

Principles of Engagement when using Aboriginal Interpreters

The Principles have been developed in accordance with recommendation 11.5 from the Final Report of the Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing in the Northern Territory, which states:

That interpreters be used at all consultations with Aboriginal people for whom English is a second language. Interpreters must be appropriately supported to ensure that they understand the subject matter of the consultation.

The Principles not only emphasise the importance of using interpreters when explaining complex scientific matters, but also recognise the significance of respecting community and culture when consulting with Aboriginal people. The Principles aim to promote consistent, effective and accountable engagement with Aboriginal people through working together.

The following high level values form the basis of the Principles: Respect and Integrity; Clarity; Commitment; Inclusion; Accountability; and Working Together.

Principles of Engagement

Genuine engagement is undertaken with respect and integrity. This will be supported by the use of interpreters when sharing and communicating information with Aboriginal people.

Ensuring all parties will respect the confidentiality of the other parties. All parties... “must respect the confidentiality of traditional owners and custodians particularly in the receipt and use of Indigenous information, and throughout any negotiations and dealings with traditional owners and custodians”.

A commitment to adhering to guidance on the use of an interpreter while undertaking consultations or community engagement.

Background knowledge of the area in which the consultation or engagement will take place, such as what language is predominantly spoken in the area must be considered. The Aboriginal Interpreting Service and land councils may assist with this.

Interpreters are used to provide clarity of the purpose, scope and timeframes of the engagement. This includes ensuring decision-making processes, roles and responsibilities are understood, and the information is understood by all.

Co-operate, where possible, with government agencies and non-government organisations to share resources and coordinate use of and support for interpreter services.

Inclusive engagement ensures enough time and space is allowed for dialogue, reflection, and the development of shared understanding of the subject matter for consultation.

It is vital the use of interpreters be arranged during the planning stages of engagement to inform the format and timing of engagement with Aboriginal people.

Establish accountability through processes that are agreed and adhered to with any changes communicated. Interpreters must be appropriately supported to ensure that they understand the subject matter of the consultation or community engagement.

In consultation with interpreter services, develop simple plain English materials, for briefing interpreters in advance to enable them to become more familiar with the subject area and enable collaboration on terms and concepts which may need to be considered further.

Create relationships that are based and maintained on trust and working together through two-way communication, exchange of information and deliberation that increases mutual understanding and enables community members to influence decisions that affect their lives.

The most important element is to be honest and clear about the intent and purpose of the consultation or community engagement.

The Aboriginal Interpreter Service provides a range of interpreting services covering the major languages of the Northern Territory. To book an Aboriginal Interpreter, follow this link [Book an Aboriginal interpreter | NT.GOV.AU](#).