

Dr Ford appointed to AIATSIS Council

A senior lecturer from the Finnis River has been selected to join Australia's leading centre for information and research on Australian Indigenous peoples.



Dr Payi-Linda Ford

Dr Payi-Linda Ford, of the Rak Mak Mak Marranunggu peoples from Kurrindju (Finniss River), will join the council of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), based in Canberra.

AIATSIS Council chairman Professor Mick Dodson said her appointment acknowledged her contribution to promoting respect

for Indigenous knowledge systems.

"Through her contribution to language and cultural diversity in educational settings, in social justice and cultural diversity, and in community development and adult education, Dr Ford has gained enormous respect for her commitment to advancing Indigenous issues and to promoting social justice," Professor Dod-

son said.

Dr Ford is on temporary secondment as a senior Indigenous policy officer in the NT Department of Regional Development, Primary Industry, Fisheries and Resources and will be returning to her position as senior lecturer at the School of Australian Indigenous Knowledge Systems at Charles Darwin University in Darwin.

Government passes test on Indigenous affairs – just

The Government's National Apology to the Stolen Generations in February this year marked a line in the sand for the beginning of a new relationship with Indigenous peoples, but despite some terrific initiatives and hefty commitments, many things are still being done 'to' Indigenous people rather than 'in partnership' with them, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Tom Calma says

Delivering his final speech in the *Essentials for Social Justice* series, Commissioner Calma said the

government had set high expectations for its first year in office, but it needed to do some business differently to achieve more positive changes.

"Over the last 12 months we've seen the historic and long-overdue National Apology, followed by commitments to closing the gap in Indigenous health inequality. We've also seen real steps taken towards creating equal life chances for Indigenous children," Mr Calma said.

"While I accept that change takes time and that the govern-

ment's commitment to a new approach is a work in progress, some mixed messages and contradictions remain.

Commissioner Calma said he was particularly concerned that new policies had been developed rapidly, but without significant engagement and participation of Indigenous peoples.

"People tell me as I travel around the country that they are overwhelmed by the level, and the constant nature, of change

"Many things are still being done 'to' Indigenous people rather than 'in partnership' with them," Tom Calma

occurring in their communities," Mr Calma said.

"We've also recently seen the independent review of the Northern Territory intervention lauded as an exercise in consultation and engagement, however there was little connection between this review's recommendations and subsequent decisions taken by government," he said.

"Despite these concerns, the last 12 months gives me hope that things can change for the better. "A new national Indigenous representative body will firm up a true partnership with the government and deliver lasting change."

Central Australian play wins prestigious Deadly Award



Trevor Jamieson and his mother who is the subject of some of the play

A confronting Central Australian play that challenges us to change our understanding of indigenous history has taken out a prestigious Deadly Award in the 'Most Outstanding Achievement in Theatre' category.

Ngapartji Ngapartji's Director and writer, Tasmanian Scott Rankin, and co-creator and key performer Trevor Jamieson, accepted the award recently in Sydney.

Ngapartji Ngapartji, Pitjantjatjara for "I give you something, you give me something" tells the true story of the Spinifex people (a clan of the Pitjantjatjara people) of the Western desert who were moved off their lands to make way for British atomic testing carried out between 1953 and 1965.

Test sites in the arid rangelands of South Australia remain uninhabitable for the next 250,000 years, after bombs almost the size of the Hiroshima bomb were dropped there.

Trevor Jamieson said, "I am immensely proud of this play. Its evolution over a nine year period has seen hundreds of people, both indigenous and non-indigenous; explore new ways of working together."

Jamieson is a Spinifex man himself, so the story is personal.

Since 2006, Ngapartji Ngapartji has sold out to a national audience of 30,000 with standing ova-

tions at every performance.

Jamieson also acknowledged the support of writer and director, Scott Rankin with whom he collaborated to make the play a reality.

Rankin, National Creative Director of Big hART, is known for his work in comedy, mainstream theatre, experimental community based projects, film and television. His work has been included in Tasmania, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Edinburgh Festivals and his plays have set box office records and received exceptional reviews.

The ground breaking play has also founded a world-first on-line Indigenous language program.

Over 350 people have enrolled in the on-line learning site, which is hailed as a model prototype by linguists. <http://ninti.ngapartji.org>

Ngapartji Ngapartji's success recently culminated in Alice Springs, with performances in front of a home audience.

Preparations are now underway for the play to travel to London to perform at Origins – the First Nations Theatre Festival in May 2009.