

**Centre for Native Title Anthropology  
AAS Preconference Native Title Workshop  
Program**

**Venue: Convention Centre, Mparntwe/Alice Springs  
9 June 2026**

**9:30 – 10:00 – Coffee, Acknowledgement of Country, Welcome and Housekeeping**

**10:00 – 11:30 – Session One: Fieldnotes in the context of Native Title and Anthropology Practice (Petronella Vaarzon-Morel, Sarah Bell, Craig Elliott)**

This session examines best practice in field research, with particular attention to fieldnotes and the management of research materials. It offers practical guidance on translating fieldwork materials into report writing for the native title context.

**11:30 – 12:30 – Lunch**

**12:30 – 2:00 – Session Two: Cultural Politics of Resource Development (Toni Bauman, Kim de Rijke, Wendy Asche)**

This session examines to what extent new forms of resource development, including unconventional gas and renewable energy projects, generate distinctive cultural politics in the contemporary native title setting. Drawing on these case studies, the session also considers the role of anthropologists in mediation and how the cultural politics of resource development are addressed in negotiations and agreement-making processes.

**2:00 – 2:30 – Afternoon Tea**

**2:30 – 3:30 – Session Three: Jigsaw Workshop (led by Louise Allwood)**

This workshop invites participants to revisit classic texts in Aboriginal anthropology and reflect on their continuing relevance to native title research and practice. Prior to the workshop, participants will be allocated one of three readings and asked to consider the relevance of your allocated reading to current issues in native title research practice.

**3:30 – 4:30 – Session Four: Current Issues in Native Title Research Practice (Wendy Asche, Michele Walters, Michelle Goodwin)**

This concluding session considers emerging challenges in native title research practice through contributions from senior practitioners, audience questions, and informal discussion.

**4:30 – 4:45 – Summary and Evaluation**

## Presenter Biographies

### **Petronella Vaarzon-Morel**

Petronella Vaarzon-Morel (MA Indiana University) is an anthropologist with over four decades of ethnographic fieldwork experience in Central Australia. She has carried out anthropological research on Indigenous systems of land tenure, including numerous Aboriginal land and native title claims, and on environmental, multispecies, and cultural heritage issues. She has been active in developing new approaches to cultural repatriation and is co-editor of the book *Archival Returns: Central Australia and Beyond*. Currently, she is collaborating with Willowra community on the Lander Warlpiri Anmatyerr Cultural Mapping Project. She is also a lecturer at NYU Sydney and former Co-Director of the Centre for Native Title Anthropology at ANU.

### **Sarah Bell**

Sarah Bell has worked as a consultant anthropologist since 2018. Prior to this she had a 20-year career as a staff anthropologist working mainly for Land Councils and Native Title Representative Bodies/ Service Providers. Sarah worked in the Northern Territory for the Central Land Council, and in WA for Ngaanyatjarra Council Native Title Unit, and its successor Central Desert Native Title Services (CDNTS), the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council (SWALSC) and Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC). Sarah's work as an in-house staff anthropologist included undertaking heritage surveys, research assistant work with consultant anthropologists on native title claims, co-authoring a native title connection report, authoring supplementary native title connection materials and reviewing connection reports. Since commencing work as a consultant Sarah has undertaken a range of native title projects across WA, the NT and Queensland, and Aboriginal heritage work in WA and the NT.

### **Craig Elliott**

Craig Elliott (BA, Macquarie University; MA, ANU), has conducted anthropological research in Australia since 1989. Following postgraduate research in north-central Arnhem Land, he worked in Central Australia since 1991, as a consultant anthropologist and Senior Anthropologist with the Central Land Council (2006-2017). Between 1990 and 2014 he tutored in anthropology at the Australian National University, University of Canberra and New York University (Sydney campus). From 1993 to the present, he conducted research in numerous claims under the *NT Land Rights Act* and *Native Title Act*. He also conducted research for social impact assessments, interstate claims and

Indigenous public health and aged care. He gave expert evidence before the Federal Court in the *Alyawarr, Kaytetye, Warumungu and Wakay Native Title Application* and *De Rose Hill Native Title Application* (both in 2001); and before the Aboriginal Land Commissioner in the *Alcoota Land Claim* in 1996, *Wakay Alyawarr Repeat Land Claim* in 2007; and *Cobourg Peninsula Land Claim* in 2023.

### **Toni Bauman**

Toni Bauman is an anthropologist, mediator, facilitator, researcher, trainer and coach who has over forty years of experience working with Indigenous communities across Australia. Toni has published widely, made national and international presentations, facilitated many workshops and forums, run training workshops and provided policy advice to Indigenous organisations and governments. Her work focusses on governance in land and native title including community engagement, decision-making and dispute management processes for free prior and informed consent, partnerships including joint management, and alternative consensus building processes such as Deep Democracy. She has worked as a staff member and consultant for government departments, statutory authorities and organisations including land councils, native title representative bodies, and AIATSIS where she was a Senior Research Fellow, Governance, Cultural Competence, and Public Policy. At AIATSIS she led the Indigenous Facilitation and Mediation Project (2003-2006), the Federal Court's Indigenous dispute resolution case study project, 'Solid Work you Mob are Doing' and the Core Cultural Learning online program for Commonwealth employees. She is a self-employed consultant and an Honorary Staff Member at the Centre for Indigenous Policy Research at ANU.

### **Kim de Rijke**

Dr Kim de Rijke is a Senior Lecturer in Anthropology at the University of Queensland and co-Director of the Centre for Native Title Anthropology. His academic research addresses environmental relations, senses of place, and the sociocultural dimensions of resource extraction, with a particular focus over the last decade on contested unconventional gas developments in Australia. Alongside his academic research, Dr de Rijke has undertaken 22 years of research on native title and heritage, including the provision of expert evidence in the Federal Court.

### **Wendy Asche**

Wendy Asche is Manager of the Anthropology Branch at the Northern Land Council (NLC). Wendy has long term experience as an applied anthropologist. She began at the Northern

Land Council as a Native Title Anthropologist in 1996 and worked in various capacities on the first eight test cases that went through to Hearing in the Top End of the Northern Territory. Wendy then went to UQ as a Fellow in 2008, working with Prof David Trigger to enable capacity building of anthropologists in the native title arena. In 2013 Wendy became a consultant working in Qld, NT, SA and WA. One matter she co-authored was the successful Timber Creek compensation test case. In 2022 Wendy returned to the NLC as Manager of the Anthropology Branch, which is now the largest employer of anthropologists in Australia, having 25 anthropologists and another 25 allied staff including archaeologists, GIS specialists, archivists and administration officers.

### **Michelle Goodwin**

Michelle Goodwin holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree (Honours) in Anthropology from the University of Western Australia. She has twenty years' experience in research and applied anthropology, specialising primarily in Native Title anthropology, anthropological research into traditional Aboriginal land ownership, genealogical research, and Aboriginal cultural heritage and sacred sites protection. Michelle has worked for the Central Land Council since 2014, initially in a genealogical and sacred sites research role, and later in a regional role, working primarily with Alyawarr people. Since 2022, she has worked as a senior anthropologist at the Central Land Council, where she has coordinated, managed and conducted anthropological research for Native Title claims. She has also previously worked as an anthropologist / researcher with the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority, Ngaanyatjarra Council, and Central Desert Native Title Services.

### **Michele Walters**

Michele Walters is an experienced anthropologist with a specialisation in analysis of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and their historical and oral histories. She utilises an inter-disciplinary approach of anthropological, historical and genealogical critical research and analysis to support Indigenous self-determination and reconnection with Country and community. She is trained and experienced in applied anthropological and family history research. Michele is employed at Queensland South Native Title Services (QSNTS) where she has authored many reports to various stake holders including the Queensland State Government, respondent parties and independent barristers. She has consulted and interviewed more than 350 individuals and families across south-east and south-west Queensland including New South Wales collecting genealogical, family history and anthropological evidence of traditional laws and customs.