

# MEETING UPDATE: NATIVE TITLE RESEARCH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

TIM HEFFERNAN RESEARCH ASSISTANT NTRU

**T**HE AIATSIS NATIVE TITLE Research Advisory Committee (NTRAC) met again on Friday, 27 November 2015. The Committee's mandate, as set out by the AIATSIS Council, is to provide advice to the AIATSIS Principal on the native title research program. NTRAC meet twice a year and is comprised of the AIATSIS Principal, two AIATSIS Council members, a representative of the NTLW's primary funding body (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet), and up to eight native title experts in current practice.

An important outcome of the recent review of the NTRAC Charter has resulted in a greater gender balance, greater Indigenous representation and diversity of experts in the native title sector contributing to NTRAC. As such, current NTRAC members include Mr Russel Taylor OAM (Principal, AIATSIS), AIATSIS Council members Professor Mick

Dodson and Mr Kado Muir, Mr Wayne Beswick (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet), Ms Natalie Rotumah (CEO, NTSCorp), Dr Valerie Cooms (Member, National Native Title Tribunal), Ms Melissa George (CEO, Northern Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance), and Dr Lisa Strelein (Executive Director of Research, AIATSIS).

The meeting commenced with a tribute to NTRAC member, the late Brian Wyatt. The Committee also discussed current and future funding provided by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, the 2016 National Native Title Conference and 2016 National Indigenous Studies Conference, as well as a range of challenges and successes being experienced by communities around Australia through their involvement with native title.

The next NTRAC meeting will be held in mid-2016.

Thanks to  
Rob Blowes!



STACEY LITTLE SENIOR RESEARCH OFFICER NTRU

**R**OBERT BLOWES SC HAS ENDED HIS 20 year tenure as a member of the AIATSIS Native Title Research Advisory Committee. His expansive knowledge and expertise of the native title sector has been invaluable to the direction of the research conducted by AIATSIS.

Mr Blowes is a barrister with over 30 years of experience in representing Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders in the preparation, litigation, negotiation and mediation of their claims to their land and waters in many parts of Australia. He has also maintained a strong research and law reform focus throughout his continuing legal career. His emphasis on, and thinking around the connection requirements under section 223 of the *Native Title Act* contributed to the AIATSIS Connection Requirements research project, which resulted in a range of papers, reports and workshop and conference presentations and papers that have guided the sector. In particular, his conduct of the Torres Strait Sea Claim (*Akiba on behalf of the Torres Strait Regional Seas Claim Group v Commonwealth of Australia*), has been instrumental to the broadening of the connection requirements under section 223 of the *Native Title Act*. He has presented on connection issues at several National Native Title Conferences, and continues to advocate for broadly stating native title rights and interests to achieve improved outcomes for native title claimants.

AIATSIS thanks Mr Blowes for his long-term commitment and contribution to the Native Title Advisory Committee and native title research, practice and law reform more broadly.



Brian John Wyatt  
16 JUNE 1951–24 OCTOBER 2015

We were deeply saddened to hear of the passing of Brian John Wyatt in October.

Brian was Churchill Fellow who had nearly 40 years experience in administration of Aboriginal affairs. He held the position of CEO with the Goldfields Land and Sea Council for 11 years, was the inaugural Chairperson and CEO of the National Native Title Council and served on NTRAC since 2013. Brian participated regularly in the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

We extend our deepest condolences to Brian's family.

Above: AIATSIS Chairperson Professor Mick Dodson and Mr Brian Wyatt. Inspecting the Amur River, Khabarovsk, Russian Federation, August 2007. Credit: Mick Dodson.