



AIATSIS

Corporate Plan
2023–2027



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Delegates working on a communal painting project at the 2023 AIATSIS Summit.

Front cover image:

Midn Marr Dreaming dancers performing at the 2023 AIATSIS Summit.

Acknowledgement of Country

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, cultures and community. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.



A smoking ceremony welcoming delegates to the 2023 AIATSIS Summit on Noongar boodja.

Introduction

Chairperson's statement

A world in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' knowledge cultures and rights are acknowledged as well as recognised, respected, celebrated and valued remains the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) Vision. The AIATSIS Council affirms our commitment to the key areas of focus identified through this Corporate Plan that underpin the Institutes Vision and Mission.

In 2024, AIATSIS will celebrate its 60 year Anniversary. AIATSIS was established through an Act of Parliament in 1964 as a place for research and preservation of Indigenous culture and heritage. The Institute has grown from its early beginnings and now holds the largest collection of its type in the world. Over the past six decades, AIATSIS has remained current: being highly respected for advice in relation to Ethics; has recently established a Centre of Excellence for Indigenous languages, boosts an ever growing presence in the Education sector; and in 2023, for the first time is expanding its presence outside of Canberra, opening the Central Australian Facility, extending the AIATSIS physical and digital footprint into the Central Australian region.

As we approach 2024, we reflect on and acknowledge this significant milestone, celebrating the achievements of those who have gone before us and those who will lead us into the future.

Through the delivery of our Corporate Plan, we turn our Mission and focus areas into actions by continuing to:

- Tell the story of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia;
- Create opportunities for people to encounter, engage with and be transformed by that story;
- Support and facilitate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural resurgence; and
- Shape the national narrative.

We will do this by maintaining our focus on:

- Building and preserving a national collection and making it accessible in various mediums;
- Promoting and creating a deeper understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures and heritage;
- Leading and influencing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research, ethics, protocols and collections;
- Partnering and collaborating with our communities, partners and governments; and
- Advising on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and heritage.

In presenting our Corporate Plan, we commit to utilising our collection to achieve our Vision and Mission focusing on working closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as rights holders and partnering organisations, our Minister and Portfolio, Government agencies, and the Academy.



Statement of preparation

As Chair of the AIATSIS Council, I present the AIATSIS Corporate Plan, for the reporting period 2023–27 as required under paragraph 35 (1) (b) of the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 (PGPA Act).

This plan has been prepared in accordance with the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jodie Sizer".

Jodie Sizer
Chair, AIATSIS Council
28 June 2023

Period of coverage

This Corporate Plan is prepared for the reporting period 2023–27 and covers the four reporting periods 2023–2027.



Left: The Hon Linda Burney MP speaking at the 2023 AIATSIS Summit welcome ceremony. Right top: AIATSIS CEO Craig Richie and Professor Greg Lehman, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Aboriginal Leadership, University of Tasmania, in conversation after Professor Lehman delivered the 2023 Wentworth Lecture. Right bottom: Installation view of Ngirramanujwal: The Art and Country of Jimmy Pike at Government House Ballroom, Perth.

Our purpose

The purpose of AIATSIS is set out in the mission statement and the functions described in the *Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 1989 (Cth)* and the *Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Amendment Act 2016*.

Mission

TELL the story of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia.

CREATE opportunities for people to encounter, engage with and be transformed by that story.

SUPPORT and facilitate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural resurgence.

SHAPE our national narrative.

Legislated functions¹

1. To develop, preserve and provide access to a national collection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage.
2. To use that national collection to strengthen and promote knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage.
3. To provide leadership in the fields of:
 - a. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research
 - b. Ethics and protocols for research, and other activities relating to collections, related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
 - c. Use (including use for research) of that national collection and other collections containing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and heritage.
4. To lead and promote collaborations and partnerships among the academic, research, non-government, business and government sectors and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in support of the other functions of the Institute.
5. To provide advice to the Commonwealth on the situation and status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and heritage.

¹ As per section 5 of the AIATSIS Act 1989 (Cth) and the AIATSIS Amendment Act 2016

Key activities

To deliver on our functions and achieve our purpose over the next four years the Institute will focus our effort on the following key activity areas:

1. Build and preserve a national collection.

2. Promote and strengthen knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage.

3. Leaders in the provision of advice on Indigenous ethics, collections and research.

4. Lead and promote collaborations and partnerships in support of the Institutes functions.

5. Leaders in the provision of advice to the Commonwealth on the situation and status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage.

Activity	Goals	Actions
<p>1. Build and preserve a national collection.</p>	<p>Ensure that our collection is representative, relevant and diverse.</p> <p>Optimise appropriate accessibility.</p> <p>Maximise opportunities provided by digital innovation.</p> <p>PERFORMANCE MEASURES</p> <p>Increase AIATSIS collection across all collection types by 2%.</p> <p>Increase in the total amount of content digitised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5% increase in content digitised. • 1% increase in digitised content that includes descriptive data. • Physical and digital collection material is maintained and preserved according to Australian Institute of Conservation of Cultural Material (AICCM) standard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to implement the <i>Collections Transformation Strategy</i>. • Implementation of the <i>ICT Strategy 2023–2026</i> and new <i>Digital Business Strategy</i>. • Clarify legal frameworks that affect the administration of the collection with a view to increasing accessibility. • Implement a focused and relevant acquisitions program. • Maintain an active digitisation program, including establishing digitisation in the Central Australian Facility and rolling out the On Country Digitisation Project. • Arrange, describe, manage and preserve collection materials in accordance with accepted industry standards. • Implement the <i>AIATSIS Collection Development Strategy 2023–2027</i>. • Develop and seek endorsement on best practice policies and procedures as they pertain to the care, management and accessibility of our collection. • Identify appropriate physical and digital storage solutions for our expanding collection. • Conduct collections based research. • Return and repatriation of cultural heritage material. • Investigate, develop and adopt new technologies for the preservation and display of collection material. • Develop solutions through the Ngurra project for the future care, preservation, and display of collection material. • Digitisation of at-risk cultural heritage material.

Activity	Goals	Actions
<p>2. Promote and strengthen knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage.</p>	<p>Provide a national forum for dialogue on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.</p> <p>Deliver transformative experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and heritage.</p> <p>Deliver high quality exhibitions, products and publications.</p> <p>PERFORMANCE MEASURES</p> <p>2,000 engagements with the collection.</p> <p>70% of respondents indicating an increased understanding of issues relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage after an experience with AIATSIS.</p> <p>15 publications and/or education resources released.</p> <p>50 Core Cultural Learning education program licenses issued.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce culturally responsive and authoritative collections-based online curriculum resources. • Develop and implement a Canberra-based schools' program to support learning about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. • Develop teacher training and associated resources to support teachers' culturally responsive pedagogy. • Strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages through funding, research and projects such as the AIATSIS Dictionaries Program. • Deliver a robust publishing program with strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation. • Design and deliver high quality exhibitions, displays, and installations with Indigenous creators and communities featuring their cultural heritage. • Promote the importance and impact of the return and repatriation of cultural heritage material. • Produce culturally safe and accessible online content. • Develop and implement an appropriate public program utilising the AIATSIS collection. • Scope and develop a multimedia exhibition program to honour the contribution of Central Australia Aboriginal Organisations to the region and nationally.

Activity	Goals	Actions
<p>3. Leaders in the provision of advice on Indigenous ethics, collection and research.</p>	<p>Speak authoritatively through evidence-based research and culturally based representative networks.</p> <p>Articulate national priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research.</p> <p>Position AIATSIS as the arbiter of standards in relation to research ethics, Indigenous research, and management of Indigenous collections.</p> <p>Foster innovation in ethical, impactful research and collection practice.</p> <p>PERFORMANCE MEASURES</p> <p>5,000 downloads of the AIATSIS Code of Ethics.</p> <p>20 citations of AIATSIS works.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make evidence-based research accessible through the Indigenous Research Exchange. Support Indigenous led research through the Indigenous Research Exchange. • Ensure Indigenous Data Sovereignty and governance principles are upheld and promoted through AIATSIS research, especially digital research infrastructure. • Conduct research in partnership with Indigenous communities and individuals. • Convene forums and foster dialogue among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. • Assist University, Government and Industry sectors to adopt and implement the AIATSIS Code of Ethics. • Provide ethics review services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research. • Provide best practice guidance on culturally safe Indigenous collection development, management, preservation and access principles and practices. • Share and promote the results of AIATSIS research and innovations in practice.

Activity	Goals	Actions
<p>4. Lead and promote collaborations and partnerships in support of the Institute's functions.</p>	<p>Actively build diverse and enduring relationships domestically and internationally.</p> <p>Be responsive and professional, with culturally competent working practices.</p> <p>Build an active network of corporate partners.</p> <p>Engage with and expand our network of members, friends, volunteers, visitors and affiliates.</p> <p>Learn from and contribute to the priorities and needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.</p> <p>PERFORMANCE MEASURES</p> <p>10 formal agreements with stakeholders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and develop connections with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to support our work. • Maintain and build relationships with communities and organisations involved in Indigenous led research and collection care/management. • Engage and collaborate with peer Indigenous, research and collections organisations. • Maintain existing and establish new partners and opportunities to collaborate on new activities. • Increase revenue from corporate, private and philanthropic sources. • Improve member engagement. • Develop and maintain partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to return and repatriate cultural heritage material. • Temporary custodianship of cultural heritage material returned from overseas. • Partner and work with Central Australian community in relation to who AIATSIS is and the work we do. Build trusting relationships with the local community.

Activity	Goals	Actions
<p>5. Leaders in the provision of advice to the Commonwealth on the situation and status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage.</p>	<p>Maintain AIATSIS position as a trusted adviser.</p> <p>Build our policy capacity and capability to deliver world class expertise.</p> <p>Report regularly on the situation and status of Indigenous cultures and heritage.</p> <p>PERFORMANCE MEASURES</p> <p>Regular reporting on status of Indigenous Culture and Heritage Report.</p> <p>Provision of high-quality advice to the Commonwealth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactively participate in national and international policy debate, expert mechanism and forums relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and heritage. • Conduct policy research and research translation to build an evidence base for Indigenous and government decision making. • Make submissions to inquiries and reviews in our areas of expertise. • Publish the framework and first two domain reports on the situation and status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and heritage. • Pursue AIATSIS representation on international committees and forums as they relate to First Nations culture and heritage.

Performance criteria

(As taken from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio Budget Statements 2023–24).

1. Build and preserve a national collection.

Goals

- Ensure that our collection is representative, relevant and diverse.
- Optimise appropriate accessibility.
- Maximise opportunities provided by digital innovation.

Performance measure	2023–24 target	2024–25 target	2025–26 target	2026–27 target
Increase AIATSIS collection across all collection types	2% from 2022–23	2% from 2023–24	2% from 2024–25	2% from 2025–26
Increase in the total amount of content digitised	5% increase in content digitised from 2022–23	5% from 2023–24	5% from 2024–25	5% from 2025–26
	1% increase in digitised content that includes descriptive data	1% from 2023–24	1% from 2024–25	1% from 2025–26
Maintenance and preservation of the physical and digital collection as per the Australian Institute of Conservation of Cultural Material (AICCM) standard as per the collection care policy	All material maintained in accordance with AICCM	As per 23–24	As per 23–24	As per 23–24

2. Promote and strengthen knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage.

Goals

- Provide a national forum for dialogue on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.
- Deliver transformative experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and heritage.
- Deliver high quality exhibitions, products and publications.

Performance measure	2023–24 target	2024–25 target	2025–26 target	2026–27 target
Number engagements with the collection	2000 engagements	As per 2023–24	As per 2023–24	As per 2023–24
Number of respondents indicating an increased understanding of issues relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Culture and Heritage after an experience with AIATSIS	70% of respondents indicate an increased understanding	As per 2023–24	As per 2023–24	As per 2023–24
Number of publications and/or education resources released	15 publications released	As per 2023–24	As per 2023–24	As per 2023–24
Number of Core cultural learning education program licenses issued	50 licenses issued	As per 2023–24	As per 2023–24	As per 2023–24

3. Leaders in the provision of advice on Indigenous ethics, collections and research.

Goals

- Speak authoritatively through evidence-based research and culturally based representative networks.
- Articulate national priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research.
- Position AIATSIS as the arbiter of standards in relation to research ethics, Indigenous research and management of Indigenous collections.
- Foster innovation in ethical, impactful research and collection practice.

Performance measure	2023–24 target	2024–25 target	2025–26 target	2026–27 target
Number of downloads of the AIATSIS Code of Ethics	5000 downloads	As per 2023–24	As per 2023–24	As per 2023–24
Number of citations of AIATSIS works	20 citations	As per 2023–24	As per 2023–24	As per 2023–24

4. Lead and promote collaborations and partnerships in support of the Institute’s functions.

Goals

- Actively build diverse and enduring relationships domestically and internationally.
- Be responsive and professional, with culturally competent working practices.
- Build an active network of corporate partners.
- Engage with our network of members, friends, volunteers, visitors and affiliates.
- Learn from and contribute to the priorities and needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Performance measure	2023–24 target	2024–25 target	2025–26 target	2026–27 target
Number of formal agreements with stakeholders	10 formal agreements	As per 2023–24	As per 2023–24	As per 2023–24

5. Leaders in the provision of advice to the Commonwealth on the situation and Status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage.

Goals

- Position AIATSIS as a trusted adviser.
- Build our policy capacity and capability to deliver world class expertise.
- Report regularly on the situation and status of Indigenous cultures and heritage.

Performance measure	2023–24 target	2024–25 target	2025–26 target	2026–27 target
Regular reporting on status of Indigenous Culture and Heritage Report	Yes	As per 2023–24	As per 2023–24	As per 2023–24
Provision of high-quality advice to the Commonwealth	Yes	As per 2023–24	As per 2023–24	As per 2023–24

Our environment

AIATSIS are the custodians of a long and significant history that tells the story of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, a role AIATSIS has played for nearly 60 years. This history serves as a platform to build into future years and for future generations.

We occupy an important place in the cultural fabric of this nation, working at the intersection between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the Government, the Academy, the Cultural Sector and the broader Australian and International public. AIATSIS operates in a changing environmental context in which the Council interprets the AIATSIS Act 1989 (Cth) and AIATSIS Amendment Act 2016 to provide strategy and priority setting.

These challenges and opportunities include:

- Increasing recognition, demand and expectation for AIATSIS expertise and collections;
- Increasing knowledge and relevance of AIATSIS;
- Growing recognition and support of Ngurra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander precinct including knowledge and cultural centre & National Resting Place;
- Increasing number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities seeking support for the return of their cultural heritage material from overseas; and overseas collecting institutions, private collectors and foreign governments willing to engage in the return of cultural heritage material to Australia;
- Ongoing risk to the AIATSIS collection;
- The highly endangered state of all Indigenous Australian languages;
- Impacts of audio-visual obsolescence as detailed under the UNESCO deadline 2025 statement;
- A unique cultural institution managing multiple areas of professional expertise and practice in a dynamic environment; and
- A fiscally challenging environment.



Ngurra: The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Precinct project site at Commonwealth Place in the National Triangle.

Cooperation

AIATSIS acknowledges our partnerships with key stakeholders. We draw on their expertise and insight and leverage these relationships to support us in achieving our purpose and mission. This includes but is not limited to:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;
- AIATSIS members;
- The cultural sector;
- The Academy;
- Government;
- National Indigenous Australians Agency;
- The corporate sector; and
- The general public.



Christiane Keller, Heath Garrett, Shaun Angeles, Nathalia Guimaraes, Iain Johnston and Ophelia Rubinich at the return of thirty-five stone artefacts back to the Eastern Maar community.

Capability

Over the duration of this Corporate Plan, AIATSIS will continue to strengthen and enhance our capability to achieve our purpose with a focus on:

Relationships

- Respectful engagement that continues to build our reputation and standing within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- Working closely with the Government including government agencies and jurisdictions to support our joint aspirations in Indigenous Affairs.
- Continue to partner with key organisations both domestically and internationally.

Governance

- Enhanced financial performance and resource management.
- Adhere to legislative obligations and compliance requirements.

Workforce capability

- Strengthen our leadership cohort.
- Develop a workforce plan that addresses workforce capabilities, requirements and gaps.
- Increase Indigenous representation in our workforce.
- Improve cultural competency.

ICT capability

- Ongoing modernisation and integration of our ICT environment to support improved knowledge management and discoverability of our collection.
- Enhance our technical expertise and capability through our *ICT Strategy 2023–2026* and our *Digital Business Strategy*.

Capability development

Map and refine core capabilities to identify capability gaps and areas for development including:

- Public Programs; and
- Facilities to support optimal delivery of AIATSIS's purpose.



Reconciliation Day BBQ for AIATSIS staff.

Risk Management and oversight

Risk Management and oversight

AIATSIS Risk Management is embedded within our governance, decision-making and business processes. Risk is managed in accordance with our Accountable Authority Instructions, the *2023 Commonwealth Risk Management Policy* and both the AIATSIS Risk Management Policy and Framework.

AIATSIS's Risk Management Policy and Framework were reviewed in 2023. The AIATSIS Risk policy is embedded within the Risk Management Framework and has been developed in accordance with the *2023 Commonwealth Risk Management Policy*.

The CEO holds senior Executive Managers accountable for risk management in the Institute. AIATSIS Executive are overseen by the AIATSIS Council Chair and the Council. The Audit and Risk Committee provide assurance to the Council as the Accountable Authority under the *PGPA Act*.

The AIATSIS Deputy Chief Executive Officer (also the Chief Risk Officer) supports the CEO and provides strategic advice to the Executive leadership team and to Council. Together, they promote positive risk behaviours to AIATSIS staff in order to incrementally improve AIATSIS approach to risk.

The Audit and Risk Committee provides independent advice to the Council Chair on the appropriateness of the Institute's systems of risk oversight and management as required to by the *PGPA Act*.

All AIATSIS staff actively contribute to risk management by identifying, assessing, controlling, communicating, monitoring and reporting risks in accordance with our Risk Management Policy and Framework as part of the business planning process.

Our enterprise risks

AIATSIS not being recognised by Indigenous communities as the leading Indigenous national cultural, research, education and collections institution.

Failure to grow, preserve, manage and store the physical and digital collections and data assets cared for by AIATSIS.

AIATSIS not being valued or recognised as a leader and centre of excellence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research.

AIATSIS not providing adequate leadership in the fields of research, ethics, and education.

AIATSIS not being well positioned for the future and is unable to deliver its core services as its systems, and processes are not sustainable, updated, relevant or fit for purpose.

AIATSIS not developing and strengthening its targeted international and national connections to support increased engagement in First Nations cultures and heritage.



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Aerial shot of Maraga, Acton Peninsula.