

RESPONSE TO NOUS REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS - NORTH QUEENSLAND LAND COUNCIL (NQLC)

TOR 1 Extent to which each organisation has achieved positive native title outcomes for persons who hold or may hold native title in its region taking account, where relevant, of disruptions caused by COVID-19. (Rec 1-3)
Rec 1 Implement a formal and regular mechanism to collect feedback on the NQLC's client satisfaction with the services it provides.
Response Accepted. Implemented in part. Work has commenced on reviewing the mechanism for collecting client feedback on service provision. The vacant Media and IT officer positions identified as key operational positions and NQLC actively recruiting – appointments due October 2024. A formal client satisfaction survey mechanism will be created by June 30 2025.
Rec 2 Continue to liaise and communicate openly with Queensland Government representatives to ensure that claims progress efficiently.
Response Accepted. Implemented. Regular meetings held with State and other NTRB-SPs to maintain open communication and address issues as related to our state jurisdiction. Risk identified with State Election in 2024 and high prospect of change of government and legislative changes. Risk management will include NQLC and collective Queensland Representative Body Alliance (QRBA) developing strategies and continuing to work closely with Qld Government.
Rec 3 Prioritise the recruitment of sufficient anthropology staff to ensure that research supports the progress of claims and is well understood by claimants.
Response Accepted. Implemented in part. The recruitment process is active. There is a national shortage of Anthropologists which is the situation impacting the sector. Work will continue for the foreseeable future. Will be reviewed in 12 months. Current Anthropologists continue to tackle the workload and incorporate their findings into the research to progress of claims. Every undertaking is afforded to assist claimants to understand the role of Anthropologists and associated processes to progress the claims.
TOR 2 Extent to which each organisation assesses and prioritises applications for assistance in a manner that is equitable, transparent, and robust, and is well publicised and understood by clients and potential clients. (Rec 4)

Rec 4 Review and confirm the NQLC's assessment and prioritisation decision-making policy and process, ensuring that it is documented clearly and transparently. The updated policy should include the factors considered when making decisions in relation to the:

- Initial decision to provide assistance.
- Prioritisation of different claims/matters.
- Interactions of these factors with resourcing decisions.

Once confirmed, communicate this policy and process to internal and external stakeholders, including publicly (for example, by publishing the process on the NQLC website) and for individual decisions (for example, by sharing the reasoning for decisions with relevant parties).

Response

Accepted.

Yet to be implemented.

The PLO position was vacant for an extended period and the APLO was focused on keeping the active matters and responding to day-to-day operational priorities. New PLO was appointed 20th May 2024 and is keen to address this in her initial review (first 3-6months) and then drafting a policy by June 2025 - completion December 2025.

TOR 3 Extent to which each organisation deals respectfully, equitably, transparently and in a culturally appropriate manner with persons who hold or may hold native title in its region, including by adequately investigating and resolving complaints. **(Rec 5-8)**

Rec 5 Introduce measures across the employee lifecycle to improve the NQLC's organisational cultural competency, including but not limited to:

- Consideration of cultural competency in recruitment decisions;
- Formal tailored cultural competency training for new starters and regular refresher training for existing staff;
- Easily accessible guidance on what respectful, transparent and culturally appropriate engagement looks like in practice;
- Visual, plain English resources about the native title process that staff can provide to clients;
- Increased numbers of Indigenous project officers and Indigenous people on NQLC staff more broadly.

Response

Accepted.

Implemented in part.

Vacancies in key positions has hindered progress past initial scoping. Actions identified to develop and finalise a policy document.

This is not limited to NQLC, engagement and collaboration occurring across other sectors to identify best practice and shared learning opportunities. Cultural Framework process timeline 6-12 months.

Rec 6 Support staff and clients to consistently understand and apply the NQLC's complaints processes by providing relevant information in appropriate formats: • For staff, upon commencement of employment and periodically thereafter through clear written guidance. • For clients, upon commencement of their relationship with the NQLC and at key points in the native title process thereafter.
Response Accepted. Implemented in part. Vacancies in key positions have hindered progress past initial scoping. The complaints process review and drafting projected timeline 6-9 months.
Rec 7 Initiate additional group engagement opportunities with Traditional Owners to improve claimant understandings of the native title process, the NQLC's relationships with claimants and relationships between different claimant groups.
Response Accepted. Implemented in part. Working with the National Native Title Council to organise PBC forum. Also working with the QRBA to explore key topics and strategies for NTRB-SPs to incorporate into a broader plan. Acknowledging there is a gap nationally on this topic and limited funding at Traditional Owners and PBC level, restricts the broader engagement opportunities. Work will continue to connect and collaborate with Traditional Owners in NQLC region.
Rec 8 Work with stakeholders and other NTRB-SPs to develop a policy for the NQLC's use of cultural materials. This policy should address key issues including how the NQLC will explain and obtain consent for potential uses of cultural materials when first engaging with a claim group and how it will continue to communicate with claim groups regarding its ongoing use of cultural materials.
Response Accepted. Implemented in part. The limited number of meetings at state level has limited opportunities for state conversations. Work will continue to raise the policy as an agenda item and progress works to develop a policy. timeframe next 12 months.
TOR 4 Extent to which each organisation performs its functions in a cost-effective manner, including by identifying the key cost drivers for the organisation.
Rec Nil.
TOR 5 Extent to which each organisation has governance and management structures, and organisational policies and an organisational culture that support efficient and effective project delivery. (Rec 9-11)

Rec 9 Implement a process for the CEO and Board to work together to clarify their respective roles and relationships in line with the principles of good governance. Revisit previous efforts to strengthen the NQLC's governance model through increasing the skills set of the Board. This should include further training for current Board Directors, implementing minimum skill requirements for all new Directors and including a minimum of two independent professional Board Directors.
Response Accepted. Implemented in part. Currently being considered as part of Rulebook review. Consultant engaged to review and redraft the Rulebook, a 2-phase consultation process applied for members and comments generated will be incorporated. Timeframe for current review 30th June 2025.
Rec 10 More clearly define the training opportunities and performance development processes available for all staff and ensure they are consistently applied. This should also include a clear employee value proposition, career pathways for Indigenous staff and adoption of a formal induction program for all new employees, including senior Executives.
Response Accepted. Implemented in part. The current workload on the CFO/HRM is limiting progress. New Executive Management appointments will help progress the training and performance development actions. The skillset of the board needs an evaluation process to confirm abilities and help identify gaps. There are numerous evaluation tools being considered – project will need to be costed. Timeframe 30th June 2025.
Rec 11 Assess the benefits and cost of splitting out human resources (HR) as a distinct and separate executive responsibility so that staff can feel more confidently supported in their professional development and growth in their workplace.
Response Accepted. Implemented in part. HRO position created and advertised. Timeframe October 2024. As part of the implementation strategy, a new employee application (employment hero) was installed 1 July 2024 and in trial phase to address day to day staff issues (leave, sign on/off etc.) which will streamline the existing process (multiple handling).
TOR 6 Extent to which each organisation is adequately supporting Prescribed Body Corporates towards self-sufficiency. (Rec 12)
Rec 12 Increase transparency by clearly communicating to PBCs what support the NQLC can provide to them within its limited budget.

Response

Accepted.

Implemented.

PBSU employs active communication strategies to connect with PBC's. The appointment of new Media Officer will enhance the level of communication. PBCSU sent letters out with applications for basic support funding to detail services and put together an information sheet and PBCSU continues to engage on a case-by-case basis with PBCs when support is required.

TOR 7 Extent to which each organisation has developed its planning for a post-determination environment. **(Rec 13)**

Rec 13 Determine the role (or set of roles) the NQLC will play in a post-determination environment, including preparation for future compensation claims. This could be facilitated by reviewing and updating the Strategic Plan and other key corporate documents to ensure that they remain fit-for-purpose and relevant to the current and future work environment.

Response

Accepted.

Implemented.

NQLC Strategic Plan and other corporate documents review action completed. The Building Economic Independence in North Queensland project also seeks to map out the process options for the board to consider (project awaiting final board approval) as part of the post determination landscape and NQLC's potential future role and function.

Operationally, NQLC Engagement Development & Support Team are working closely and knows business aspirations of PBCs post-determination (to the extent they wish to share). However, work is progressing through discussions about how this can be 'tracked' in a post determination space.

NQLC is actively engaging with two groups about compensation claims. The process includes engagement with the State to also include historical mining and exploration – a clear risk is the potential for change of state government.

The future act online toolkit not ready – Timeline after June 30, 2025.