

Reflections on the Past, Present and Future Roles of Anthropology in Aboriginal Land Councils and Native Title Representative Bodies

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Second Keynote Address, Annual Conference of the Australian Anthropology Society, Canberra, 3–5 October, 2002

Thank you for the kind words of introduction. Also I wish to thank the Association for the invitation to address the conference. The address has the rather grand title of “Reflections on the Past, Present and Future Roles of Anthropology in Land Councils and Native Title Representative Bodies”. This paper's prime focus is the examination of the role of the anthropologist at the Land Councils established under the Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act 1976, (ALRA). There are a number of reasons for this topic's selection.

Section I: Anthropologists in Land Councils and Native Title Representative Bodies

A feature of Australian Aboriginal anthropology over the last twenty-five years is its intense involvement in issues that have developed from the ALRA and Native Title Act (NTA). An excellent example is the detailed knowledge of land tenure systems and their transformation over time which has arisen out of land claims and native title determinations. The important policy advice that anthropologists have, and will continue to provide to governments and Aboriginal organisations, is another vital sphere of involvement. The responses to the Reeves' Review demonstrate the influence anthropologists can have in policy formulation. Anthropological research and debate have impacted in these and related areas. Most of the research was performed in conjunction with or stimulated by the Northern Territory Land Councils. Often somewhere in the background, was an employee Land Council anthropologist performing a vital but unheralded role.

Anthropologists are increasingly finding employment at Land Councils and Native Title Representative Bodies. The Northern Land Council's anthropology branch employs ten anthropologists. It has a total staff of eighteen including research assistants and others who provide anthropological support. The branch also employs numerous consultant anthropologists who perform specialist tasks such as heritage clearances and the preparation of expert reports for native title determinations and land claims. The anthropology branch's budget is around two million dollars per year. The Central Land Council has a similar budget and staffing regime of anthropologists. Native Title Representative Bodies have smaller anthropologically focused budgets and employ fewer staff anthropologists. These organisations stress the usage of the private consulting anthropologist. However, their combined utilisation of anthropologists is considerable.

Another purpose for the topic's selection is educational. Given the expansion of anthropologists and anthropology into this field, a number of you may work for a Land Council or Native Title Representative Body. I am here to warn you of what you are getting into. This paper does not discuss the role of the private practicing anthropologist. That particular sub-profession requires a separate analysis. The limelight here is firmly on the employee anthropologist - he or she who is a full-time

employee of Land Councils or Native Title Representative Bodies. This address is presented in two parts. The first part briefly explores the historical development of the anthropological identity at the Northern Territory Land Councils. It also describes current areas of anthropological responsibility and the possible contributions anthropologists and anthropology will make in the future direction of Land Councils. The second part isolates and examines some of the day to day dilemmas the employee anthropologist faces and provides advice on how to counteract and minimise these problems. This part is glossed under the heading 'ethical and organisational problems'. This section also examines the skills and theoretical underpinnings I believe are required of the employee anthropologist. Suggestions are made of some areas of involvement by which anthropology departments may assist in the development of such skills and capacities.

There are three themes woven through this address, being:

- i. that the anthropologist's role both historically and currently is influenced by the ambiguity in organisational identity of the land councils as they fluctuate between perceptions as grass roots activist Aboriginal organisations and as administrative bodies established under legislation;
- ii that the statutory duties of land councils directly influence the limits of anthropological practice; and
- iii that the structure of Land Councils into professional branches has a fundamental influence on functions of the anthropologist and on internal organisational relationships.

The administrative version of Land Councils is as statutory authorities established under the ALRA representing Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory for particular geographic regions. Two Land Councils are also representative bodies under the NTA. There are four Land Councils with the Northern and Central Land Councils being the largest. Each Land Council consists of elected members from communities throughout the Land Council's region. Elections are held every three years, including the election of a Chairman, a Deputy Chairman and Executive Members who represent a region of the council. At the two larger land councils the Chairman is a full-time employee.

Council meetings are held two or three times a year at which members determine policy direction and formally approve land use agreements to which traditional Aboriginal owners have given their consent. Executive and regional council meetings are held at various places in the regions between Land Council meetings.

The executive council is responsible for managing council business between full council meetings. The regional councils are responsible for decisions over local issues to the extent of their delegated power, and for recommendations to the full council over other matters. Each Land Council has a chief executive officer and a set of staff (in each about 120 people) for implementing council decisions on policy directions and fulfilling statutory responsibilities.

Now that is the administrative perception of Land Councils. There are other views. A predominantly Aboriginal view is that they are resource rich organisations and thus important organisations to have involvement in to influence the allocation of these resources. Another perception emphasises grass roots activism and political influence far more than the administrative version described earlier. This view which I gloss as the 'grass roots activist identity' perhaps was more dominant twenty years ago.

However, this identity still influences the direction of land councils and their staff, especially the Central Land Council.

Historically, this grass roots activist identity had an influence on the employee anthropologist and the style of anthropology practised. The first annual report of the Central Land Council (1981) contains some revealing statements on this activist, grass-roots identity. Some quotes:

“The Aboriginal Land Rights Act provides for the establishment of land councils as bodies corporate. The Central Land Council is such a body, but it is not and never has been simply a statutory body established by a government law.... From the start CLC was determined to be independent and run its own affairs. An offer by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies of an anthropologist to be employed by and under the direction of the Institute of Aboriginal Studies was rejected. Staff had to be employed by and be accountable to the Council.... But it needs to be made clear from the outset - the CLC has its roots in the history of the Aboriginal struggle for land rights. The character of the CLC has been forged in that struggle. Whatever its functions under the Act it is first and foremost an Aboriginal organisation.... The essential character of the CLC as an Aboriginal organisation is that it is independently, Aboriginal managed, close to Aboriginal organisations, and a fearless advocate of the Aboriginal point of view” (p's 1-4).

The first anthropologists employed by the Central Land Council were strongly influenced by such views of the organisation and certainly acted as advocates of the Aboriginal viewpoint. The initial Central Land Council anthropologists were employed before the passing of the ALRA and they played a significant and important role in the debate and political posturing that occurred before its passage through Parliament along with lawyers such as Jeff Eames and David Parsons. They were also fundamental catalysts in the fast-tracking of claim hearings on Alice Springs town camps by interim Aboriginal Land Commissioner Ward where over a thousand people lived without shelter or water in true third world conditions. They also travelled thousands of miles consulting Aboriginal people on their land needs. Once the ALRA was passed their tasks became more focused on fulfilling the functions of the Act especially that of providing assistance in land claims. They undertook most of the research for the initial Central Land Council land claims.

As far as I can ascertain, no anthropologist worked as an employee of the Northern Land Council prior to the passage of the ALRA. Also Northern Land Council anthropological practice did not arise out of the activist grass roots view of Aboriginal organisations held by many Central Land Council staff and supporters from Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid. Whilst there is no doubt grass roots Aboriginal activism occurred in the Top End at this time, the Northern Land Council's early corporate identity arose from a 'public service' style or model. Staff conceptualised their organisational role as providing a full range of neutral professional advice to the Aboriginal policymakers not activist ideas, an understandable model given that initially most Northern and Council senior staff consisted of former public servants, usually with close links to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. This public service model had undoubted influence on the anthropology practised by the first Northern Land Council anthropologists. Often I think it restricted it, but others who worked at the Northern Land Council at this time could make more informed analysis.

The Northern Land Council accepted the offer of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies sponsored anthropologist unlike the Central Land Council. The 1981 Annual Report summarised this role very much in the 'public service model' as overseeing all professional anthropological work carried out within the NLC, identifying the need for external expert assistance, assisting in the engagement of suitable consultants and over-sighting their work.

The anthropology first practised at the Central Land Council falls somewhere along the continuum between advocacy and partisan anthropology. Keen (1999:27-63) suggests the characteristic feature of advocacy anthropology is the role of anthropologists as advocates and technical staff employed by client organisations who set the goals of research. The anthropologist is essentially a facilitator of social action by supplying data and results which can make contributions to organisational goals. (p42). Partisan anthropology on the other hand is a more politically engaged anthropology. Keen suggests that the partisan anthropologist's main aim is to collect ethnographic data on indigenous people's needs, rights and territories and utilise this data to document independently and publicly the social realities of these people. Topics are chosen for study and dissemination in order to have a political effect, reflecting the political commitment of the researcher (1999).

The initial anthropology practised at the Northern Land Council is difficult to characterise. Certainly it was a type or sub-set of advocacy anthropology but developed within a more bureaucratic or institutionalised organisational framework than at the Central Land Council. I use the term institutionalised advocacy anthropology to classify it. As will become clearer in part two this style of anthropological practice now characterises both Land Councils.

The movement of the Central Land Council to 'institutionalised advocacy anthropology', and the Northern Land Council's reinforcement of it, were consequences of the inevitable focus on Land Council functions and responsibilities as required by the ALRA. The Central Land Council's movement to the institutionalised form of anthropological practice involved considerable debate and occasional animosity amongst anthropology staff. Being one of those involved, I must admit at the time it did not appear to be a constructive debate but with hindsight it probably was. The Land Councils' functions relevant to this discussion are;

- Expressing the wishes of Aboriginal people about the management of their land and legislation about their land;
- Consulting traditional Aboriginal landholders and other Aborigines interested in Aboriginal land and land under claim;
- Negotiating on behalf of Aboriginal land holders with people interested in using Aboriginal land.;
- Assisting Aboriginal people claiming land;
- Distributing to Aboriginal associations statutory payments from the Aboriginal Benefits Accounts to communities affected by mining operations and income received on behalf of landowners under negotiated agreements; and
- Protecting Aboriginal sacred sites both on and off Aboriginal land.

Most importantly, in carrying out its functions, a Land Council must consult with Aboriginal traditional owners who must give their consent before the Land Council

enters an agreement, or takes any action affecting their land. There is a statutory definition of a traditional owner which places emphasis on descent, local descent groups and spiritual responsibility toward sites.

This element of informed consent has structured the role of the employee anthropologist for the last two decades and will continue to influence it. The import of properly determining and documenting the traditional owners of Aboriginal Land cannot be underestimated. Initially, the Land Rights Act directed each Land Council to compile and maintain a register setting out the names of persons who, in the opinion of the council, were the traditional owners of land in its area. This section of the ALRA was later amended so that the Land Councils are no longer obliged to maintain and compile such registers. Whilst neither land council maintains formal registers, both have extensive records on traditional ownership based on anthropological research by employee anthropologists. Both Land Councils have systems by which anthropologists provide details of relevant traditional owners and associated systems of land tenure prior to the commencement of consultations over non-Aboriginal activities on Aboriginal land.

The stakes are high. Traditional owners have the legal right to control (or 'veto') most of what occurs on their land. They also have a statutory entitlement to receive rents and payments. Other agreements can be negotiated whereby money is paid to Aboriginal traditional owners. It is not uncommon for disputes over the incorrect identification of Aboriginal traditional owners to go through the legal system. The ALRA also confers legal rights and benefits on Aboriginal people other than the traditional owners, essentially on any other Aboriginals interested in the land and any Aboriginal community or group that may be affected by the proposed action. Whilst not having veto rights, such categories of people must be consulted and be given adequate opportunity to express their views.

Identifying those belonging to these categories and documenting the nature of their interests are fundamental tasks of the employee anthropologist. Again it is not unusual for disagreements over these matters to be litigated. An associated area of research, is the determination of what constitutes for particular actions, group consent. Again considerable litigation occurs in this area so detailed and careful research is essential.

The preparation of anthropological material required in land claims is the other ALRA function which has strongly influenced Land Councils' anthropological practice. The requirements here are analysis of land tenure data and genealogical material within criteria established by the ALRA. This involves working with lawyers and providing expert evidence before the Aboriginal Land Commissioner. A vital task - land cannot be utilised for economic independence unless it is first in Aboriginal hands.

The employee anthropologist has had a changing role in the preparation of land claims. Initially, a significant number of land claims were prepared by Land Council anthropologists, especially at the Central Land Council. Often the employee anthropologist acted as assistant to more experienced anthropologists who had a specialised knowledge of a particular region. Such roles in land claim preparation (and now native title determinations) fell away in the early 1990s and now the Land Council anthropologist is often limited to hiring a specialist consultant, assisting with logistics and arranging peer review of the research.

This has occurred for many reasons. The numerous other tasks, especially the extinguishment of the daily round of bush fires, limits the required concentrated

research and field effort. The consultant anthropologist with experience in land claim/native title research is often the most efficient use of resources. Also, Land Council anthropologists initially often have minimal field experience and sometimes lack the necessary post graduate qualifications. Most employee anthropologists come to Land Councils with little experience in the ordering and analysis of field data which is essential to land claim research.

Some lawyers express a concern that the employee anthropologist can be viewed by courts as lacking professional independence. An associated argument is that anthropologists with limited employment experience outside Aboriginal organisations are less independent. Whilst some 'judges' may hold such views, my experience suggests that most courts are interested in what you know not your employment history.

My approach is to encourage anthropologists to develop skills in the preparation of both land claims and native title determinations. There is a standing offer for such involvement at the Northern Land Council. It unfortunately comes with the proviso that such research has to be fitted around current tasks. Those who take up the offer discover such research is both rewarding and challenging.

Rewarding because the research is directed towards a tangible goal which results in a positive result i.e. Aboriginal self- determination. Contrast this to some horrible dispute over royalties where there often appears to be few positives. Challenging physically, as the claim process usually involves arduous field work such as fixing flat tyres (my record is 16 in a 3 day trip across the Wakaya Desert) and camping out in heat, frost or rain. Demanding professionally and intellectually as attempts are made to analyse and explain to others complex systems of land tenure in terms of statutory criteria. Demanding in the personal and character building meaning, as the researcher struggles with the difficulties of working in cross-disciplinary teams with colleagues from linguistics, history and pre-history. This is not to mention the even more character building exercise of dealing with, assisting, and being assisted by our friends the lawyers. I admit this is often the hardest obligation of all.

Monitoring inexperienced employee anthropologists during land claims/native title determinations is one of the most important professional development tasks that can be undertaken by senior anthropologists. The junior anthropologist is given tasks such as compiling genealogies and claimant biographical material, and collecting and analysing historical data. Such research facilitates the absorption of useful background material as well as the establishment of personal links. Establishing relationships within communities is often difficult for the Land Council anthropologist. Whilst daily contact is made with Aboriginal people, it is usually casual and fleeting and initially embarrassing. Sometimes it is easier to hide away in the office than to venture out bush. Of course, community visits are made and many Land Council anthropologists are absent from home for long periods. But even on these trips 'quality time' with Aboriginal friends and clients is difficult to arrange. Usually the emphasis is on meetings, agendas and Land Council business and not the activities our Aboriginal clients are interested in. Land claim/native title research often provides that extra portion of quality time needed to establish personal relationships and then fulfill the obligations such relationships entail.

Employee anthropologists perform many tasks, including all those administrative and bureaucratic undertakings we all hate, and believe have nothing whatsoever to do with anthropological practice. They organise meetings, take minutes, draw up budgets,

monitor budgets, perform project management, produce briefing papers, fill in log books, etc. As explained in the next section this bureaucracy whilst annoying, is essential.

Whilst the informed consent provisions of the ALRA have largely determined the practice of anthropology at Land Councils, the definition of traditional Aboriginal ownership is not relevant throughout the Northern Territory. In such areas, conceptualising Aboriginal land and its land holding groups within the classical traditional owner model is unrealistic. Doing so in the past has perhaps accelerated, and in some cases, been the casual element in many raging conflicts and disputes. Careful research is of the essence so that consultation methodologies and administrative structures are established that have some relationship to these groups' views of their Aboriginal identity, history and relationship to land. This will be an important future area of research.

The ever-expanding array of organisations established by Land Councils as land holding, royalty dispersing and commercially orientated structures requires urgent anthropological investigation. In the past, these organisations have been established on limited understandings of Aboriginal views of equity, fairness and economic distribution. An associated area of inquiry is of land disputes. Both the ALRA and NTA provide Land Councils functions and obligations regarding dispute reconciliation and mediation. The common anthropological investigations have been the identification of the various parties to the dispute, some examination of their relative rights in land, and dissection of the reasons behind the conflict. Increasingly the Land Council anthropologist is being assigned the tasks of a mediator, directly assisting the disputing parties to resolve their problems. Most land council anthropologists have insignificant professional training in the aptitudes required. Perhaps the Land Council anthropologist can best contribute in the resolution of land disputes by ensuring that they do not occur in the first place i.e. perform the process of traditional owner identification as thoroughly and sensitively as possible.

A more active involvement in land management processes is a developing area of anthropological practice. Since the sunset clause came into effect in June 1997, no more claims have been lodged by the Land Councils and both organisations are shifting their focus to the management of land and seas, and appropriate multiple land use strategies. Both organisations have established caring for country and land assessment and planning units. The anthropological involvement in these units, except for the provision of traditional ownership data, is minimal. Anthropological inputs in terms of inquiry into Aboriginal classification of land units, flora and fauna, and pattern of sea and land usage are all required.

As the direction of the Land Councils turns to the development of land, the employee anthropologist will increasingly have involvement in social impact assessment. Such research will involve the collection of socio-cultural data for the usage of land council negotiators, planners and Aboriginal land holders when major developments are planned on land with an Aboriginal interest. Recent social impact assessment research conducted by the Northern Land Council include the Alice Springs to Darwin Railway project, the Bradshaw Army Training Project and the Kakadu Area Social Impact Study.

Section II: Ethical and Organisational Problems

The Land Council anthropologist is a small component of a large and bureaucratic organisation. The Northern Land Council has a staff of around one hundred and twenty people divided into six large branches or sections. The Central Land Council is similarly organised. A feature of both is the dominance of professionals in these branches. The Northern Land Council employs eight lawyers, ten anthropologists, five people with accountancy qualifications, eleven land management/environmental professionals and at least another seven with various professional qualifications (e.g. surveying, journalism, education, management). Both positive and negative consequences result from this dominance of Land Councils' organisational structure by non-Aboriginal professionals. Professional staff (and anthropologists are no exception here) tend to dominate the processes of program delivery and policy advice. In their enthusiasm to establish their anthropological, legal or environmental science point of view, they often make it difficult for indigenous staff to express views or be involved meaningfully in programs. Often employee anthropologists perceive themselves and their profession as indispensable. Thus some programs often tend to stress anthropological issues rather than more broader organisational goals.

Anthropologists like most Land Council professional staff can have motivations that are inconsistent with good resource utilisation. They are often too focused on getting the job done and have no interest in issues such as budgets, and project control (which are the essential business of good management). They believe such tasks can be performed by minor administrative staff. If effort is not expended on these essential tasks the result usually is no money for research.

Many employee anthropologists are used to working independently as students or as university staff. Usually they are not familiar with systems of management and administration and the need to get things done through other people. In essence, employee anthropologists are often poor team players. This has consequences for the completion of organisational goals as most land council research has a multi-disciplinary team focus.

Another outcome of professional branch organisation is the creation of isolation and suspicion between the branches and the different professionals they contain. The classic example is said to occur between legal and anthropology branches. The other well known examples is the environmental (caring for country) sections versus mining section / branches-- the classic 'greenies' versus 'developers' scenario.

The professional isolation a result of this branch structure is accelerated by an accompanying spatial isolation as each branch is located separately.

The professional branch structure results in the establishment of communication systems that proceed down the branches but do not link branches. Thus whilst the anthropologists may know what is going on in their branch, the achievement of a broader, inter-branch perspective is difficult.

In the above circumstances, the nurturing of a corporate ethos is not easy and the employee anthropologists, like other staff, often suffer from a lack of a organisational drive or purpose. This organisational purpose was certainly not lacking in the earlier days of anthropological practice at the Land Councils. At the Northern Land Council I have attempted to overcome these problems of professional isolation and sporadic lack of organisational purpose by:

- implementing a system of project teams and associated procedures; and
- setting a definable anthropology branch direction of ‘getting country back’ This is as set out in the Northern Land Council strategic plan --secure recognition of Aboriginal interests in land and sea resources and acquire land and sea interests to meet the rights, interests and needs of Aboriginal constituents.

This branch focus is reinforced by a set of yearly goals for which a team (from all branches) has responsibility for achieving and organising. There is a ALRA land claim general team whose target is three claims yearly to be presented to the Aboriginal Land Commissioner for recommendation. Similar ‘general teams’ have been established to deal with native title determinations, registrations and future acts.

The professional branch system does have positive aspects. Despite all the above disadvantages, most employee anthropologists like working in such a system. It brings with it a capacity for anthropologists to support each other professionally, to discuss anthropological issues both work focused and ethical, and provides a capacity for policies and procedures to be developed essential to anthropological practice. An example of the latter are the procedures developed to protect the data in the Northern Land Council’s Land Interest Register. Such procedures come from an anthropological and client focused perspective of ensuring the data is protected from unwarranted outside intrusion. If these procedures were legally driven they would stress issues to do with legal privilege. If driven by Corporate Services, they would stress the correct number of forms to fill out. Being employed in administratively focused organisations such as Land Councils can protect the anthropologist from unfair or arbitrary actions. Procedures and protocols dealing with appropriate behaviour and interaction between staff and council members are essential.

I will now delve into the ethical dilemmas which arise from Land Council anthropological practice. The first set of ethical problems can be glossed under the heading “who do I work for”. The employee anthropologist is torn between three allegiances and associated sets of motivations being:

- to the organisation that hires them;
- to their profession and the professional and ethical standards set by it; and
- to their informants / clients.

My friends in the Northern Land Council’s legal branch have no such divided loyalties. To them it is quite clear-cut. Their loyalties are initially to the legal professional and the professional standards set by it; next to the clients they represent; and lastly to the organisation that hires them. Some anthropologists take a similar approach. I have never found it that simple and I am constantly searching for the appropriate balance. There are no easy answers to counteracting the pull of these three allegiances but I have some advice. If you are contemplating employment at a Land Council or Native Title Representative Body, do not wait till you are employed before confronting this dilemma. Land Councils and most Native Body Representative Bodies utilise work contracts that specify field notes and other material collected, is owned by the hiring organisation. Usually there are specific duty statements that are organizationally focused not client focused. If you have any fundamental objections to what is specified in the contract or position description then the job is not for you.

Although much is made of fundamental disagreements and conflicts between the Northern Territory Land Councils and their clients, they occur infrequently and are

usually solvable. The most productive approach to this ethical dilemma is frankness. Explain to informants any limits that contracts may place on interactions with them, along with a full as possible explanation of the implications of the research. Any difficulties will soon become apparent.

Another ethical problem arises from a clash between professional and organisational objectives. Although some employee anthropologists like myself are furniture like fixtures, others rightly have higher horizons e.g. post graduate research, a post doctoral fellowship- in other words they see that their long-term career is firmly rooted in a professional identity or career path as an anthropologist, usually at a university. Thus the rewards for achieving organisational objectives may be of less concern than achieving those professional objectives. One example, is embarking on a particular area of research because it is what interests you professionally to the neglect of your tasks as an employee anthropologist. Another variation is utilising data collected in organisational tasks in a higher degree or publications without permission. Publishing material or utilising data or subsequent analysis for higher degree research is not incompatible with the employee anthropological role. At the Northern Land Council employee anthropologists are encouraged to present papers and attend seminars, particularly on issues associated with applied anthropology, and to upgrade their qualifications. Potential private research must be discussed frankly at the initial stages so that a research plan can be designed that satisfies everyone's needs. Always involve the legal section sooner than later. If the research involves current or future litigation there will be a concern over potential loss of professional privilege.

The most constant ethical problem faced by the employee anthropologist is establishing the limits to which anthropological skills and training are used to support the cases of clients and/or the employing organisation. Pressure can be placed on anthropologists to achieve a certain result. This ranges from a particular person wanting to be recognised as the main traditional owner in a royalty disbursement, to a lawyer or other Land Council employee insisting on a particular anthropological approach in a land claim, native title determination, or cultural heritage dispute. It is the latter set which have the most important organisation consequences and is what I will give some advice on.

Firstly a general statement – more damage will occur to Aboriginal aspirations with regards land rights and heritage protection from telling lawyers or their clients what they want to hear, rather than presenting them sound advice based on careful, methodical research and clear exposition of all possible arguments. All the anthropologist can do is base his or her advice on the methodologies and paradigms gained from professional training and field experience.

The first step in providing sound advice is not to take on research tasks unless you have the necessary qualifications and experience to do so. If you think the research is beyond your current capabilities, do not do it. Pass it on to a more experienced in-house anthropologist. If you work alone in a Native Title Representative Body hire an experienced consultant. If the research report is complex, controversial or the subject of intensive legal scrutiny expose it to peer review. Throughout the research ensure that regular meetings occur with those who will play roles in decision making. Insist on this – extensive participation throughout will provide fewer opportunities for disagreement and dissent at the end. Also ensure that all the possible implications of your advice have been considered. Look at all aspects. Act as a devil's advocate.

Finally, if this process has occurred and there is still strong pressure for a change in approach or results, and you are still convinced the recommendation is based on thorough research – resist.

Underlying the above process is a basic principle – what constitutes adequate or inadequate anthropological research must initially be the judgment of an anthropologist not a lawyer, administrator or executive member. They certainly have the right to reject or not to act on advice but they should not request for it to be replaced with advice or results they find legally, administratively or politically more palatable. If this occurs do not be a party to it.

University departments can assist Land Councils and Native Title Representative Bodies in the sphere of professional training/education. Many universities have developed post graduate courses in applied anthropology and others incorporate applied anthropology units in undergraduate degrees. In the near future Land Councils and Native Title Representative Bodies may hopefully be employing these graduates. To maximize their chances of employment I make some suggestions on possible means of improving their skills base.

The first area is what van Willigen and Dewalt (1985:65) summarises under the heading of kinship data and what I was taught at the Australian School of Pacific Administration thirty years ago as the genealogical method. What is required here are the fundamentals e.g. who are the best informants, methods of cross checking data, the form in which it should be collected, the basic data that should be collected, the construction of genealogical charts and methods of analyzing the data. Other associated skills needing development are methods of collecting and analyzing household census data. Here I am assuming that the student has a thorough grounding in the basic theoretical background such as kinship and descent, descent group typology, and kin groups and kinship terminology. This is essential. All anthropologists interested in Land Council employment must have a thorough grounding in these concepts.

The next sphere is what can be described as basic research skills e.g. how to take field notes, systems of ordering and analyzing the data they contained, the different types of interviews, basic interviewing techniques, rapid research techniques, the basis of multi-disciplinary research.

Topics dealing with particular Aboriginal issues that require emphasis are Aboriginal social groups and their transformation over time and the land related legislation affecting Aboriginal people (e.g. ALRA, NTA, various heritage legislation).

Another domain that needs emphasis is the ethical issues particular to applied anthropology. Perhaps incorporated here could be some analysis and examination of the history of applied Aboriginal anthropology.

Other skills that need development are the technical skills, the use of global positioning systems, and basic instruction in computer systems such as ‘land info’. Also map reading and compass use are essential skills. Given the increase in social impact research at Land Councils specific training in the techniques of this field would be useful.

The employee anthropologist, especially those employed in Native Title Representative Bodies suffer from geographic and intellectual isolation. The Northern Territory Land Councils do not have close links with university departments. Whilst all employee anthropologists have friends and contacts at universities who are relied

upon for anthropological advice and personal counsel, there are few formal links. There are useful chat rooms and web sites which are helpful in maintaining links and stimulating ideas. Also conferences like these are extremely valuable. At the Northern Land Council there are planning days devoted to discussion of topics of concern and interest. Staff are also sent on cultural awareness and language courses. However, there is no doubt that the employee anthropologist suffers from 'professional isolation'. There are a number of manifestations of this. Struggling to maintain an acceptable level of theoretical and methodological competence is one. Another is perhaps a growing division between applied and academic anthropologists. Sometimes the employee anthropologist suffers from a 'professional inferiority complex' believing that he or she is perceived as some type of 'feral' anthropologist who is incapable of sound or unbiased research.

Closer bonds between universities and Native Title Representative Body Land Councils may demolish such stereotypes. Such ties must not be limited to universities conducting consultant research. They must be broader than this, with more of an intellectual and professional essence. Native Title Representative Bodies could choose a particular university depending on geographic closeness and established connections. Anthropologists from that university would provide short-term training courses on the issues outlined earlier.

They could also provide professional mentoring to employee anthropologists without in-house support. Native Title Representative Bodies might provide internships to the university's applied anthropology students. Occasional visiting fellow status may be offered to land council staff so they can attend seminars, present papers and thus be less isolated both intellectually and professionally.

However, the most important assistance universities can provide Native Title Representative Bodies and their anthropologists is to continue to do what they have always performed to a high level of excellence- send students out into the field, get the data published, and enter it into the debate over land rights and associated issues. All points of view are needed. Without such research and robust debate in the past, obtaining Aboriginal rights in land would have been a much more difficult undertaking.

Before I finish, I would like to thank all those employee anthropologist who have, and are employed at Land Councils and Native Title Representative Bodies. I know you work hard with little recognition. Let me thank you for all that hard work and dedication.

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