

## Day 2 Session 2: Issues around succession and decision-making for applied anthropologists

Sam Williams (Northern Land Council) *Issues around succession and decision-making for applied anthropologists*. Sam developed a pre-recorded video as an introduction to the panel discussion by Gareth Lewis (consultant), and Emma King (Northern Land Council)

Succession in the context of future acts, land use agreements and royalty disbursements raise a set of complex questions for applied anthropologists. This session examines some of the challenges associated with succession and considers the role of Land Councils and NTRBs in the succession process.

A commonly encountered problem is that succession to a deceased estate is often a feature of traditional ownership of land in the Top End of the Northern Territory.

Where once succession might take several generations to be fully resolved by the Aboriginal jural public, the pressure to reach decisions in relation to succession in land holding is rapidly accelerated in the contemporary sphere.

Key points made during discussion include:

- It may be difficult to apply Traditional laws and customs ('rules') for succession in contemporary settings
- Applied anthropologists are required to be active participants in facilitating succession processes, and developing strong internal processes/protocols will aid them to manage this position
- Transitional decision-making arrangements may be effective
- Input on transitional arrangements should be sought from Boards/Senior People
- Representative bodies may be forced to 'take a position' and this can have long-term consequences for disputing parties.
- Succession can be a long-term, complex, and highly disputed process and facilitation/mediation efforts need to be adequately resourced
- Proactive research should occur to identify succession early, and if done early such documenting of the knowledge and wishes of Senior People may assist; keeping in mind that unresolved succession may hinder Native Title determinations