

Sea of Hands, February 2014

In February 2014, ANTaR ACT and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) collaborated to celebrate the sixth anniversary of the National Apology and the 50th anniversary of AIATSIS with a large, colourful 'sea of hands' on the shores of Lake Burley Griffin.

ANTaR members, volunteers and friends joined with staff from AIATSIS, ACT Health, Indigenous Business Australia, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and students from Belconnen to install the Sea of Hands on 12 February.



Photo: Indigenous students from Weetangera Primary, Belconnen and Canberra High Schools came to lend a hand!
Photograph courtesy of AIATSIS



Photo: School student planting a hand for Sea of Hands event. *Photograph courtesy of AIATSIS*

It was no mean feat installing the 10,000 hands in the summer-dry ground, but thanks to AIATSIS staff who watered the grass, it became easier. There were many visitors to the Sea of Hands that day and the following two days, some seeing it for the first time and others remembering past installations. New names were added to the existing 300,000 names appearing on the hands. Signing a hand indicates a commitment to reconciliation, rights and respect. Thanks to ANTaR volunteers and AIATSIS staff who braved the rain to pack up the hands on the following Saturday.

This was a successful event with the message of the Sea of Hands still relevant today, some seventeen years after it was first installed at Parliament House, Canberra in 1997.