AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STUDIES

COLLECTION MANAGEMENT REPORT INCORPORATING AN OPTIONS ANALYSIS AND ASSESSMENTS OF OUTCOMES RISK AND COLLECTION RISK

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In accordance with its legislation and current Statement of Strategic Intent, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) aims to develop, manage, maintain, preserve and provide access to its collection.

As required by the Collection Management Project Brief, this report presents:

This report acknowledges the parallel Significance Assessment project that is also making important recommendations to AIATSIS.

In order for AIATSIS appropriately to develop, manage, maintain, preserve and provide access to its collection at the optimum level, the report concludes with ten recommendations for consideration. These are listed not only in Part V of this report, but also on pp. 6-11 below, as part of a consolidated list of all recommendations arising from both this report and the parallel and concurrent Significance Assessment.

CONSOLIDATED RECOMMENDATIONS

This section lists all the recommendations made by Significance International in its two 2014 reports to AIATSIS. These recommendations arise from:

> the Collection Management Report (CM)
>
> the Significance Assessment (SA)
>
> the Options Analysis (OA) at Appendix A of CM
>
> the Collection Risk Assessment (CRA) at Appendix B of CM

CM 1   That AIATSIS implement recommendations SA 1 – 2 arising from the 2014 Significance Assessment Report so as to establish a significance assessment program at AIATSIS and to use products of significance assessments for a range of institutional purposes

SA 1	That AIATSIS build upon the foundation laid by this 2014 Significance Assessment Report, establish a significance assessment program at AIATSIS to: a. more fully evidence the proffered, necessarily 'snapshot', sub-collection significance assessments; b. map priorities for sub-sub-collection and single item significance assessments, informed by areas of high significance arising from this Report and 'at risk' collection formats identified in the parallel Collection Risk Assessment Report (within the Collections Management Report).
SA 2	That AIATSIS use products of significance assessments, particularly succinct, evidenced 'statements of significance', for a range of institutional purposes like setting collection management priorities (e.g. conservation and digitisation workflows) and communicating the values, meanings and importance of the collection via periodic press / social media / online exhibition releases, national and international register nominations e.g. to the UNESCO Memory of the World Program, and in fundraising.

CM 2   That AIATSIS consider refreshing its online communications about access to the collection so as to encourage discovery and engagement by diverse users

CM 3   That AIATSIS explore ways of enabling managed public online access to the collection catalogue so that audiences can contribute to the collection knowledge base

CM 4   That AIATSIS consider adopting the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Archives and standards developed by the International Council on Archives and other professional bodies in the collections sector

CM 5   That AIATSIS implement recommendations CRA 1 – 6 of the Collection Risk
        Assessment undertaken as part of this reporting project

	In regard to:	That AIATSIS:
CRA 1. Paper based materials		
CRA 1a	Inconsistency of continuity: preservation programs	Assess preservation housing and develop a revised strategy to re implement housing programs
CRA 1b	Storage space	Revise shelving. Undertake shelf move to create space. Develop strategy for long term storage needs
CRA 1c	Brittle material	Re-assess digitisation to incorporate pre 1985 materials depending on priority.
CRA 1d	Pollutants	Re-assess digitisation to incorporate pre 1985 materials depending on priority.
CRA 1e	Storage Environments	Maintain conditions
2. Art and Artefact sub-collection		
CRA 2a	Maintenance program	Implement an annual maintenance program for the displayed collection
CRA 2b	Storage almost full	Long term plan for storage expansion (possibly off site or outsourced)
CRA 2c	Display conditions	Revise all hanging systems. Assess effect of light, location and UV on art works
CRA 2d	Registration	Create a Collection Registration Position. Implement formalised management of this collection
CRA 2e	Location	Implement formalised management of this collection
CRA 2f	Condition	Conservation assessment of entire collection. Development, implementation of maintenance plan
CRA 2g	Light / UV / IR	Revise locations of Art works and artefacts that are light, UV and IR sensitive
CRA 2h	Relative Humidity	Revise locations of Art works and artefacts that are RH sensitive
CRA 2i	Storage environment	Ensure maintenance of storage conditions
3.Audiovisual materials		
CRA 3a	Loss of Collection components	Closely monitor the Collection. Maintain controlled environments. Increase digitisation programs

3.Audiovisual materials (cont.)		
CRA 3b	% Collection Digitised	Increase digitisation programs
CRA 3c	Rate of deterioration	Undertake comprehensive assessment of collection conditions
CRA 3d	Pollutants	Conduct full collection survey to assess extent of internal pollution
4. Off-site Storage		
National Library of Australia		
CRA 4a	Environment	Maintain communication with NLA re maintenance of conditions
CRA 4b	Store shared with material from other agencies	Consider long term relocation to purpose built above ground store
CRA 4c	Water related emergencies(Minor)	Ensure NLA disaster planning strategies are up to date and maintained
CRA 4d	Flood inundation	Consider long term relocation to purpose built above ground store
CRA 4e	Compactus Vibration	Check materials position on shelving at regular intervals
CRA 4f	Plant / Back-up	Ensure NLA contract technical support and maintenance schedule is maintained
National Film & Sound Archive – Nitrate Vaults		
CRA 4g	Environment	Maintain communication with NFSA re maintenance of temperature and RH control
CRA 4h	Store shared with material from other agencies	(Appears secure)
CRA 4i	Security	Assess vulnerability of site
CRA 4j	Plant / Back-up	Ensure NFSA contract technical support and maintenance schedule is maintained
Iron Mountain Inc., Hume		
CRA 4k	Environment	Maintain communication with Iron Mountain re maintenance of conditions
CRA 4l	Store shared with material from other agencies	(Appears secure)
CRA 4m	Plant Back-up	Ensure back-up during power loss

CRA 4n	Security	Maintain security

5. Acton Peninsula Building		
CRA 5a	Vaults not fire rated	Consider long term relocation of stores off site
CRA 5b	Water fire sprinkler system	Develop long term plan to upgrade fire suppression system in storage vaults
CRA 5c	Water related emergencies (Minor)	Ensure disaster planning strategies and training are up to date and maintained
CRA 5d	Water related emergency (Major)	Ensure collection well housed and raised from floor. Ensure regular maintenance of roof and gutter systems. Maintain disaster planning.
CRA 5e	Closed Access Stack insulation and building seal	Upgrade air seal and install insulation above closed access stack
CRA 5f	Flood inundation	Consider long term relocation of stores off site
CRA 5g	Plant maintenance	Plan for major plant replacement / upgrade within next 5-10 years
CRA 5h	Mould Outbreak in vaults	Monitor stores for mould. Monitor condensation sites. Incorporate plumbing into any future plant upgrade
CRA 5i	Water, gas supplied by NMA	Develop long term strategy to guarantee supply. Formalise MOU with NMA. Develop long term plan for off-site storage repository
CRA 5j	Storage Capacity	Long term plan for storage expansion (possibly off site or outsourced)
CRA 5k	Environment	Develop strategy to enable plant backup within next 12 months
CRA 5l	Extended plant failure	Urgently upgrade RH plant for all vaults
CRA 5m	Pest Management	Maintain cleaning program, focussing on building outer spaces
CRA 5n	Entry Foyer Environment	Consider relocating works of art or creating an airlock, screening natural light, controlling HVAC near works
6. Collection Related Staffing		
CRA 6a	Low in house digitisation staffing resources	Increase digitisation resources

CRA 6b	Building Management / Facilities Staff	Requires increase in positions to 3.0 full time Upgrade APS 6 to EL1; APS 4 to APS 5; create new APS 5 position
CRA 6c	Conservation	Create full time Conservation position at APS 6 level
6. Collection Related Staffing (cont.)		
CRA 6d	Collection Registration	Create full time registration position at EL1 level
CRA 6e	Staff Training	Re-introduce collection preservation, emergency training for staff
CRA 6f	Loss of corporate knowledge / expertise	Plan for key staff turnover Increase staff collection training

CM 6   That AIATSIS commission a digital assets risk assessment to underpin digital preservation processing and staffing, and to ensure robust and future-ready data management and access

CM 7   That AIATSIS consult with the Australian National Data Service when developing its approach for increased storage of both digitised and born digital content

CM 8   That AIATSIS implement the optimum staffing structure and levels set out in Appendix I so as to reduce collection management backlogs, create staff succession plans and increase managed access and use of the collection

CM 9   That AIATSIS develop advocacy for the Optimum management of the collection, drawing on the Collection Management Options Analysis prepared as part of this project

CM 10   That AIATSIS implement recommendations OA 1 – 5 arising from the Options Analysis prepared as part of this reporting project

OA 1	That AIATSIS undertake, as a matter of priority, a detailed feasibility study for a purpose built facility if there is a decision to pursue Option C Optimum
OA 2	That AIATSIS employ the evaluation criteria set out in section 3.2 to determine a preferred option
OA 3	That AIATSIS carry out a comprehensive risk assessment of its preferred option

OA 4	That AIATSIS present its preferred option in a straightforward manner, clearly stating why stakeholders will benefit by focusing on one particular option by:
	Identifying the deciding factors (financial and strategic) for selecting the preferred option
	Providing a brief summary of the preferred option's costing estimates
	Illustrating why identified risks are acceptable
	Outlining how the capital project would be implemented
OA 5	When preparing an implementation roadmap, that AIATSIS:
	Detail governance and oversight mechanisms to demonstrate where and how the preferred Option would fit within the organisation's broader governance and oversight structure
	Demonstrate that the organisation has and will apply a sound project management strategy and methodology to manage the project during its life cycle and through post-implementation
	Provide an overview of the methods and processes that will be implemented to gauge the project's progress and how that progress will be communicated to the project team, project sponsor, and other stakeholders
	Describe how the organisation will address outcome management, i.e. tracking of outcomes, outcome owner engagement, outcome target metrics and time frames, and outcome reporting process
	Demonstrate that the organisation has a function in place to manage the risks of the project
	Describe how the potential impact of the proposed change on organisational culture, systems, and processes and on people working within and with the invested organisations will be managed in later stages of the project management process
	Indicate how the organisation will address performance monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement for project implementation and benefits realisation

ABOUT THE CONSULTANTS

Significance International

Significance International Pty Ltd was established in 2010 as an Australian Company with the aim of providing high quality fee-for-service offerings to the cultural heritage sector in Australia and internationally. The company's strength is in the area of 'movable cultural heritage' (objects and collections).

Veronica Bullock is the company's founding Director. Significance International draws on her extensive experience in significance assessment; preservation needs assessment; training in significance and risk assessment; strategic advice and planning for collections across regions, states and nations; and cultural heritage research including collections mapping and sustainability indicator questions.

A number of highly qualified and experienced Associates are affiliated with Significance International. They contribute through expert teams created to meet clients' specific requirements. All hold relevant professional association memberships / accreditations and many contribute research and practice findings to professional conferences and publications.

Together, the Director and Associates of Significance International offer skills and knowledge in a wide range of fields. These include anthropology, archaeology, architecture, archives appraisal, built heritage, business management, collections management, conservation science, conservation planning and management, cultural landscapes, education and training, exhibition support services, history, Indigenous rock art and site management, interpretation and communication, maritime heritage, military history, military objects and collections, oral history expertise, report writing, risk assessment and management, significance assessment, and transport history and collections.

The combined experience of the Director and Associates, both in Australia and internationally, means Significance International can accept research commissions of many types, both large and small. Each member of Significance International has good working relationships with a diverse group of professional colleagues with whom the company can collaborate to bring complementary skill and knowledge sets to research tasks.

Significance International was recently selected to the Research and Training Panel of the Australian Civil-Military Centre and is especially engaged with the protection of cultural heritage in emergencies, and its effective use in community recovery.

Previous clients include the Ibermuseus Program of Spanish and Portuguese speaking countries and, in Australia, the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House, and Curtin University. Significance Assessments and Preservation Needs Assessments for smaller collecting organisations are often supported by Community Heritage and Maritime Museums of Australia Project Support Schemes. Public workshops and private masterclasses are run regularly and we pride ourselves on keeping abreast of Australian Government and international developments affecting cultural heritage.

The Significance International team for the AIATSIS Collection Management – Options Analysis Project comprised:

Ms Veronica Bullock

Veronica has a strong background in material cultural. She holds degrees in Prehistory/Archaeology and Materials Conservation. Veronica has worked in both curatorial and conservation roles in major Australian collecting institutions and particularly enjoys advocating for regional collections. From 2005-2010 she worked as Development Officer at the Collections Council of Australia, then peak body for collections in Australia. Following its closure she established the cultural heritage consultancy Significance International which undertakes projects in a range of areas, including significance and risk assessment. For more detailed information about Veronica's career please see:
http://www.significanceinternational.com/AboutUs/VeronicaBullock.aspx

B. A. (Hons) ANU, M. App. Sci. (Mat. Cons.) (Hons) UWS, VET Cert IV (Training & Assessment)

Ms Margaret Birtley

Margaret is the Principal of Margaret Birtley Consulting. Through her work in the not-for-profit sector with museums, advocacy bodies, sporting organisations, universities and professional associations, her experience includes leadership roles in education, research, management and heritage collections. As CEO of the Collections Council of Australia she oversaw projects supporting heritage collections in archives, galleries, historical societies, Indigenous keeping places, libraries and museums. In 2002 she received a Lifetime Achievement Award from Museums Australia (Victoria).

B. A. (Hons) Uni Melb, M. Phil. Oxford, Grad. Cert. Management Deakin, Cert. Gov. for Non-for-profits Governance Inst. of Australia

Ms Margaret Coaldrake

Margaret has held Chief Executive roles in government and within a commercial consulting environment for over 20 years, building on her qualifications and experience in the museum sector. In that time she has established two successful management consulting companies, working with dozens of sub-consultants and hundreds of clients, many of whom have relied on Margaret's expertise for more than a decade. Margaret has carried out extensive review and advisory projects across all aspects of governance, organisational strengthening, project management, risk analysis and business and strategic planning for a range of not for profit organisations, the private sector and for Commonwealth, State and Territory Departments. In the past 3 years she has carried out reviews followed by guidance and assistance of post review implementation for AnglicareSA, Assets Division of Housing NSW, Commonwealth Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, Comcare and CSIRO.

Margaret is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and the Australian Institute of Management and holds a Centenary Medal.

B. A. (Hons) U Syd, M. A. (Museum Studies) Leicester, Diploma, Aust. Inst. of Company Directors

Mr Kim Morris

Kim is the Director of Art & Archival Pty Ltd. A professional in the field of cultural conservation and preservation since 1982, his consultancy specialises in the conservation of paper, paintings, objects, textiles and rock art; collection preservation consultancy; exhibition preparation; training; microfading analysis (in partnership with Bruce Ford); and collection disaster planning, response and recovery. In 2006, Kim was recognised as the Conservator of the Year by the Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material.

B. App. Sci. (Conservation of Cultural Material) Canb. CAE / Uni Canb

Mr Michael Piggott

Michael is a part time consultant and researcher within the archives and cultural heritage sectors, having previously served as a librarian and archivist with three Canberra based national cultural heritage organisations (1972-1998) and the University of Melbourne. He has been active for many years in the Australian archives profession, working on national conferences, training programs, branch and national Australian Society of Archives Council activities and its journal   . His clients since 2009 have included several Australian universities, Archives New Zealand, a large regional museum, a national order of Catholic nuns and a leading Australian fashion house.

B. Ec. (Hons) Monash, Grad. Dip. Librarianship Canb. CAE/Uni Canb, B. Lett. ANU, M. Archives Administration UNSW

PART I   INTRODUCTION

1.   CONTEXT

In 2013 the (then) Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education commissioned an independent review of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS). This was triggered by the 2012 Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People that recommended a review of AIATSIS to examine its future strategic direction, its role and functions, governance structures and levels of resourcing with a view to strengthening its capacity to preserve and disseminate Indigenous knowledge and support Indigenous research.

In response to this recommendation, AIATSIS commissioned expert reports using industry leaders and stakeholders across the range of functions, in parallel with the independent Review commissioned by the Department, to provide further detailed evidence to support the development of future strategic directions. The independent Review and other projects highlighted and confirmed the areas where AIATSIS could re-focus its priorities and functions.

AIATSIS recognises that the collection is integral to every aspect of the organisation's work and therefore wishes to ensure that the collection is managed at the optimum level and with optimum benefit for all stakeholders and clients of AIATSIS. For that reason, AIATSIS commissioned this Collection Management Review and the parallel Significance Assessment.

In June 2014, selected Significance International Pty Ltd as the consultant to:

> review and report on the collection development, management, preservation and access practices undertaken at AIATSIS, and

> make an assessment of what is optimally required to manage a collection like that held at AIATSIS.

AIATSIS undertook to provide documentary resources and the opportunity to interview key members of staff, to assist the consultant in gaining:

> background information on the collection and the organisation.

AIATSIS also undertook to provide resources to assist the consultant in:

> gaining comparative data from stakeholders through AIATSIS' international benchmarking exercise with other collecting agencies ('Future Pathways'), and

> the review and report development and finalisation.

Also in June 2014, AIATSIS selected Significance International Pty Ltd as the consultant to assess the significance of the collection. That assessment has informed and supports this report.

2.   SCOPE AND KEY QUESTIONS

The over-arching scope for this project was defined by AIATSIS as:

> A review and report on the collection development, management, preservation and access practices undertaken at AIATSIS, and

> An assessment of what is optimally required to manage a collection like that held at AIATSIS.

Specific questions were framed in the AIATSIS brief. One has been removed from the requirements; it read: 'What are the national and international comparisons?' The remaining questions are addressed in this report:

> What is the optimal resourcing level to develop, manage, maintain, preserve and provide discoverability of, and access to a collection of the size and complexity of that held at AIATSIS?

> What is the infrastructure required to undertake critical collection functions and does AIATSIS either have that infrastructure or a plan to acquire?

> Identify and make recommendations about best practice in the management and preservation of large collections.

> What is the future pathway for improved discoverability and accessibility of collection materials and what will that require?

A further question was posed by AIATSIS in its brief: 'What is the business case for AIATSIS to be resourced appropriately to develop, manage, maintain, preserve and provide access to its collection?' Following discussion between AIATSIS and the consultants, this question has been reframed. The resulting Collection Management Options Analysis is at **Appendix A**. It has been developed by Margaret Coaldrake based on this Collection Management Report to the specific requirements of AIATSIS. It includes a detailed comparison of the pros and cons of the options, but no recommendation on a preferred option or implementation plan. Significance International notes that these will be developed by AIATSIS in the context of other reports and business cases currently in development.

Significance International believes that the basis of any case for future options must be a strong focus on the underlying risks to effective achievement of the organisation's aims. An Outcomes Risk Assessment is at Attachment A to the Options Analysis (**Appendix A**).

Significance International has also commissioned a Collection Risk Assessment to inform this report and contribute to its recommendations. This Assessment has been prepared by Kim Morris, an Associate of Significance International; it is included as **Appendix B** to this report.

All three reports – on Collection Management, the Collection Management Options Analysis and the Collection Risk Assessment – have been developed collaboratively by representatives of Significance International and combined into this single document. This report is based on information provided by AIATSIS. Significance International does not accept responsibility for the outcomes of any actions arising from the use of this Report by AIATSIS.

PART II THE ORGANISATION AND ITS COLLECTION

3. THE ORGANISATION

3.1 ORGANISATIONAL OVERVIEW

AIATSIS is a statutory authority of the Australian Government. Originally established as the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies in 1964, its current legislation is the .

AIATSIS sits within the portfolio of the Department of Education. It is eligible to apply for competitive grants through the Australian Research Council and is a member of the National Indigenous Research and Knowledges Network.

Governed by a Council chaired by Professor Michael Dodson AM and managed through the Principal, Mr Russell Taylor, AIATSIS has seven program areas, each led by a program Director:

> Aboriginal Studies Press
>
> Collections
>
> Communications and Media
>
> Corporate Services
>
> Executive
>
> Research Indigenous Country and Governance
>
> Research Indigenous Social and Cultural Wellbeing.

The 'One AIATSIS' Project, initiated by the Principal in 2010, aimed to foster co-operation across all these programs.

In keeping with the concept of 'One AIATSIS', The ,
'Building knowledge pathways', defines a single and unified purpose for the organisation:

> Building pathways for the knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to grow and be shared.

This statement clearly implies the involvement of all forms of the AIATSIS Collection: the real (physical / analogue) material, the digitised surrogates of the real, and the 'born digital' items that are being introduced to the collection.

Section 5(e) of the defines the Institute's function with specific regard to the collection:

> To establish and maintain a cultural resource collection consisting of materials relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies

Other functions are the promotion, publication and research (including research training) relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies and the encouragement of understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies.

3.2   THE COLLECTIONS PROGRAM

In accordance with the   , AIATSIS has established and maintains an extensive 'cultural resource' collection.

The 'Collections Program' is the section of AIATSIS that is responsible for the collection. The Program regards itself as charged with achieving a collection-specific goal that is defined in the :

> Ensure our collections are safe, accessible, valued and growing[1]

The key success measure associated with this goal is: 'AIATSIS is the repository of choice for Indigenous materials'.

AIATSIS places high value on providing a safe place for sensitive material; being respectful of communities and individuals; and being respectful of the rights of Indigenous people to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions.

Arguably, the Collections Program is not expected to work alone on achieving the stated goal. It receives co-operation and support from other Program areas to achieve success. Specific support is evident at present from Corporate Services (including the Facilities team as well as Finance and Human Resources), Communications & Media, and the Executive. Current collaboration with the two Research programs and the Aboriginal Studies Press was less obvious, in our observation.

The collection can be regarded as having a number of sub-collections, some of which are grouped in response to their format. We have found it convenient to label the sub-collections for the purpose of assessing their significance. In alphabetical order, they are: Art and Artefacts / Audio / Manuscripts / Moving Image / Pictorial / Print / Rare Printed.

Until mid-2013, management of these sub-collections was split across two distinct programs, the Audiovisual Archive and the Library. The main responsibilities of these programs were as follows:

Audiovisual Archive	Library
Art and Artefacts Audio Moving Image Pictorial	Manuscripts Print Rare Printed

An organisational restructure from July 2013 created the Collections Program through the merger of the Audiovisual Archive and the Library. This merger is a 'work in progress' and many traces of the two previous teams remain: in the office locations of personnel; in

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1   The wording of this Goal now reflects advice provided by AIATSIS after the completion of the research in August, On 8 September 2014, Lyndall Osborne, Acting Deputy Principal of AIATSIS, advised: 'It appears we have had some version errors (soon to be corrected) with what went up on the website, so my apologies. The wording in the document approved by Council was "safe, accessible, valued and growing"'. This contrasts with the wording that was previously provided to the consultants ("safe, secure, valued and growing").

operational arrangements (such as the separately defined and different access conditions and opening hours[2]); and in many online and paper-based communications. The Library, for example, maintains a Facebook page and Twitter account in its 'own' name.[3] Despite many signs of willingness to work as a single Program, the name of the Program recognises a plurality of collections, so one can understand the ease with which remnants of the earlier structure survive. Responding to user needs, the online catalogue continues to offer the ability to search the 'Audiovisual Archives' or the 'Library' as well as 'All'.[4] Some tensions appear to exist between structure and practice (or form and function) and more work will be required in coming years if the organisation wishes to fully merge the earlier 'silos' of the Audiovisual Archive and the Library.

The current structure of the Collections Program is a hybrid of functional and matrix models for an organisation. It aims to integrate the Program's staff and activities through functional groupings but requires strong internal cross-team communication and co-operation.

In August 2014 the staff of the Collections Program numbered 51 personnel ('unique staff') representing 46.35 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) personnel. Five positions were vacant. The majority of the 50 funded positions are full-time but more than half (30) are not ongoing, while only 21 are ongoing. This situation leads to staff anxiety and potential inefficiency in the short term, and the risk of losing skilled personnel to more secure jobs in the medium and long term.

A spreadsheet showing these positions in their current team groupings is at **Appendix H**.

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2   See: http://www.aiatsis.gov.au//collections/access.html and also http://www.aiatsis.gov.au//collections/library.html and http://www.aiatsis.gov.au//collections/ava.html. In August 2014, moves were being made towards the consolidation of physical access to all sub-collections through the Stanner Reading Room.

3   See https://www.facebook.com/AiatsisLibrary and https://twitter.com/AIATSISLibrary

4   The 'home' page of Mura® (the AIATSIS Collections Catalogue) states 'The AIATSIS Audiovisual Archives and Library hold the world's premier collections relating to Australian Indigenous studies.' See: http://mura.aiatsis.gov.au/uhtbin/cgisirsi/?ps=TwuzoYgRwe/x/267200010/60/1180/X

4.   THE COLLECTION

4.1   WHAT IS THE COLLECTION?

In summary,[5] the AIATSIS collection holds:

more than 650,000 photographs

more than 130,000 items of print research materials and rare books

40,000 hours of recorded sound

16,000 film cans

around 12,500 manuscript titles

8,000 video titles

a thousand works of art and material culture

As mentioned previously, and as indicated by the above list, the collection is managed in sub-collections that are defined by format or material type.

The collection also includes digitised surrogates of many of the physical items. Digitisation is being undertaken for preservation purposes, and (where appropriate) to enable information that is not paper-based to be viewed and shared.

The Collections Program has commenced harvesting websites that are relevant to its collecting fields and is aware that it will increasingly be expected to acquire data that is 'born digital'.

4.2   HOW IS THE COLLECTION SIGNIFICANT?

The following Statement of Significance of the AIATSIS collection has been written by Significance International as part of its parallel project for AIATSIS.

> Over its fifty years of life the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) has nurtured and safeguarded a unique understanding of Indigenous Australia through its collection. The core of the collection derives from research funded directly by the Institute through its long-running grant program, which supported ethnographic fieldwork and filmmaking. Indigenous contributions to the collection have increased since the 1989 revision of the original 1964 Act. Legislative requirements include enhanced connections between AIATSIS collection and research functions and the provision of policy advice to government.

> The primarily visual and oral forms of Indigenous Australian knowledge transmission are well documented in the audio, art and artefact sub-collections, with many graphic renderings of nuanced worldviews and understandings of natural world workings. Aspects of this knowledge have also been captured in moving and still imagery shot by Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers. The outstanding AIATSIS moving image, audio, pictorial and manuscripts sub-collections are an 'inexhaustible' source of insight

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5   These indicative figures are cited in many recent documents. A current public source is the AIATSIS website; see: http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/ava/pictorial.html and also here: http://50years.aiatsis.gov.au/about-us/our-journey. The actual size grows on almost a daily basis.

for contemporary and future Australians. These items hold some answers to complex environmental and social challenges ranging from reducing suicide rates through language and family reclamation to evidencing and potentially halting biodiversity losses.

Most of the estimated 250 Australian languages and 600-700 dialects are represented in the unrivalled AIATSIS language holdings from which the 'Australian Indigenous Languages Collection' has been registered with UNESCO Memory of the World Australian Program, and 40 'endangered languages' recorded by Luise Hercus between 1963 and 1999 have been inscribed on the National Registry for Recorded Sound. Language is a key to much of this specialised Australian knowledge and also to the future aspirations and opportunities of Indigenous Australians. The founders of AIATSIS would be pleased to see the collection being used for contemporary creative production by Indigenous Australians as directors rather than subjects. Historic imagery, music and language are reworked in new and distinctively Australian forms of understanding and expression, which simultaneously serve more urbanised lifestyles.

W E H Stanner was a founder of AIATSIS and shaper of its collecting remit. His maps, sketches, notes, diaries, photographic negatives, audio recordings, publications and the paintings of his research assistant then friend, Nym Bandak, are a fine example of meticulous anthropological work in collecting and linking information across material formats. The Stanner collection is a microcosm of the whole AIATSIS collection. This attention to meaningful detail was continued by expert anthropologists, archaeologists, collection managers, linguists and musicologists when they produced deep information records and finding aids for all future professional and personal collection data miners.

As an intergenerational keeping place for Indigenous Australians the AIATSIS collection is significant across all four categories – historic, artistic / aesthetic, research / scientific, and social / spiritual – and remains the most extensive and best contextualised collection of Indigenous Australia in the world. It is a site of pilgrimage.

Recommendation CM 1

That AIATSIS implement recommendations SA 1 – 2 arising from the 2014 Significance Assessment Report so as to establish a significance assessment program at AIATSIS and to use products of significance assessments for a range of institutional purposes

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4.3   HOW ACCESSIBLE IS THE COLLECTION?

The collection represents a vast information resource. In that context, it is important to note Section 41 of the   which defines certain overarching limitations on the Institute's ability to disclose information and thus allow access to, and use of, the collection:

(1)   Where information or other matter has been deposited with the Institute under conditions of restricted access, the Institute or the Council shall not disclose that information or other matter except in accordance with those conditions.

(2)   The Institute or the Council shall not disclose information or other matter held by it (including information or other matter covered by subsection (1)) if that disclosure would be inconsistent with the views or sensitivities of relevant Aboriginal persons or Torres Strait Islanders.

These clauses are serious in intent and are being implemented with appropriate diligence and empathy by the Collections Program in accordance with the 'Access and Use Policy: AIATSIS

Collection'. The work involved in managing limited and conditional access is complex and often sensitive.

The Policy explains that:

> Approximately a quarter of our unpublished audiovisual holdings is restricted in some way, often due to secret/sacred or personal content. Just over 10% of manuscript materials are restricted on the same basis. (p. 3)

Graphs in the following page of the policy reveal that approximately half of the audiovisual materials and a similar proportion of the unpublished print materials are 'open for private study' (p. 4) and the remaining material is open for copying (sometimes requiring community permission) or quotation. In other words, the majority of items can be accessed in some way.

It is therefore disappointing to visit the online portal to Mura® (the AIATSIS Collection Catalogue). The current web-page seems like a barrier because its dense text requires the user to acknowledge their understanding of high level ethical statements about Language, Deceased Persons and Access Conditions before commencement of any searching.[6]

It is commendable to see the more open and much more accessible approach at another of AIATSIS's online portals – for   , AIATSIS's influential thesauri 'for subjects relating to Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies, language groups and people, and place names'.[7] At that portal, the sensitivity statement can be easily selected but does not serve as a barrier to discovering information. This matches the expectations of the Director of the Collections Program that the collection should be discoverable in the way that anyone can read the address written on an envelope (equivalent to the cataloguing metadata about an item), whereas the contents of the envelope (equivalent to restricted items in the collection) do not have to be accessible to all.[8]

It is worth noting that during the last decade, 85,000 pages have been added to online exhibitions. In 2013-14, these attracted approximately 300,000 online page views.[9]

Recommendation CM 2

That AIATSIS consider refreshing its online communications about access to the collection so as to encourage discovery and engagement by diverse users

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4.4   HOW IS THE COLLECTION USED?

The Collections Program captures data relating to the use of the collection in a variety of ways. The monthly statistics reveal patterns of access and use to the physical collection onsite in a large number of categories. These patterns correlate directly with the staffing levels available to assist the enquirer. In other words, when staff numbers drop (e.g. in Client Services), there will be a corresponding reduction in the number of Access Unit Requests completed and waiting lists will start to grow. On the other hand, access to published online information and exhibitions

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6   See: http://www.aiatsis.gov.au//collections/muraread.html

7   See: http://www1.aiatsis.gov.au/thesaurus/

8   Personal communication from Lyndall Osborne to Margaret Birtley and others, 12 August 2014.

9   Feedback received via Lyndall Osborne from Gerald Preiss, 12 August 2014

through web visits does not need staff facilitation and the statistics reveal substantial engagement by users.

Although the data is incomplete, it appears that Indigenous people are as active as non-Indigenous people in lodging requests to access the collection. For some formats in recent years, requests from Indigenous people outnumber those by other people.[10] Onsite workshops to train new and existing users in accessing AIATSIS information would increase their confidence and their effectiveness for future onsite and off-site collection research to complement their online access.[11]

The Ara Irititja[12] and PARADISEC[13] projects are actively engaging participants as co-creators in their online work and may be able to offer suggestions about managed access by individuals.

In 2010, the Collections Council of Australia published a statement about 'The uses of collections'[14] and listed a number of ways in which collecting organisations are adding value to their communities. The AIATSIS collection is used in each of the listed ways (see **Appendix G**), demonstrating that the collection is utilised and appreciated in well-rounded and multi-faceted ways.

Recommendation CM 3

That AIATSIS explore ways of enabling managed public online access to the collection catalogue so that audiences can contribute to the collection knowledge base

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4.5   HOW IS THE COLLECTION MANAGED?

The collection is managed largely in accordance with recognised standards and protocols developed by and for the library, archival (including audiovisual archiving), conservation and digitisation sectors. The list of standards in **Appendix F** shows that AIATSIS, as a national organisation, has set appropriately high targets for its work, and that it has contributed to the creation of standards that have now been adopted by other leading organisations around the world.

AIATSIS holds institutional memberships of relevant professional associations in these sectors. Individual staff members are often members of these and other specialist organisations including in audio and motion-picture engineering.

A gap appears, however, to exist in connection with the standards that apply to the museum and gallery domains, where the   [15], the

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10   Personal communication from Alana Harris to Veronica Bullock, 18 August 2014.

11 Faith Baisden suggested this, citing State Library of Queensland practice, when interviewed by Veronica Bullock on 13 August 2014.

12 See: http://www.irititja.com

13 See: http://paradisec.org.au/

14 Collections Council of Australia Ltd, 2010, 'The Uses of Collections'. Now available at: http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/56747/20120504-0833/www.collectionscouncil.com.au/Portals/0/Uses%20of%20collections.pdf

15   Available via several websites, including: http://www.museumsaustralia.org.au/site/resources_national_standards.php

Australia Council of the Arts'   and the
                                       [17] would assist in managing the
Art and Artefacts sub-collection. Despite AIATSIS's suggestion that it is connected with
Museums Australia and the Conservation Committee of ICOM,[18] these organisations do not
appear in a detailed list of memberships supplied to the consultant.[19]

Closer links with Museums Australia[20] and Interpretation Australia Association[21] could
contribute to the ongoing development of access arrangements and public programs. Museums
Australia's
                                                                        [22] might
not have much that's new to offer the AIATSIS staff, but should be part of the in-house tool-kit
in relation to the Art and Artefacts sub-collection and for the induction of new staff and
volunteers.

We believe there is another gap relating to descriptive standards for manuscripts such as the
International Council on Archives (ICA) descriptive standards ISAD, ISAAR, ISDIAH and ISDF[23]
and the Australian Society of Archivists'   .[24]

More broadly in relation to archives, reference could be made to the National Archives of
Australia standards for archival preservation for physical storage[25] and also for digital
preservation[26] and to the ICA's recent work on access to archives such as
               [27] (2012) and the related
(2014).[28]

The Universal Declaration on Archives[29], adopted by UNESCO in November 2011, includes this
clear statement of commitment to best practice in archives:

> We therefore undertake to work together in order that
>
> > appropriate national archival policies and laws are adopted and enforced;

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16   Available for free download from: http://terrijanke.com.au/index.php/council-of-the-arts-protocol-guides/

17   See: http://www.indigenousartcode.org/index.php/public-institutions

18   , section 4.2.1

19   Personal communication from Barry Cundy, 18 July 2014.

20   See: http://www.museumsaustralia.org.au/

21   See: www.interpretationaustralia.asn.au

22   See: http://museumsaustralia.org.au/userfiles/file/Policies/ccor_final_feb_05.pdf

23   See: http://www.ica.org/10206/standards/standards-list.html

24   See: http://www.archivists.org.au/products/hardcopy-publications/describing-archvies-in-context

25   See: http://www.naa.gov.au/Images/Storage-Standard_tcm16-47305.pdf

26   See: http://naa.gov.au/records-management/agency/digital/index.aspx

27   See: http://icarchives.webbler.co.uk/13619/toolkits-guides-manuals-and-guidelines/principles-of-access-to-archives.html

28   See: http://www.ica.org/15375/news-and-events/technical-guidance-on-managing-archives-with-restrictions.html

29   See: http://icarchives.webbler.co.uk/13343/universal-declaration-on-archives/universal-declaration-on-archives.html

the management of archives is valued and carried out competently by all bodies, private or public, which create and use archives in the course of conducting their business;

adequate resources are allocated to support the proper management of archives, including the employment of trained professionals;

archives are managed and preserved in ways that ensure their authenticity, reliability, integrity and usability;

archives are made accessible to everyone, while respecting the pertinent laws and the rights of individuals, creators, owners and users;

archives are used to contribute to the promotion of responsible citizenship.

AIATSIS has not yet registered its support[30] for the Universal Declaration, but might consider doing so.

Recommendation CM 4

That AIATSIS consider adopting the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Archives and standards developed by the International Council on Archives and other professional bodies in the collections sector

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4.6   WHAT IS THE PHYSICAL CONDITION OF THE COLLECTION?

The Collection Risk Assessment (**Appendix B**) reveals that, despite sound investment in the facilities and in preservation activity through digitisation, there are serious risks facing all parts of the collection, with some rated catastrophic and others extreme or high priority.

Using a tool specifically designed for assessment of risks surrounding cultural collections, Kim Morris considered six areas in detail, as listed here with the range of priority risk ratings shown for each in parentheses:

Paper based materials (Low – High)

Art and Artefact sub-collection (Medium – Catastrophic)

Audiovisual materials (Extreme – Catastrophic)

Off-site Storage (Low – Medium)

Acton Peninsula Building (Medium – Catastrophic)

Collection Related Staffing (Extreme – Catastrophic)

Storage is nearing or at capacity in most locations at the Acton Peninsula building; digitisation of audiovisual material may not be keeping pace with deterioration; and the display of art works around the building is not consistent with museum standards. The off-site storage locations provide good long-term conditions for the material housed there, but the Assessment reports many concerns relating to the storage environments at the Acton Peninsula building. The current lack of a professional conservator is noted, as is the small size and low APS levels of the Facilities team within the Corporate Services Program.

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30   See: https://icarchives.wufoo.com/forms/register-your-support-for-the-uda/

The Collection Risk Assessment primarily considered the real (physical / analogue) material in the collection and the risks to it. It is also important to note that AIATSIS has been digitising its analogue material – for preservation and access purposes - for approximately 13.5 years – and has therefore invested approximately $40 million in building its digital holdings. These need to be preserved in their own right.[31]

Recommendation CM 5

That AIATSIS implement recommendations CRA 1 – 6 of the Collection Risk Assessment undertaken as part of this reporting project

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In addition, AIATSIS is increasingly being encouraged and required to acquire 'born digital' material as well, and this can safely be assumed to be a growth area with vast potential but major obligations.

The preservation of such digital holdings is being managed in accordance with international standards, but the obligations to guard against digital 'bit rot' are intense. It has been suggested to us that there will be increasing need for the Information Technology staff within AIATSIS to complement the work being done within the Collections Program through the planned Digital Asset Management System (DAMS), and for increased storage capacity to preserve the anticipated future 'big data' that will derive from research projects as well, potentially, from communities and individuals. The work being done by the Australian National Data Service (www.ands.org.au) in guiding the responsible storage of 'big data' generated by Australian research projects may suggest models that AIATSIS should explore.

Recommendation CM 6

That AIATSIS commission a Digital Assets Risk Assessment to underpin digital preservation processing and staffing, and to ensure robust and future-ready data management and access

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Recommendation CM 7

That AIATSIS consult with the Australian National Data Service when developing its approach for increased storage of both digitised and born digital content

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4.7   AN OBSERVATION ON BACKLOGS AND SUCCESSION-PLANNING

Staff of the Collections Program frequently mention the backlogs that exist in the cataloguing and end-processing of print and manuscript material. Thousands of items await basic cataloguing and so are undiscoverable by researchers. Over 70 manuscript groupings lack the finding aids that would help people become aware of their content. The digitising of audiovisual material proceeds in accordance with agreed priorities, but concerns are being raised as to whether the existing resources will manage to digitise all of the fragile material before it is too late. Client Services staff report very long waiting times for responses to complex enquiries; this 'response backlog' correlates to the small number of staff available to work on client enquiries.

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31   Feedback received via Lyndall Osborne from Gerald Preiss, 12 August 2014

All heritage organisations have backlogs in relation to collection management but long-standing backlogs generate risks in connection with stakeholder relationships and expectations. In the case of the AIATSIS collection, stakeholders with major concerns include depositors, donors and scholars. Others who are affected include community and family historians and fellow professionals in the collections sector[32]. Managing the risk requires dealing with the backlog while relevant expertise is available, or at least recording sufficient information to enable the personnel who follow an earlier expert to make suitable decisions.

We can illustrate this problem with an observation on the large backlog of unprocessed material in the Closed Access Stack of the Rare Printed sub-collection. The boxes holding this material are frequently annotated with instructions to 'ask X', where X is a present or past (retired or deceased) member of staff who knows / knew the background, special conditions and so on that were associated with the acquisition. Reliance on the individual and their corporate memory is not always a sign of best practice, but in collection contexts it is frequently an invisible and invaluable asset – difficult to replace quickly, and exploited by management, communications teams and scholars far more than is often credited. The observation from the Closed Access Stack points, therefore, to the need not only to address backlogs more efficiently, but also to develop larger teams and a stronger culture of team-work and knowledge-sharing between individual staff members so that succession-planning becomes more feasible.

4.8   THE AIATSIS COLLECTION – STATUS AND CONTEXTS

The following tables summarise the observations made by the consultants on the collection and its contexts, with respect to Resources and Infrastructure:

Resources		
A	The collection	Large, significant and growing
		Diverse materials and formats
		Mostly in stable condition (but some very serious concerns – see section 5.6 and **Appendix B** for details)
		Many legitimate protections that mitigate against open access and use
		When available and accessible, used and valued by individuals and communities
		Lacks profile and use within many sections of the community (including within heritage and research sectors and some other professional communities)

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32 The National Museum of Australia reported experiencing long delays in response to image requests (Submission to the Independent Review of AIATSIS, 20 September 2013. See: http://www.acilallen.com.au/cms_files/38.%20National%20Museum%20of%20Australia.pdf) and other professionals have advised us that it takes 'far too long' for requests to be processed (years in some cases) and that the service has been 'especially slow in recent years'.

Resources		
B	Intellectual framework for the collection	'Essential infrastructure for research' (= current strategy for promotion of collection, as shown on the two-page Statement of Strategic Intent)
		Audiences / users (when defined) are assumed to align with this research role
		Fair alignment with national and international laws, protocols and standards – including some that require or support restrictions to access and use
		Comprehensive suite of written policies to guide current practice
		Written plans for growth and preservation of collection
C	Organisational context	Collection is a whole-of-AIATSIS asset and responsibility
		With exceptions such as the Mura® catalogue that unites most sub-collections, previous management through two programs ('Library' and 'AV Archive') has created persistent silos
		Good will to and from other program areas across AIATSIS is at risk through silo mentality and a possibly inward focus on collection
D	Staff of the Collections Program	Highly committed to the collection (or sub-collections)
		Knowledgeable in most specialised fields (but with gaps in knowledge about archives, art and artefacts / material culture, due to lack of sufficient and appropriate staff)
		Skilled in technical fields
		Unevenly adjusted to recent restructure as the 'Collections Program'
		Lacking succession plans due to high specialisation and small teams
		Risk loss of corporate knowledge through departure of long-serving senior staff
		Service catalogue is useful, but could be developed to connect better with the other programs of AIATSIS (not only the IT Services)
		Volunteer program is planned

Infrastructure		
E	Building	Difficulties are emerging with amenity and capacity (see **Appendix B**)
		Layout of building discourages collaboration between teams and programs
		No gallery for topical exhibitions drawn from collection
F	Equipment	Relevant upgrades are planned
		Crowd-sourcing opportunities to annotate and value-add to collection are planned in conjunction with DAMS

PART III   NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS

5.   AIATSIS BENCHMARKING STUDY

In conjunction with its 50th anniversary this year, AIATSIS initiated a worldwide survey of collecting organisations, aiming to:

> Provide a snapshot of local, national and international collection management, preservation and access practices, and

> Determine the approximate extent and distribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander materials globally.

At the initiation meeting for this Collection Management Report project on 7 July 2014, AIATSIS advised Significance International of its intention to make the findings of the survey available so that they would contribute to this section of the report.

Subsequently, AIATSIS has advised that 'the postal delivery of the survey was significantly slow & many only received the package last week so we have extended the closing date from 31 July to 15 Aug 2014.' In the same email, AIATSIS confirmed its intention to share with the consultants 'a very initial report, consisting of all the answers together with where AIATSIS fits in the responses (where ever possible)'.'[33]

AIATSIS's extended timeline for its important research means that their findings have not reached Significance International before the due date for our report to AIATSIS.

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33   Personal communication by email from Mark Denbow to Margaret Birtley, 22 July 2014.

6. DEFINING THE OPTIMUM: BEST-PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

Best practice in the management and preservation of large collections can be understood in many ways, and these are probably as diverse as the collections themselves. The following expressions of best practice are proposed as a way of defining the optimum for AIATSIS:

Compliance with the law

All activity in Australia is governed by the legislative framework. Collecting organisations are not exempt. Breaches can be policed and penalties applied. Consequently their operations must comply with international treaties and national and local legislation, rules and regulations.

> Comply with the law

The consultant's assessment of AIATSIS in relation to this recommendation is that **Best practice** is being achieved.

Conformance with externally accepted standards

The management of cultural collections is not highly codified, largely because of the diversity of governance, purpose and type of the collections themselves. If a collecting organisation self-identifies with a particular domain in the collections sector (e.g. Archives, Galleries, Historical Societies, Keeping Places, Libraries or Museums) then the organisation will have access to any codes, standards and guidelines (summarised here as 'standards') that have been defined by the co-ordinating body (or bodies) for that domain. Such standards are occasionally connected with an external accreditation system[34] but in Australia participation is voluntary; they are not policed; and there are no formal penalties or sanctions applied for non-participation or for failure to conform.

Informal reactions to a sub-standard (poorly managed) collection might, however, impact adversely on the organisation through (e.g.) stakeholder disengagement; reduced financial support; reduced flow of donations of items for the collection; professional ostracism; and withdrawal of collegial support.

> Identify relevant domain(s) in which professional engagement is appropriate
>
> Identify some key standards that are relevant
>
> Conform with a majority of those key standards

> Identify all external standards that are relevant.
>
> Conform with a majority of those external standards

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34   For example, the museum accreditation programs offered by Museums Australia Victoria (http://www.mavic.asn.au/museum_accreditation_program) and History SA (http://community.history.sa.gov.au/content/joining-cmp)

Identify all external standards that are relevant.

Conform with all those external standards

The consultant's assessment of AIATSIS in relation to this recommendation is that **Good practice** is being achieved.

Conformance with formal agreements

Organisations with cultural collections enter into formal agreements with other entities for a variety of purposes such as: funding through grants and sponsorship; co-operation on projects and programs; licensing of rights; provision of goods and/or services.

Breaches of an agreement may attract legal prosecution. Failure to acquit an agreement satisfactorily may mean that the organisation becomes ineligible to work with that entity again.

Acquit each formal agreement as required by the contract

Fifty percent (50%) of open-ended agreements such as MOUs are active

Acquit each formal agreement as required by the contract

Seventy-five percent (75%) of open-ended agreements such as MOUs are active

Acquit each formal agreement as required by the contract

All (100%) of open-ended agreements such as MOUs are active

The consultant's assessment of AIATSIS in relation to this recommendation is that **Better practice** is being achieved.

Performance against internal policies and plans

Four critical aspects of the governance of any contemporary organisation are transparency, accountability, stewardship and integrity. Boards of governance are expected to be active in formulating strategy, setting policy, monitoring progress and providing accountability. Within the organisation, managers of cultural collections are expected to work within a framework of policies and plans. These are likely to be accompanied by performance indicators and reporting requirements. Achievement against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) is a common indicator of success for individuals, teams and projects.

Provide a suitable policy and planning context

Establish KPIs for planned actions

Achieve 80% of planned actions at the level specified in the KPIs (or better)

Provide a suitable policy and planning context

Establish KPIs for planned actions

Achieve 90% of planned actions at the level specified in the KPIs (or better)

Provide a suitable policy and planning context

Establish KPIs for planned actions

Achieve 100% of planned actions at the level specified in the KPIs (or better)

The consultant's assessment of AIATSIS in relation to this recommendation is that **Good practice** is being achieved.

PART IV WHAT IS OPTIMALLY REQUIRED FOR THE COLLECTIONS PROGRAM AT AIATSIS?

7.   RESOURCES

The current provision of human resources in the Collections Program is listed at **Appendix H**. The current establishment is for 46.35 FTE (51 unique positions) ranging in level from EL 2 to APS 3. At the start of this project, five of the positions were vacant.

This establishment is sub-optimum in relation to the organisation's legal and strategic responsibilities. The Program is to be congratulated for nevertheless delivering no less than Good Practice against the criteria shown above in section 7 of this report.

To ensure delivery of Better or Best Practice against each of the criteria shown in section 7, a large expansion of the staff establishment is required.

The optimum resourcing level for the Collections Program to develop, manage, maintain, preserve, provide discoverability of and access to, a collection of the size and complexity of that held at AIATSIS is estimated as being 117.4 FTE positions, ranging in level from SES 1 to APS 3. The recommended establishment is based on advice from current staff and on the consultant's experience.

In addition, it is recommended that staffing be increased in the Corporate Services Program so as to provide support to the work of the Collections Program. Specifically, these increases involve the creation of 6 additional FTE positions and the upgrading of two current positions.

Appendix I depicts this optimum staffing.

This increase is necessary   of whether the Program operates from the current building or a new facility, as proposed by Options (B) and (C) in section 10, below.

In other words:

> Better Practice can be achieved in the current facility by increasing the human resources to 117.4 FTE positions.

> Best Practice can only be achieved with additional investment in the facilities available for storage and for public programs. Subject to careful design of any new facilities, however, the number of staff required is not expected to increase.

Recommendation CM 8

That AIATSIS implement the optimum staffing structure and levels set out in **Appendix I** so as to reduce collection management backlogs, create staff succession plans and increase the managed access and use of the collection

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8. INFRASTRUCTURE

AIATSIS is aware of the ongoing need to improve and develop their management of the digitised holdings. They have plans in place to improve their Digital Content Object Storage System (DCOSS) and to acquire an over-arching Digital Asset Management System (DAMS). They have prioritised a list of planned capital expenses that includes equipment upgrades. It is anticipated that these costs can be met through the normal budget appropriations.

AIATSIS's digitisation activity is currently supported by the Australian Government's annual provision of $3.2 million. The Independent Review of AIATSIS recommends working towards securing a longer term annual appropriation for this work.

The existing building and facilities appear to serve the needs of the current number of researchers. The onsite collections storage for physical material is, however, approaching capacity.[35] A dedicated storage facility should be considered.

Capital works are also required if the collection is to be made accessible (a) to larger numbers of researchers attending the Canberra venue in person, and / or (b) through a wider variety of public programs that may include displays and exhibitions.

Examples of best-practice solutions in their own contexts and at their own scale are:

National Museum of the American Indian, Washington DC

Australian War Memorial – gallery extensions

Western Australian Museum - their new museum is in development from 2013-2020, with state govt funding of $428.3 million locked in for design, build, fit-out and opening. The project includes an upgrade to their storage facility. It is not a green-field site but is associated with their existing heritage buildings. (http://www.museum.wa.gov.au/new-museum/News)

National Library of Australia - Treasures Gallery opened Oct 2011. This was a major internal makeover, plus ft-out and new displays. Funding was 'over $3 million' and came mostly from private and corporate donors.(http://www.nla.gov.au/exhibitions/treasures-gallery)

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35 This is evidenced by the Collection Risk Assessment at Appendix B as well as being commented on by staff of the Collections Program.

9. MEETING FUTURE EXPECTATIONS

AIATSIS is more than just a collecting organisation, and has taken important steps to providing access and client services. It faces profound challenges with regard to preservation of both the 'real' (physical / analogue) and the digitised and digital material in the collection. It works to high standards, but is under-staffed and therefore cannot meet the legitimate requests and expectations of current users.

Looking to the future, there will be increasing potential for the collection to gain greater profile and to be used in new and innovative ways through online communications.

The following options, A – C, are presented to indicate a range of possibilities for the future management of the AIATSIS collection, from the current scenario (A), to an enhanced service at the current location (B), to an 'optimum' in a new location (C).

Each option is underpinned by the principles that AIATSIS is, and must always be:

> a safe place for sensitive material;
>
> respectful of communities and individuals; and
>
> respectful of the rights of Indigenous people to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions.

The Enhance (B) and Optimum (C) options both enable AIATSIS to address emerging and future expectations of researchers and all users that:

> the collection will continue to grow in meaningful ways, aligned with government and AIATSIS strategies and anticipating future needs
>
> the significance of the collection and sub-collections (and many of their parts) will be understood and celebrated
>
> statements of significance will be used for a range of institutional purposes
>
> the collection will be:
>
>> highly discoverable online
>>
>> in large part accessible
>
> simple enquiries will be finalised promptly (within 2 working days)
>
> complex requests will be responded to efficiently (normally by providing preliminary advice within 3 working days regarding the feasibility of providing the requested service and the anticipated timeframe).[36]

Option B makes access more efficient, although on a rather specialised / niche scale. Option C enables a much more comprehensive form of public and specialised access.

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36 The current levels of Access staffing mean that, for Audiovisual requests, the waiting period is 6 months. The optimum would be 30 days but the need for community consultation on some items means that timeframes cannot be standardised.

	Option	Activity	Results
A	Status quo	Maintain current growth of collection Maintain current preservation strategies Maintain current rate of digitisation Continue to provide access and use in accordance with legislation and policy Continue to provide limited pro-active outreach services	A collection that struggles for relevance and profile Some disaffected donors and users Little engagement of new audiences / users Material currently at risk may not be preserved before it is lost Frustrated staff Unviable and unsustainable Eventual and rapid decline (through inability of current resources and infrastructure staff to meet current, let alone emerging, needs) to become a closed and dormant collection that is, at best, a 'library of last resort' for unique items in the collection

	Option	Activity	Results
B	Enhance	Develop a more strategic vision for growth of collection	Improved relevance and profile
		Safeguard the collection by implementing the recommendations of the Collection Risk Assessment by Significance International (August 2014)	Engaged audiences and users
			Increased proportion of significant additions to the collection
		Increase the rate of processing, especially with digitisation and cataloguing, to reduce backlogs and make material discoverable	Increased participation by Collections Program staff in AIATSIS research activities
		Aim for continuous improvement to the access and use approach so as to maintain a fair balance between the need to protect Indigenous traditions and cultural expressions, and the ability to assist researchers	Increased use of the collection by the AIATSIS research programs
			New online exhibitions curated (and guest-curated)
		Ensure that each work-team has procedural manuals that guide consistent practice in their specialised fields	Greater interoperability with other collection databases
			Greater discoverability of collection
		Re-brand the collection (perhaps in the context of a refreshing of the AIATSIS brand)	Generation of public programs (which could include exhibitions) on a scale suited to current building, and in collaboration with other venues
		Extend the opening hours of the Stanner Reading Room (for access to the Library and Audiovisual Archives sub-collections) so that the room is open from 10 am to 5 pm, Monday to Friday, and so that the roster does not draw Collection Management staff away from their regular work	Succession plan for staff (supported by increased number of personnel at different levels, and by existence of definitive procedural manuals)
			Training of Indigenous staff in collection management
		Provide resources to manage some outsourcing to the 'crowd' of value-adding activities currently done in-house	Involvement of Indigenous Visiting Research Fellows and other Indigenous scholars in research relating to collection management and the history of the collection
		Re-engage traditional audiences and users	
		Actively engage new audiences and users	
		Recruit a total of 77 additional staff across AIATSIS to implement the above (71 in the Collections Program and 6 in Corporate Services)	

	Option	Activity	Results
C	Optimum	As for (B) Ensure long-term storage solutions for the collection Create a purpose built landmark building to house AIATSIS including collection storage and public programs (for users and visitors) facilities Develop and implement programs (including research, publications and exhibitions) that foster understanding of the Collection and the communities and individuals to whom they relate.	A prominent 14,000 m^2 venue in a high profile Canberra location A collection actively used by researchers A collection in an organisation that contributes to the nation through its inherent message about Australian identity plus its infrastructure and services for research, education, cultural awareness and transmission Trusted Digital Repository status The Australian repository of choice for Indigenous materials 2,500 m^2 of assured, long-term storage solutions for the collection (of which 2,000m^2 could be a dedicated off-site store) The first port of call for international visitors seeking cultural understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples The National Keeping Place of Australia's First Peoples

Following the definition of the above three Options, Margaret Coaldrake analysed them for AIATSIS. Her Collection Management Options Analysis is at **Appendix A**.

Recommendation CM 9

That AIATSIS develop advocacy for the Optimum management of the collection, drawing on the Collection Management Options Analysis prepared as part of this project

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Recommendation CM 10

That AIATSIS implement recommendations OA 1 – 5 arising from the Options Analysis prepared as part of this reporting project

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PART V   RECOMMENDATIONS

Significance International recommends:

CM 1   That AIATSIS implement recommendations SA 1 – 2 arising from the 2014 Significance Assessment Report so as to establish a significance assessment program at AIATSIS and to use products of significance assessments for a range of institutional purposes

CM 2   That AIATSIS consider refreshing its online communications about access to the collection so as to encourage discovery and engagement by diverse users

CM 3   That AIATSIS explore ways of enabling managed public online access to the collection catalogue so that audiences can contribute to the collection knowledge base

CM 4   That AIATSIS consider adopting the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Archives and standards developed by the International Council on Archives and other professional bodies in the collections sector

CM 5   That AIATSIS implement recommendations CRA 1 – 6 of the Collection Risk Assessment undertaken as part of this reporting project

CM 6   That AIATSIS commission a digital assets risk assessment to underpin digital preservation processing and staffing, and to ensure robust and future-ready data management and access

CM 7   That AIATSIS consult with the Australian National Data Service when developing its approach for increased storage of both digitised and born digital content

CM 8   That AIATSIS implement the optimum staffing structure and levels set out in **Appendix I** so as to reduce collection management backlogs, create staff succession plans and increase managed access and use of the collection

CM 9   That AIATSIS develop advocacy for the Optimum management of the collection, drawing on the Collection Management Options Analysis prepared as part of this project

CM 10   That AIATSIS implement recommendations OA 1 – 5 arising from the Options Analysis prepared as part of this reporting project

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ABBREVIATIONS

AIATSIS   Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

DAMS   Digital Asset Management System

DCOSS   Digital Content Object Storage System

FTE   Full Time Equivalent

ICA   International Council on Archives

NLA   National Library of Australia

NFSA   National Film and Sound Archive