Governance of the AIATSIS Thesauri 2021-2024

**INTRODUCTION**

A well planned, strategic, prioritised approach is part of managing AIATSIS Collection data. This includes adherence to standards, policy, and procedures. Quality assurance has a vital role in managing information and a culturally safe environment is essential for staff and clients using the Collection and information about the Collection.

The AIATSIS Thesauri is used in catalogue records to describe the AIATSIS Collection of over 1,000,000 items. Clients use the thesauri headings to discover relevant material In the Mura catalogue. The AIATSIS Thesauri is increasing in its uptake by cultural organisations looking to use a more culturally appropriate controlled vocabulary in cataloguing/searching for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander material.

An international standard, the AIATSIS Thesauri was accepted by the Library of Congress to use in bibliographic records world-wide. Library of Congress Subject Headings, an international standard for subject analysis in the library and Information sector is deficient in the field of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies, cultures, histories, languages, and places. The AIATSIS Thesauri was developed to address this gap.

As part of data sharing, terms from the AIATSIS Thesauri are included in AIATSIS records contributed to the Australian National Bibliographic Database (Libraries Australia) and Trove, both which are maintained by the National Library of Australia, and OCLC. (Online Computer Library Centre), a cooperative catalogue for Libraries across the world. AIATSIS contributes bibliographic records to RMIT's Informit Indigenous Collection database. An updated copy of the AIATSIS Thesauri is sent to accompany the AIATSIS contribution to the dataset.

**PURPOSE**

This document identifies the standards, policies, procedures, and processes used in relation to the AIATSIS thesauri. Included is a statement on the purpose, use and reuse of the terms.

**SCOPE**

Datasets, use and reuse of data, standards, references to policies and procedures are included in the Governance document.

* Catalogue and authority data managed in Sirsi, harvested for use In Mura
* Place and subject authority headings managed in Multites
* Austlang which also manages language and people authority headings

**BACKGROUND**

The AIATSIS Thesauri was developed from subject codes used In the AIATSIS catalogue. It continues to be a tool primarily for AIATSIS staff to catalogue / describe material held in the AIATSIS Collection and as a discovery mechanism for staff and clients. The AIATSIS Thesauri consists of three separate thesauri, namely placenames, language and peoples and subjects.

The Placename and Subject Thesaurus are managed by a thesaurus management system (currently Multites). In addition to the thesaurus management system, the terms are managed and maintained independently in the Library Management System (LMS), currently SirsiDynix Workflows). The mechanism to manage these thesauri is using siloed systems which are not interoperable. A laborious manual effort is required to attempt to keep the two datasets in sync.

In preparation for the implementation of a thesaurus management system (Multites) from 2005-2007, a review of the AIATSIS thesauri was undertaken. Additional terms and changes to existing terms in the Subject and Placename thesauri are reflected on the AIATSIS Pathways website on a monthly basis.

The Language and Peoples thesauri were reviewed, prior to the integration with Austlang. These two thesauri are managed in Austlang and the responsibilities for management and administration are shared across business units in AIATSIS. Ongoing linguistic expertise is required to keep the language and Peoples thesauri up to date.

**INDIGENOUS-LED GUIDES AND PROTOCOLS FOR CARING FOR COLLECTIONS**

The thesauri demonstrate the commitment of AIATSIS to the ATSILIRN protocol

**5.1** Use national Indigenous thesauri for describing documentation relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and issues.

The AIATSIS Thesauri demonstrate the commitment to the Tandanya Declaration in the AIATSIS environment. The AIATSIS Thesauri have been designed to contain culturally appropriate terms which is part of supporting culturally safe research and access. The application of terms from these thesauri in metadata, specifically for improving descriptions and catalogue records seeks to address recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ownership and identity.

## CREATION OF THESAURI TERMS

**STANDARDS**

The Collection Transformation Project team produced a discussion paper on Standards currently used in the management of the AIATSIS Collection. Implementation of a robust approach to guide the selection of, and adherence to, metadata standards will be enacted over a three-year plan.

The following content and communication standards are currently employed in the creation of AIATSIS thesauri terms:

LMSauthority data

* USMARC 21 https://www.loc.gov/marc/bibliographic/
* 1:250,000 and 1:1000000 1975 map series Index

Thesaurus management system data

* Multites uses proprietary filetypes.
* Can export in RTF, HTML, PDF and TXT

**POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

Descriptive Cataloguing Framework Principles & Standards.

The AIATSIS Descriptive cataloguing framework principles & standards document is used for descriptive and subject cataloguing of most material formats in the AIATSIS Collection.[[1]](#footnote-1) The framework endorses a set of standards, which promote interoperability and are drawn from recognised international standards. Most of these standards have been sourced from the library community, although they include several relevant archival standards.

Authority Control on Mura[[2]](#footnote-2)

This document lists the authority files used for authority control in bibliographic records in the Mura catalogue. A procedure for the addition of new names for the Subject Thesaurus is included.

Austlang manual[[3]](#footnote-3)

This manual details the linkages between the Austlang database and the Language and Peoples thesaurus and the cooperative work across Collections, Digital Services and the Research and Education Unit.

**QUALITY ASSURANCE**

The following describes the high-level steps involved in quality control of information and data.

Sirsi data

For quality assurance processes for Sirsi data (including authority headings), refer to Cataloguing Procedural Guidelines.

Review of thesaurus terms

Keeping the thesaurus up to date demonstrates respect and understanding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and knowledge, in the acknowledgement that Australia’s Indigenous culture is alive, dynamic, and changing.

*Place Thesaurus*

New place headings are added as material in the collection is catalogued. This fits with the scope of the AIATSIS Thesauri, that they reflect the subject matter of material in the AIATSIS Collection.

*Subject Thesaurus*

Language related terms are due for review.

A decision will need to be made regarding the reformation of the committee to authorise proposed additions to the subject thesaurus.

A review of grammatical terms will provide consistency and accuracy; also needs some training about grammar and its parts and vocabularies etc.

*Languages and Peoples Thesaurus*

See Roles and Responsibilities

**USE AND REUSE OF DATA**

LICENCING

Conditions of use of the terms in the Subject and Placename AIATSIS Thesauri are in copyright to AIATSIS. Downloading, displaying, and reproducing the terms in unaltered form (retaining AIATSIS copyright statement) is permitted but only for non-commercial use. The terms are permitted to be used to describe items in collections held in Libraries, Archives and Keeping places. All other rights are reserved. Request and inquiries concerning reproduction and rights are to be addressed to [library@aiatsis.gov.au](mailto:library@aiatsis.gov.au)

The Language and Peoples Thesaurus uses a CC 4.0 license.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBLITIES

Current roles and responsibilities in the governance of the AIATSIS Thesauri are:

**Collections Services Group**

Assistant Director Descriptive Metadata and Cataloguing

* Advise on use and reuse of AIATSIS Thesaurus - descriptive and client management

Metadata Coordinator

* Ensure consistency of data across platforms
* Delivery of relevant data to external partners

Senior Cataloguer

* Update Sirsi with latest research and terminology
* Complete changes to placenames and subject thesaurus headings; follows advice from ICP Assistant Director (Languages) who communicates changes in AUSTLANG to *Thesaurus heading language* and *Thesaurus heading People* (Names tab).

**Digital Services**

Collections Strategic Advisor / Collections Data Specialist

* Advise on use and reuse of AIATSIS Thesaurus - systems and data management

Development Services Manager

* Advise on use and reuse of AIATSIS Thesaurus from technical perspective
* Management of Austlang backend

**Research and Education: ICP**

**Assistant Director (Languages)**

* Upgrades to Reference names are subject to ongoing research, including observations of language centres and community groups, [Gambay map](https://gambay.com.au/languages/), advice from linguists, recent publications, communication from individuals and communities, and other sources as discovered.
* Former Reference name is added to Synonyms.
* Change Reference name and directs Senior Cataloguer to change Thesaurus headings and advise when completed. Update Austlang record.
* Note that some People names are not the same as Reference name or Language thesaurus headings.

**RELATED ISSUES**

Issues identified through the data analysis relating to workflows will be documented for addressing at a separate time.

**RESOURCES**

There are no additional resources for management of data. Work will be scheduled sympathetically alongside business-as-usual tasks. This will mean that work on the AIATSIS Thesaurus will be gradual.

**REVIEW**

This governance document will be added to as required and reviewed on annual basis.

**DEFINITIONS**

In this document the following terms are used:

**Authority headings** means the authorised, authoritative, or established form of a name or subject term.

**Controlled vocabulary** means an organised arrangement of words and phrases used to index content and/or retrieve content through browsing or searching. It typically includes preferred and variant terms and has a defined scope or describes a specific domain.

**Sirsi** means the integrated library system SirsiDynix Symphony, the cataloguing and library management system which houses the metadata for the bulk of the AIATSIS Collection.

**Taxonomies** means a structure used for classifying materials into a hierarchy of categories and subcategories

**AIATSIS Thesauri** means the three unique datasets (Placenames, Subject and Language/Peoples) which are used in describing the AIATSIS Collection and as an internationally recognised coding system for Australian Indigenous languages.

**Multites** means the software used by AIATSIS to create and manage thesauri, taxonomies and other types of controlled vocabularies.

1. AIATSIS Collections Program, “Descriptive Cataloguing Framework Principles & Standards.” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. AIATSIS Collections Program, "Authority Control on Mura (2019)” [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. AIATSIS Research Program, “Austlang Manual” [↑](#footnote-ref-3)