



Chapter 4

Corporate governance, management and accountability

Highlights 2007–08

- The continuous improvement plan was expanded to include a review of all human resources policies, procedures and systems
- An Institute-wide training and development plan was launched with a focus on leadership
- Following a survey of users, work began on redesigning the AIATSIS website to improve accessibility
- The Institute's readiness for disaster and recovery was improved by identifying and correcting weaknesses
- A new system of electronic invoice processing led to increased productivity, while improving internal control, document security and the audit trail.

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 Senator, the Hon. Kim Carr, Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research.

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 persons elected by the members of the Institute in accordance with the Institute rules, being persons who are themselves members of the Institute
- one person appointed by the Minister, being a person who is a Torres Strait Islander

- four other persons appointed by the Minister, being persons who are Aboriginal persons or Torres Strait Islanders.

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

Membership of the Council during 2007–08 and the term of each appointment are set out in [Table 4](#).

Professor Dodson and Emeritus Professor Tonkinson were appointed Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson, respectively, from 20 September 2007 until 15 May 2008. In 2007–08, the Council held four meetings in Canberra.

Council members 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 2007–08 was \$2,735.

Profiles of all Council members at 30 June 2008 are provided on [pages 96–97](#).

Table 4: Elected and appointed Council members and terms

Elected members	Term of appointment
Professor Michael Dodson, AM	16 May 2006–15 May 2008 16 May 2008–15 May 2011
Professor John Maynard	16 May 2006–15 May 2008 16 May 2008–15 May 2011
Emeritus Professor Robert Tonkinson	16 May 2006–15 May 2008 16 May 2008–15 May 2011
Mr Michael Williams	16 May 2006–15 May 2008 16 May 2008–15 May 2011
Appointed members	
Mr Eric Bedford	20 September 2007–19 September 2010
Ms Terri Janke	20 September 2007–19 September 2010
Dr R Marika*	20 September 2007–19 September 2010
Mr Dana Ober	5 February 2007–4 February 2009
Dr Mark Wenitong	20 September 2007–19 September 2010

* Deceased 11 May 2008.

Members

Applicants for membership in AIATSIS must demonstrate an interest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies. Applications are considered by the Research Advisory Committee (see page 16), which makes recommendations to the Council.

Membership is awarded for five years and is renewable. During the financial year, twenty-eight new members were appointed by the Council, bringing the total membership of the Institute to 515 at 30 June 2008.

Corporate governance

Under the Act (s. 13) 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.

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

The **Finance Committee** consists of two Council members; the Principal; the Deputy Principal, Collections; and the Director of Corporate Services. During the year, Council representatives on the Finance Committee were Mr M Williams and Professor J Maynard.

The **Audit and Risk Committee** consists of the Finance Committee plus representatives

from internal audit and the Australian National Audit Office. Consistent with the requirements of the *Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997*, the *Audit and Risk Committee* is established by the Council to provide a deliberative forum for developing the internal control framework, risk management policies and fraud prevention review.

Through assessment of management outcomes and actions examined by internal and external audit, the Audit Committee is able to support the AIATSIS executive in the discharge of its governance responsibilities. In so doing, the Audit Committee facilitates the ongoing development and strengthening of the management and accountability framework.

Judicial decisions and external reviews

In 2007–08 AIATSIS was not subject to any judicial decisions, parliamentary committees, or other external reviews

The Principal is supported by the **Executive Board of Management**, which comprises the senior managers and other officers. The board 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 Executive Board of Management on

During 2007–08 the Audit and Risk Committee met three times:

Members' Name	Position Held	Special Responsibilities	Members Attendance
Mr Steve Larkin	Principal	Chairperson	3
Ms Bronwyn Nimmo	Deputy Principal, Collections		2
Ms Di Hosking	A/g Deputy Principal, Collections		1
Mr Michael Williams	Council Member	Council Representative	3
Professor John Maynard	Council Member	Council Representative	3
Mr Jeff Hobson	Director, Corporate Services / CFO		3



AIATSIS Audio trainees Adam 'Battleship' Shipp (left) and Michael 'Gee Wizz' Weir (centre) on stage with hip-hop MC Carts2Deadly's Nathan Carter (right) who entertained the 700-strong crowd at the Institute's free, annual outdoor event *NAIDOC on the Peninsula* on 10 July. Keeping true to 2007's NAIDOC theme, *Looking Forward, Looking Blak*, this event focused on promoting local Indigenous performers and contemporary expressions of traditional culture.

information technology 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 Institute's intranet.

The **AIATSIS Corporate Plan for 2008–10** was published following endorsement by the Council in 2008. 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 2008–09 was endorsed by the Council in May 2008.

Corporate Services provides finance, human resources, information technology and building management support to all AIATSIS programs. This includes assistance with

regulatory compliance and accountability requirements, planning for sustainability, and risk management.

Staffing

A breakdown of staff employed at 30 June 2008 is shown in **Table 5**. During the year, four ongoing positions were filled by application and two by transfer. At 30 June 2008, there were eighty-six new or extended appointments; there were forty-eight separations during the year. Separations comprised two resignations, one transfer, forty-three contracts expired (twenty of which were renewed), one promotion and one retirement.

Workplace diversity

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

Table 5: Staffing levels and numbers, as at 30 June 2008

Level	Male	Female	Total	Ongoing	Non-ongoing	Casual	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	PWD	NESB
PEO	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
SES	1	1	2	2		0	1	1	1	0
EL 2	2	4	6	5	1	0	0	6	0	0
EL 1	12	10	22	9	12	1	2	20	0	0
APS 6	6	20	26	11	10	5	6	20	2	2
APS 5	8	10	18	6	11	1	3	15	2	2
APS 4	6	13	19	9	9	1	6	13	0	1
APS 3	3	7	10	2	8	0	4	6	0	0
APS 2	1	9	10	3	7	0	7	3	1	1
Trainee/ Cadet	0	2	2	2	0	0	2	0	0	0
Total	40	76	116	50	58	8	32	84	6	6

Abbreviations: PWD—people with a disability; NESB—non-English speaking background; PEO—Principal Executive Officer; SES—Senior Executive Service; EL—Executive Level; APS—Australian Public Service.

Indigenous staff

The Institute's Agency Agreement 2007–11 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 provides Indigenous cadetships and training positions to provide paid work experience and enhance future employment opportunities for Indigenous people. Two Indigenous cadets were employed during 2007–08.

Six Indigenous trainees continue to be employed as part of the AIATSIS Digitisation Program. Staff from the Audiovisual Archive are working with the Canberra Institute of Technology and the Yurauna Indigenous Centre to support the trainees and tailor courses to their needs. Two Indigenous

officers were high achievers, one receiving the ACT Trainee of the Year award and another achieving a number of Distinctions and High Distinctions in their examinations.

At 30 June 2008, the Institute employed a total of 116 staff, 28 per cent of whom identified as Indigenous (see Figure 4).

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 work level standards, and is consulted when employment policies are reviewed or training courses developed. The caucus is represented at the Consultative Committee, the forum that brings staff and management together to discuss employment issues.

Indigenous staff members are also eligible to join the **Indigenous APS Employees Network** (IAPSEN), which supports and

Table 6: Salary ranges under Agency Agreement for 2007–08

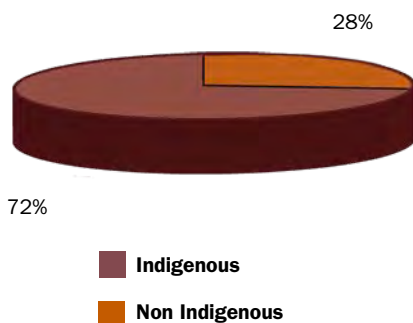
Level	Minimum (\$)	Maximum (\$)
Executive 2	82,914	94,022
Executive 1	71,920	77,667
APS 6	56,179	64,534
APS 5	52,015	55,154
APS 4	46,635	50,635
APS 3	41,843	45,161
APS 2	37,735	40,737
APS 1	32,459	35,875
Cadet/Trainee	12,600	32,327

advocates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interests, values and perspectives in the Australian Public Service. 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 is also involved in IAPSEN: the Principal is a member of the steering committee for this network.

Staff remuneration

All staff except those covered by Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs) are covered by the AIATSIS Agency Agreement 2007–11.

Indigenous and Non-Indigenous staff

**Figure 4:** Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff

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>.

Seven AIATSIS staff were covered by AWAs — two Senior Executive Service (SES) staff and five non-SES staff. Except for remuneration, the employment conditions in these AWAs are similar to those in the Agency Agreement and reflect AIATSIS employment policies.

Three employees received performance bonuses in 2007–08, totalling \$50,313. Further information on AWAs and performance bonuses is not provided for confidentiality reasons.

Staff training and career development

AIATSIS is committed to the continued development of its staff through the provision of training and career advancement opportunities. 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 \$93,217 on staff development activities during 2007–08.

The AIATSIS Agency Agreement requires that the Institute's Performance Feedback Scheme be linked to remuneration increments. The scheme outlines the arrangement for discussing an individual's performance, sets forth the basis for the provision of training and development opportunities, and assists with workforce planning.

Cooperative workplace relations

The Institute is committed to promoting a cooperative workplace and to ensuring that there is appropriate participation by staff in 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.

Occupational health and safety

AIATSIS has a policy of providing and maintaining the highest degree of health and safety for all employees. The policy 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 the Institute's 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.

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 occupational health and safety concerns
- holding a health week, including influenza vaccinations and individual health checks for staff who wished to participate.

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.

No accidents requiring notification under section 68 of the *Occupational Health and Safety (Commonwealth Employment) Act 1991* were reported during 2007–08. No notices were received by AIATSIS during the year under section 30, 46 or 47 of that 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 handle the many 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 2007–08, 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 profit of \$2.524m — is greater than the expected breakeven forecast. The primary reasons for this turnaround has been the application of AASB 1004, issued December 2007, that now requires AIATSIS to treat the full amount



Love of country demonstrated in winning artwork

‘A work that’s striking both visually and emotionally — the love of the place comes through.’ So said the judges in awarding first prize to Alana Garwood-Houng (above) in the inaugural AIATSIS Staff Art Exhibition in October 2007.

It was love of place that had inspired Alana in completing the winning work, *Lake Boga*, in pastel and ink on paper. Part of her heritage is Wamba Wamba, the people of Lake Boga, located near Swan Hill in northern Victoria.

Indeed, the names of her ancestors are inscribed on reeds at the edge of the lake in her winning work. The names are almost hidden, but the artist points to them with pride. ‘This is my way of remembering not only the place, but my people.’ Alana is a Yorta Yorta woman with Wamba Wamba and Wergaia heritage.

A library officer who joined AIATSIS in 1989, Alana Garwood-Houng also took out the Too Deadly people’s choice award for another of her three entries, a pastel, ink and collage work inspired by NAIDOC posters, titled *Lookin’ forward, lookin’ black*.

A wood and tree root sculpture titled *Tree* gained second prize for Library Collections Manager Pat Brady (left).

Some 40 staff entered the competition, which provided a sampling not only of the cultural achievements of many AIATSIS people but of the diversity of their backgrounds. The judges were Barbara Paulson from the National Museum of Australia and Dr Luke Taylor, Deputy Principal Research at AIATSIS.

It is hoped to hold the event annually to foster the artistic skills of staff and encourage artistic expression.



of certain grants, not fully expended during the year, as income in the year of receipt. Previously the unexpended amount of income was treated as 'Unearned Income'. As a consequence the Institute expects to record future losses corresponding to this amount. Additional contributing factors to the surplus have been a number of systems improvements that have resulted in provision accounts — depreciation and obsolete stock, being written back.

Detailed information is provided in the financial statements at [pages 62–95](#).

During the reporting period, the finance department changed from a manual system of processing invoices to an electronic work-flowing process. The department is now using software (BASWare) to move invoices electronically around the Institute for certification and delegate approval. This has enabled an increase in productivity, and improved the audit trail, internal controls, and document security. It is expected that the electronic system will lead to a decrease in demand for hardcopy storage, which will reduce the need for storage space.

Finance continued with its Continuous Improvement Plan for the Institute. The Risk Management Policy and Plan, with plans for disaster, pandemic and business continuity were all finalised.

Again the Institute participated in the Comcover review of the risk management strategy, which resulted in a decrease in the cost of the premium. A number of recommendations have been approved for implementation in 2008–09.

A fraud review is scheduled for the end of 2008–09 to comply with legislation of a bi-annual review.

Human resources

The Institute's Continuous Improvement Plan was expanded to encompass a review of all

human resources policies, procedures and systems, as well as an overall training and development plan. This was implemented mid-year and will continue into 2008–09. The training and development program was launched with a program aimed at leadership within the Institute, 'Managing and Leading in AIATSIS', which was offered to staff in November 2007 and was well received.

Other improvements include an electronic timesheet system interfaced to the payroll system. Work has also begun on the introduction of an electronic induction program for new staff.

A significant recruitment exercise, involving the recruitment of some 40 staff, was undertaken toward the end of 2007–08 to facilitate the staffing of the continuation of the AIATSIS Digitisation Program for the next three years.

Information technology

IT Services has extended the contract with ASG Pty for another twelve months, under the same terms and with a nominal increase in fees.

The 2007 migration to Microsoft server technologies was an unqualified success, resulting in higher availability, greater security and a significantly lower total cost of ownership in spite of the necessary increase in hardware resources and software. The increased cost will be offset by discontinued subscriptions to Novell and Guava, the non-tangible gains from longer server up-time and the lower costs of support for Microsoft technologies. The new infrastructure has been further augmented by the successful implementation of the proposed ISA Server, which provides diverse, secure methods for remote access to the corporate network.

Following a review of AIATSIS's information security infrastructure, IT Services will be deploying Kaspersky Business Space

Security to all PCs, laptops and servers, both internally and to those with remote access to the corporate network. An external email service provider will be selected to better address issues of spam, email classification and business continuity.

Perhaps the most significant development in the AIATSIS core infrastructure will be the adoption of Server Virtualisation technologies, scheduled for early 2009. Server Virtualisation enables multiple server operating systems, running discrete services, to run on a pool of physical servers. This enables each service to be maintained and changed independently as well as providing full hardware redundancy and load-balancing. This development will simultaneously satisfy a requirement to refresh our server hardware and software, enable significant cost savings through reduced power consumption and more efficient use of hardware, and greatly improve the facility for maintenance, backup and disaster recovery.

AIATSIS website

A working group has been established to assess the requirements of a new AIATSIS website. A public survey was conducted during the year and members of all programs were involved in developing a new design for the public site. The new site is intended to provide greatly improved accessibility to the general public as well as encompassing other websites that have existed outside the current site, such as the Library's online exhibitions and the Native Title Research Unit. The site will provide RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds, embedded video and podcasts as well as wikis for internal and external use. Secure access to the corporate intranet and other internal resources will also be possible. Once a design has been accepted, it is hoped that the new site will be operational in late 2008, with an official launch date to be determined.

Building management and environmental performance

AIATSIS experienced no major problems with building operations during 2007–08. There were no new works carried out.

The Institute's rolling preventive maintenance program was continued. The program encourages a proactive approach to identifying problems before they occur.

AIATSIS occupies a relatively new building with modern controls for energy management that are 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 and cardboard is recycled where possible and toner cartridges are collected for recycling. The Institute has commenced a review of environmental management, which has identified various options (including reduced building energy consumption) for reducing the Institute's ecological footprint.

Improved security through installation of additional access control was completed and work to upgrade security with improved intrusion-detection capability is expected to be completed by the end of 2008.

Following business continuity planning exercises, various measures to improve the Institute's readiness for disaster and recovery were identified and commenced. These measures include modification of the main switchboard to enable ready connection of a hired generator, improved fire detection and protection, and improved water leak detection for critical areas (server, communications and telecine rooms).

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 \$23,310 during the year on recruitment advertising. In addition, \$50,503 was spent on marketing and promotion of AIATSIS. No expenditure was made to fund advertising campaigns (i.e. market research; outdoor, television, radio or cinema advertising; or direct mail advertising).

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 three consultancies during the year with a total estimated value of \$75,700. In addition, twenty-five contracts totalling \$1,248,151 were let. The largest of these contracts was for venue hire and catering relating to the 2008 Native Title Conference held in Perth. 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.