendt and Professor Nakata’s terms ended during the year and they did not seek a further term on the Council.

Professor Dodson and Emer. Professor Tonkinson were appointed Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson respectively from 9 May 2005 until 8 May 2007. The Council held four meetings in Canberra in 2005–06.

Councillors are provided with an indemnity for claims against them while performing their duties as Councillors. The indemnity is in the form of a standard insurance policy with Comcover, the Australian Government’s self-insurance agency. The value of the indemnity is \$100 million per claim. The premium in 2005–06 was \$5,852.

Profiles of all Council members at 30 June 2006 are provided on pages 8 to 10.

Members

Applicants for membership must demonstrate an interest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies. Applications are considered by the Research Advisory Committee (see page 17), which makes recommendations to the Council. Membership is awarded for five years and is renewable. During the

financial year, nine new members were appointed by the Council, bringing the total membership of the Institute to 511 at 30 June 2006.

Corporate governance

Under the AIATSIS Act (s13) it is the responsibility of the **Council** to ensure ‘the proper and efficient performance of the functions of the Institute and to determine the policy of the Institute with respect to any matter’. The **Principal** is responsible for day-to-day administration of the Institute.

In 2003 the Australian Government engaged Mr John Uhrig, AC, to report on the most suitable governance arrangements for Australian government bodies, including AIATSIS. His conclusion was that either a governing board (Council) or executive management (a chief executive who reports directly to government) could be suitable, depending on the functions to be performed. During the year, DEST advised the Institute that it had reached a preliminary position that retaining a governing council best met the Uhrig conclusions for AIATSIS.

The Council is supported by a Finance Committee and an Audit Committee.

The **Finance Committee** consists of two Council members; the Principal; the Deputy Principal, Collections; and the Director, Corporate Services. During the year, Council representatives on the Finance Committee were Michael Williams and Natasha McNamara.

The **Audit Committee** consists of the Finance Committee plus representatives from internal audit and the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO). There were no reports on the Institute’s operations by parliamentary committees and there were no judicial decisions that are expected to have a material impact on operations.

The Principal is supported by the **Executive Board of Management** (EBM), which comprises the senior managers and other officers. The EBM meets monthly to discuss matters affecting the Institute. Meeting minutes are published on the Institute’s Intranet.

The **Information Technology Advisory Committee** provides advice to the EBM on IT and information management matters. The **Consultative Committee** is a joint management and staff forum that deals with workplace relations issues. The **Occupational Health and Safety Committee** deals with health and safety issues for all employees. Minutes for these committees are also published on the Intranet.

The **AIATSIS Corporate Plan for 2005–07** was published following endorsement by the Council in 2005. Copies of the corporate plan are available from the Communications Manager and online at <www.aiatsis.gov.au/about_us/corporate_publications>. A business plan for 2006–07, which includes specific projects to be undertaken, was endorsed by the Council in June 2006.

Corporate Services provides finance, human resources, information technology and building management support to all Institute programs. This includes assistance with regulatory compliance and accountability requirements, planning for sustainability, and risk management.

Staff employed

An analysis of staff employed at 30 June 2006 is shown in the table below. During the year, no ongoing positions were filled. At 30 June 2006, one staff member was on leave without pay. There were eighty-seven new or extended appointments and twenty-four separations during the year. Separations comprised six resignations, one transfer, thirteen contracts expired and four retirements.

Table 5: Staffing levels and numbers, 30 June 2006

Level	Male	Female	Ongoing	Non-ongoing	Indigenous	Full-time	Part-time	PWD *	NESB **
PEO	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0
SES	1	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	0
Exec 2	4	4	6	2	1	8	0	0	0
Exec 1	12	13	12	13	7	24	1	0	0
APS6	5	16	8	13	5	16	5	0	0
APS5	6	14	8	12	4	18	2	0	0
APS4	2	15	10	7	5	12	5	0	0
APS3	3	8	3	8	3	9	2	2	0
APS2	0	6	2	4	3	4	2	0	0
APS1	1	2	0	3	3	1	2	1	0
Cadets/ Trainees	2	6	0	8	8	7	1	0	0
Total no.	37	85	52	70	41	102	20	4	0
% of staff	30	70	43	57	34	84	16	3	0

* People with a disability

** Non-English speaking background

Workplace diversity

The Institute's program for workplace diversity, set out in the AIATSIS Workplace Diversity Program, continued operation during the year.

Indigenous staff

The Agency Agreement 2005–06 includes a number of specific provisions to facilitate the employment and retention of Indigenous staff within the Institute.

The Institute attracts Indigenous people to vacant positions through advertising in Indigenous newspapers and networks in addition to advertising in the mainstream press. The Institute continued to identify Indigenous cadetships and training positions to provide paid work experience and enhance future employment opportunities for Indigenous peoples. Three Indigenous cadets were employed during 2005–06.

Seven Indigenous trainees were engaged as part of the ADP. The AVA is working with the Canberra Institute of Technology and the Yurauna Indigenous Centre to support the trainees and tailor courses specific to their needs.

At 30 June 2006, the Institute employed a total of 122 staff, 34 per cent of whom identified as Indigenous (see Figure 5). This continued the trend over the past five years of an increasing proportion of staff who identified themselves as Indigenous.

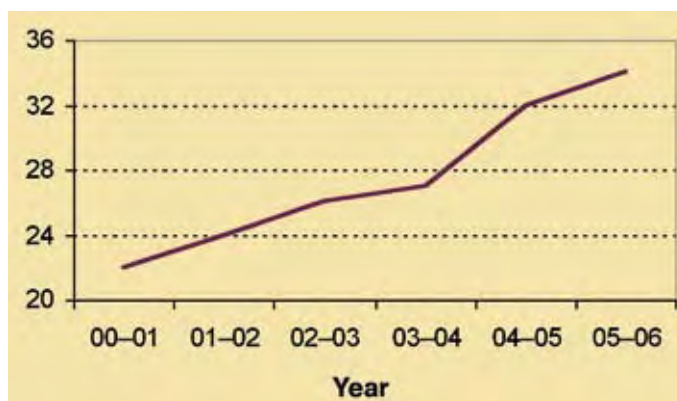


Figure 5: Percentage of total staff identifying as Indigenous, 2000–01 to 2005–06

The **Indigenous Caucus** is an internal working group supported by management, which provides Indigenous staff with a forum to discuss various issues affecting them. The caucus has assisted management in reviewing policies such as the

studies assistance guidelines, and is consulted when employment policies are reviewed or training courses developed. The caucus is represented at the AIATSIS Consultative Committee, which brings staff and management together to discuss employment issues.

Our Indigenous staff members are also eligible to join the **Indigenous APS Employees Network** (IAPSEN), which supports and advocates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interests, values and perspectives in the Australian Public Service (APS). Staff members are encouraged to join the network and participate in discussion groups. New Indigenous staff are advised about the network when they join AIATSIS. At an organisational level, the Institute was also involved in IAPSEN: the Principal was a member of the steering committee for this project.

During 2005–06, two Indigenous staff members attended the Indigenous APS Careers Workshop for APS 1–4 employees, and two attended the Indigenous APS Careers Workshop for APS 5–6 employees. The workshops help participants to identify their career aspirations and provide strategies for career development. Feedback from participants was that the course gave them valuable information and insights into their career needs.

Staff remuneration

All staff except those covered by Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs) are covered by the AIATSIS Agency Agreement 2005. AIATSIS provides a range of non-salary benefits, details of which are set out in the agreement. The agreement is available online at <www.aiatsis.gov.au/about_us/corporate_publications>. A new agreement is currently being negotiated and is expected to begin operating early in 2007. Table 6 shows the range of salaries under the Agency Agreement, by classification.

Table 6: Salary ranges under Agency Agreement

	Minimum, \$	Maximum, \$
Executive Level 2	78,966	89,545
Executive Level 1	68,495	73,969
APS Level 6	53,504	61,461
APS Level 5	49,538	52,528
APS Level 4	44,414	48,224
APS Level 3	39,850	43,010
APS Level 2	34,986	38,797
APS Level 1	18,549	34,167
Cadet	16,793	17,096

Nine AIATSIS staff were covered by AWAs (two Senior Executive Service (SES) staff and seven non-SES staff). Except for remuneration, the employment conditions in these AWAs were identical to those in the Agency Agreement and other AIATSIS employment policies.

Three employees received performance bonuses in 2005–06, totalling \$59,645. Further information on AWAs and performance bonuses is not provided for confidentiality reasons.

Staff training and career development

The Institute is committed to the continued development of its staff through the provision of training and career advancement. This recognises the Institute's need to retain and develop high-quality staff in a tight job market, and the needs of staff to improve their skills and job satisfaction. The Institute spent \$172,129 on staff development activity during 2005–06.

The Institute's Agency Agreement requires that the Performance Feedback Scheme (PFS) is linked to remuneration. The PFS provides an arrangement for discussing an individual's performance, a basis for the provision of training and development opportunities, and assists with workforce planning. Training in more effective use of the PFS was provided to supervisors and staff.

The Institute arranged for three cultural awareness training sessions involving sixty-six staff during 2005–06.

Cooperative workplace relations

The Institute is committed to promoting a cooperative workplace and to ensuring that there is appropriate participation by staff in the decision-making processes. Both staff and management recognise that the maintenance of cooperative workplace relations provides all staff with an opportunity to participate in decisions that impact directly on them.

Health and safety, human resource development, workplace diversity and access and equity issues were also addressed through the Institute's consultative mechanisms, ensuring that the Institute's obligations were met while maintaining a cooperative workplace environment.

Occupational health and safety

The Institute has a policy of providing and maintaining the highest degree of health and safety for all employees. It aims to:

- prevent all accidents and ill health caused by working conditions

- protect all employees from any health hazard that may arise out of their work or the conditions in which it is carried out
- place and maintain employees in an occupational environment designed to satisfy their needs for health, safety and welfare at work.

To demonstrate our commitment, the Principal signed an employer 'statement of commitment' with Comcare for the period 2002 to 2012. The statement covers the following four targets:

- reduce the incidence of workplace injuries and diseases
- eliminate all fatalities due to workplace injury
- reduce the average lost time rate
- reduce the average time taken for rehabilitation intervention.

The Occupational Health and Safety Committee met quarterly to discuss occupational health and safety issues. Measures taken during the year to protect the health, safety and welfare at work of employees included:

- testing of emergency evacuation procedures
- staff training in workplace practices, including the responsibilities of fire wardens
- provision of equipment needed by staff to deal with OH&S concerns.

The Agency Agreement now includes a formal statement of the Institute's policy on the use of drugs in the workplace, and provides for access to counselling services by staff. Influenza vaccinations were offered to staff in May 2006. Staff were eligible for reimbursement of up to \$200 during 2005 and 2006 to promote improvements in their health.

No accidents requiring notification under section 68 of the *Occupational Health and Safety (Commonwealth Employment) Act 1991* were reported during the year under review. No notices were received by AIATSIS during the year under sections 30, 46 or 47 of the Act, nor were any directions given under section 45.

Strategic alliances to support corporate activities

As a small agency, AIATSIS has limited resources available to deal with the plethora of accountability, management and reporting policies required to support good corporate governance. The Institute works to improve its effectiveness by joining with other agencies with similar corporate directions to share policy ideas. During 2005–06, the Institute maintained membership of the Cultural Managers Forum—a group comprising the Canberra-based cultural agencies—to discuss common issues on information technology.

Staff in Corporate Services maintained and built on the Institute's strategic alliance with the Indigenous Employment Strategy team at the Australian Public Service Commission.

Financial management

The financial result for the year—a loss of \$338,000—represents a significant improvement compared with the initial expectation of an operating loss of around \$700,000. This loss was due to timing differences, that is income received in 2004–05 was spent in 2005–06. Detailed information is provided in the financial statements at pages 91–126.

AIATSIS completed the mandatory transition to new accounting standards, including recasting the 2004–05 results to provide comparative figures for the 2005–06 financials under the same accounting standards. There were no material variations to results as a result of the transition.

Information technology

A Digital Asset Management System (DAMS) comprising Digitool software and Sun data storage equipment was commissioned during 2005–06. Further information on the DAMS is in Chapter 3.

To support these systems, the main IT network was upgraded at a cost of \$400,958. This involved replacing switches with equipment capable of handling the very large data volumes created by digital video files. New servers were installed to support the new website and AUSTLANG databases; additional servers were purchased to provide better support for email services and to reduce the potential adverse effects of network equipment breaking down.

Network security was enhanced by the acquisition of new firewall equipment, a restructuring of server connections and the development of new policies and procedures.

AIATSIS website

As foreshadowed in the *Annual Report 2004–05*, the Institute's website was updated to provide improved functions and access to Institute information. In an exercise that absorbed significant staff time, all information held on the old site was reviewed, and updated if necessary, during the transition. The main benefits of the new site include better capabilities to develop functions such as geospatial search functions; online submission and management of grant applications; e-commerce and e-publication; inclusion of sound and video

clips; and online discussion fora. The new site is also much easier to manage and update.

The Library has developed much of the content on the Institute's website, including online exhibitions and manuscript finding aids. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Biographical Index (ABI) was set up so that it could be searched separately from Mura® on the family history web pages. A new online tutorial on using Mura® was created.

As well as advice for authors, ASP added information to the website about forthcoming events, reviews of launches, and excerpts from print and online book reviews. On the sales front, contents lists, sample chapters and author interviews were added. ASP hopes to add audio interviews in future. For booksellers, ASP added advance information sheets for each title.

AUSTRALANG, the Web Indigenous Languages Database—currently in test and development for the new site—hosts edited and research-interactive text and commentaries.

The NTRU website includes extensive resources and publications, and provides comprehensive and regularly updated sources that are directly relevant to decision making, conflict management and agreements. It incorporates a site dedicated to the IFaMP project.

Over the next two years, further work will develop a capability to search through a single access point all AIATSIS online collections and databases, including internal file records covering our history.

Building management and environmental performance

AIATSIS experienced no major problems with building operations during 2005–06.

Significant changes were made to office layouts, particularly in the Audiovisual Archive Program, to accommodate new equipment acquired for the digitisation project. Planning for this work began in May 2005 and building work was completed in June 2006 at a cost of \$395,000. Planning to resolve problems with the archival vaults began; work on these is expected to be completed around September 2006.

AIATSIS occupies a relatively new building with modern controls for energy management, designed to minimise environmental effects. Energy use is monitored to ensure the lowest use consistent with archival and office requirements. Natural gas is used for most heating requirements. Water use is minimised, for example through the use of dual-flush toilets and by not irrigating lawns around the building. Used office paper is recycled where possible.

Freedom of information

No requests for information were received under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* during the year.

Advertising and market research

The Institute spent \$25,004 during the year on recruitment advertising. In addition, \$43,367 was spent on marketing Institute publications and activities. No expenditure was made to fund advertising campaigns; market research; outdoor, television, radio or cinema advertising; or to direct mail advertising organisations.

Service charter

The Institute's Service Charter operated throughout the reporting period. The charter provides for the monitoring of performance and service provision, and encourages client feedback. Any indications of dissatisfaction on the part of clients are followed up by investigation and, where possible, resolved. The Service Charter is available online at <www.aiatsis.gov.au/about_us/corporate_publications>.

Consultants and contracts over \$10,000

The Institute let six consultancies during the year with a total estimated value of \$170,868. In addition, thirty-eight contracts totalling \$2,011,240 were let. The majority of these contracts were for the supply of equipment. For details of consultancies and major contracts, see Appendix 6.

Competitive tendering and contracting

All contracts had provisions allowing access by the Auditor-General.

Exempt contracts

No contracts were exempt from publication in the Purchasing and Disposal Gazette.