

GUIDELINES FOR ENGAGEMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL CONSULTANTS

General

Central Desert Native Title Services Ltd strives to obtain the highest standard of consultants possible to provide the best service available for its native title claimants. Equally, the policies and procedures used by Central Desert Native Title Services Ltd to engage consultants aim to be financially sound and consistent with current guidelines and procurement methods.

Qualifications

Consultants are expected to hold, as a minimum, an undergraduate honours degree in anthropology/archaeology/history, although preference is given to consultants with higher degrees and a proven track record of fieldwork and research. The required qualifications will vary depending on the duration and complexity of the work and whether or not the consultant is likely to be expected to appear as an expert witness. Although, other things being equal, the most qualified consultants are selected where available. In some cases, such as short-term Surveys, a less qualified candidate may be considered. For complex and ongoing projects such as the research and preparation of native title claims, the consultants who are engaged will have a minimum of a Masters degree, however, less qualified consultants may be engaged to assist in such projects under the supervision of a more qualified researcher.

Experience

Preference is given to consultants who have worked in the area of the Western Desert, who know and have developed a strong working relationship with people represented by Central Desert Native Title Services Ltd. An understanding of social and political issues confronting Aboriginal people and a facility with Western Desert languages are considered to be advantages. For consultants who have worked in the area represented by Central Desert Native Title Services Ltd previously, the quality of their previous work and standing within communities provide an indication of their suitability. Where the consultant has not previously been employed in the area represented by Central Desert Native Title Services Ltd the employees of other Aboriginal organizations, representative bodies or native title service providers familiar with the consultant's work may be contacted to provide an opinion of their strengths and weaknesses.

In some situations, a consultant does not necessarily require an academic qualification to be deemed to be an expert on a particular aspect of the research. In cases where a consultant has acquired a unique understanding or insight through direct experience, for example in the case of patrol officer, missionary or person with a similar historical association with the claimants, they may be engaged to assist in the preparation of claims and exempt from the requirement of having to possess a relevant qualification.

Assessment of applications

Suitably qualified and experienced individuals are invited to express their interest in undertaking work by registering as a consultant. In most areas of Native Title research, the number of suitably qualified consultants who also possess relevant background experience is limited. The ability to engage a consultant may thus be a question of selecting the individual who is available to carry out a job at a particular time rather than the person who is the most highly qualified or experienced. While minimum standards apply, all applicants with appropriate qualifications are included on the Register provided there is no obvious conflict of interest or doubt regarding their suitability to carry out work on behalf of the Central Desert Native Title Services Ltd. In this manner, the pool of available consultants is increased. The decision to accept an individual from this pool will vary depending on their availability and expertise in specific areas relevant to the work of the Central Desert Native Title Services Ltd.

Fees

Fees for services by applicants to the Register of Consultants are expected to remain constant for 12 months. Central Desert Native Title Services Ltd does not accept increases in consultancy rates over this period. However, a lower daily rate may be negotiated with some for projects of longer duration.

Conflict of interest

Consultants are required to advise Central Desert Native Title Services Ltd at the time of signing an agreement if they have carried out, or intend to undertake, other work, which may represent a conflict of interest. Such situations could potentially arise where consultants are representing the government, resource developers or other indigenous groups who are opposed to a particular Native Title claim. In addition, as part of the agreement, consultants are required to advise Central Desert Native Title Services Ltd prior to signing any further consultancy agreements during the term of their consultancy.