



ACT  
Government

healthier  
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HELPING PEOPLE AND  
BUSINESS THRIVE

CASE STUDIES 2017–18

PLATINUM

## AIATSIS

### 150 staff

*The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) was interviewed by Grosvenor Management Consulting on 17 May 2018 as part of a formal Healthier Work Evaluation. AIATSIS is a federal organisation established to promote knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, traditions, languages and stories. They employ 150 people in the ACT.*

Amit Barkay is the Facilities Manager at AIATSIS, which has Platinum recognition status from Healthier Work. He heard about Healthier Work through AIATSIS' involvement with Access Canberra's ACTSmart business recycling program.

"My first motivation for joining was personal: I'm passionate about health and wellbeing, I wanted to change the culture here, and to improve myself," says Amit. "In government agencies, there aren't always policies in place beyond compliance with health and safety legislation, so I hoped to introduce to the organisation more of the physical activities that I enjoy, and to begin building a community around health and sports. It worked very well with our football team; three years on, all the people involved in that have built a really strong relationship with each other. So it has evolved! For us, it's now also about emotional wellbeing."

Amit and Healthier Work soon won over AIATSIS' leadership.

"Once management began to see that the Healthier Work accreditation was raising our profile, they quickly saw the benefit not just of carrying out the activities, but of our participation in Healthier Work. We're the first federal agency to do something like this, and we're very proud of that. The accreditation has been displayed in the Deputy CEO's office and in our reception, and our Healthier Work participation has appeared in the annual report twice."

Amit says that Healthier Work provides motivation for the champions to keep improving their workplace's culture.

"Whenever I approach the Healthier Work team, I get help!" explains Amit. "The breakfasts they run are absolutely fantastic, you get to meet the whole team, including Greg [Jones, the ACT Work Safety Commissioner], and get a reminder that there is a lot of momentum behind this. They also have professional speakers, and you get to share ideas with the other champions."

AIATSIS currently operates two campuses, two kilometres apart. Amit has taken this as an opportunity.

"We provided electric bikes for travel between the campuses, and we encourage people to use those, or to walk, instead of taking a taxi. We also promote cycling to work, and each year we do the Pedal Power Big Canberra Bike Ride as an organisation. It's been really successful – about 25 of our staff cycle to work all year round, and much more than that in summer, so we've had to double the size of our bike shed!"



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During their years in the program, AIATSIS have undertaken a wide range of physical, nutritional and health initiatives, many of which have become business as usual and had lasting impacts on the health of the people who work there.

“We now provide healthy lunches, and we’ve eliminated sugary snacks in meetings. As we are located by the lake lunchtime walks are very popular,. Our staff surveys have showed a reduction in the numbers of smokers and the amount people are drinking is significantly down. We’ve also had anti-stress initiatives – one very popular one was an African drumming session for everyone to have a go on and let loose . One of our employees stands out as having been transformed by Healthier Work; she even needed a cane to walk, but now she is improved beyond recognition in physical and mental health, she has more confidence, and even held some public speaking engagements to promote it. It was an amazing impact to have had.”

