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Council biographies



Professor Michael  
Dodson



Professor John  
Maynard



Mr Eric Bedford



Dr Payi-Linda Ford

**Professor Michael Dodson**, AM (Chairperson) is a member of the Yawuru peoples, the traditional owners of land and waters in the remote area of the southern Kimberley region of Western Australia and a prominent advocate on issues affecting Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as well as other Indigenous peoples around the world. He was Australia's first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner. He is currently the Director of the National Centre for Indigenous Studies at the Australian National University, the Special Rapporteur for the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and a Director of Dodson, Bauman & Associates Pty Ltd, legal and anthropological consultants. He holds a Bachelor of Jurisprudence and a Bachelor of Laws from Monash University, a Doctorate of Letters (HC) from the University of Technology Sydney and a Doctorate of Laws (HC) from the University of New South Wales. In 2009 he was named Australian of the Year by the National Australia Day Council.

**Professor John Maynard** (Deputy Chairperson) is Chair of Aboriginal Studies and Head of the Wollotuka School of Aboriginal Studies at the University of Newcastle. His traditional roots lie with the Worimi people of Port Stephens, New South Wales. He has held several important fellowships, including the Aboriginal History Stanner Fellowship for 1996 at the Australian National University and the New South Wales Premier's Indigenous History Fellowship for 2003–04. He was a member of the Executive Committee of the Australian Historical

Association from 2000 to 2002 and has worked with and within many urban, rural and remote Aboriginal communities. He sits on the New South Wales History Council and the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council. He is the author of five books, including *Fight for Liberty and Freedom: The origins of Australian Aboriginal activism* and *Aboriginal Stars of the Turf*. He holds a Diploma of Aboriginal Studies from the University of Newcastle, a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of South Australia and a PhD from the University of Newcastle.

**Mr Eric Bedford** has strong family and cultural links throughout the Fitzroy Valley in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. He currently holds the position of Koori Outreach Worker for the Peninsula Integrated Health Service in Victoria. He was previously the Manager, Community Development Employment Projects, Marra Worra Worra in Fitzroy Crossing, the Chairman of the Malarabah Regional Council, an ATSI Commissioner and the Executive Director of the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre. He has been active in developing concepts and models for regional autonomy for Aboriginal people to enable communities to exercise their right to self-determination, and in promoting economic development projects in the Fitzroy Valley.

**Dr Payi-Linda Ford** is a senior lecturer with Charles Darwin University's School of Australian Indigenous Knowledge Systems in the Northern Territory. She is a Delyak-Elder of the Rak Mak Mak Marranunggu peoples and Traditional



Ms Terri Janke



Mr Dana Ober

Aboriginal Owner from Kurrindju (Finniss River) in the Northern Territory. Dr Ford speaks several Aboriginal languages. These include Mak Mak Marranunggu, Marithiel, Wagait/Daly River Creole and Aboriginal English. She has been actively involved in Indigenous community organisation businesses. She is acknowledged for her deep understanding and contribution to promoting cross-cultural diversity as well as awareness of, and respect for, Indigenous knowledge systems and the benefit they hold for all Australians. Dr Ford has been engaged in advisory roles to government and non-government organisations. For the past twenty-four years she has been involved in teaching and learning, delivering mainstream education for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians from early childhood through to higher education. She holds a Doctorate of Philosophy (Education), Masters in Education (Language and Literacy), Graduate Diploma in Special Education and Diploma of Teaching (Primary) from Deakin University, Victoria.

**Ms Terri Janke** is an Indigenous arts lawyer, writer and consultant. Her law firm, Terri Janke and Company, is a Sydney-based specialist Indigenous law firm representing Indigenous artists, writers, filmmakers and Indigenous businesses across many fields, in copyright and intellectual property issues. Her publications include *Our Culture: Our Future—Report on Australian Indigenous cultural and intellectual property rights*, the first report of its kind to outline a comprehensive framework for protecting Indigenous cultural heritage; and

*Minding Culture: Case studies on intellectual property and traditional cultural expressions*, written for the World Intellectual Property Organisation. She is also a published fiction author. Her novel *Butterfly Song* was published in 2005. She was born in Cairns, Queensland, and has family connections with the Torres Strait and Cape York Peninsula (Meriam, Wuthathi and Yadaighana). She holds a Bachelor of Arts/Law from the University of New South Wales. She is currently undertaking a PhD in Law at the Australian National University, focusing on future options for protecting Indigenous cultural and intellectual property.

**Mr Dana Ober** is from Saibai Island in the western Torres Strait. He is a linguist and has an expert knowledge of Torres Strait Islander culture and history. He is currently the chief executive officer of Saibai Council. He was previously a lecturer at the Centre for Australian Languages and Linguistics at Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education. He speaks three languages fluently: Kalaw Kawaw Ya, Yumplatok and English. His main areas of interest are the development and maintenance of Australian Indigenous languages and human rights, particularly Indigenous rights. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree, with a major in linguistics and sub-major in anthropology, from the Australian National University. He is currently undertaking studies towards a Master of Applied Linguistics degree at Charles Darwin University.

**Emeritus Professor Robert Tonkinson** held the Chair of Anthropology at the University of Western Australia from 1984 until his retirement in 2003, and is currently an Honorary Senior Research Fellow there, as well as editor of *Anthropological Forum*, the international journal of anthropology and sociology. He is well known internationally in his field of social anthropology for his contributions to the Aboriginal Australian and Melanesian anthropological literature. He has worked with Aboriginal people since 1962 and has published extensively, especially on Western Desert society and culture. His closest links are with the Martu people in the eastern Pilbara, with whom he has been involved for



Emeritus Professor  
Robert Tonkinson



Dr Mark Wenitong



Mr Michael Williams

forty years. A Fellow of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia since 1988, he holds Bachelor of Arts (Hons) and Master of Arts degrees from the University of Western Australia and a PhD in Anthropology from the University of British Columbia.

**Dr Mark Wenitong** is President of the Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association and the Senior Medical Officer at Wuchopperen Health Service, Cairns. He was the 2006 winner of the Reconciliation Australia and BHP Billiton Indigenous Governance Awards. Dr Wenitong is a member of a number of national Indigenous health committees including the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Council, the Australian Medical Association Taskforce on Indigenous Health, and the National Health and Medical Research Council Health Advisory Committee. He has a particular interest in Indigenous men's health and is Chair of the Andrology Australia National Reference Group on Indigenous Male Health. He is the author of numerous publications, including *Strengthening Cardiac Rehabilitation and Secondary Prevention for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders*, *The Role of the General*

*Practitioner in an Aboriginal Control Community Health Service*, and *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Male Health, Wellbeing, and Leadership*. He holds a Bachelor of Medicine degree from the University of Newcastle.

**Mr Michael Williams** is the Director of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit at the University of Queensland. He is a member of the Goorang Goorang Aboriginal community from south-east Queensland. He has been involved in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs for more than thirty years. For the greater part of his career, he has worked in the tertiary education sector, lecturing in mainstream history and maintaining a close involvement with programs that provide support for Indigenous Australian students. His academic interests include Indigenous language use, cross-cultural communication and the field of Indigenous knowledge. He has served on the Board of Directors of the Special Broadcasting Service and on numerous other government, academic and community boards concerned with Indigenous and non-Indigenous issues. He holds a Master of Philosophy (Qual) degree from Griffith University.