

Day 3 Session 5 Mentorship in representative bodies - New opportunities for Professional Development?

Panel Session: Louise Allwood and Pascale Taplin (North Queensland Land Council) and David Martin (consultant)

NQLC developed a program to enable mid-career anthropologists with the opportunity to work as independent experts on connection material with mentorship from their more practiced senior colleagues.

Pascale and Louise put the 'pedal to the metal' in describing the challenges of working with a mentor (one-on-one) through the processes of developing connection research – from the practical side of the representative body's perspective to the experience of the researchers.

Highlighted points were:

- COVID is impacting on the availability of interstate consultants led NQLC to re-arrange inhouse workloads so staff anthropologists could take on duties as experts
- Issues of the independence of 'experts' within Rep Bodies had to be worked through with a number of practical steps taken by NQLC
- The NTRB found there were practical advantages to having in-house instead of always relying on consultants
- To date the experiment has had favourable outcomes; but it is crucial that mentees within Rep Bodies when are paired with experienced mentors
- Mentors should impart skills and tools rather than provide directions- it is important to create a dialogic space for discussion, not simply a 'directive' space
- Consent determinations may provide a more favourable context in which the independence of the in-house expert is viewed
- Litigation may involve different issues for how expert opinion will be assessed when in-house anthropologists have produced work with the input of mentors
- There is a lack of capacity and will within the education sector to drive appropriate training of early-career anthropologists who are entering the sector- so NQLC has taken this step supported by CNTA to help close the gaps. (CNTA has also a wealth of online resources- podcasts, videos, and conference/workshop papers for the benefit of native title anthropologists).
- Lack of specific training will lead to issues for in-house anthropologists employed within Rep Bodies and is a looming future issue to be dealt with by the sector.