

ASSISTANCE TO NATIVE TITLE HOLDERS/CLAIMANTS ATTENDING NATIVE TITLE MEETINGS POLICY

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to provide a consistent approach by First Nations Legal and Research (FNLRS) to the forms of assistance provided in relation to people attending Native Title Meetings.

FNLRS will first decide in relation to any particular meeting if assistance to invitees is appropriate. If a decision is made that such assistance is appropriate, that assistance will then be provided in accordance with this policy.

As a general policy, three forms of assistance will be provided to indigenous invitees to Native Title Meetings.

They are:

1. Travel Assistance
2. Accommodation and Meals Assistance
3. Data allowance (remote meetings)

Assistance will not be provided to persons whose attendance is not relevant to the business of the meeting.

General Principle

This policy is subject to the budgetary restrictions under which FNLRS operates and which may govern the running of any particular meeting. FNLRS reserves the right to restrict the administration of this policy where grant conditions or budgetary requirements require such restrictions. FNLRS shall otherwise make every effort to apply this policy consistently and without discrimination, acknowledging that the assistance will not amount to a full reimbursement of travel costs.

Travel Assistance

1. Travel Assistance will be provided either in the form of reimbursement of public transport costs or payment of a kilometre allowance.

2. Travel Assistance **will not** be provided to persons who travel less than 50 kilometres from their principal residence to the place of the meeting.
3. If a private vehicle is used to attend a meeting it is subject to the following conditions:
 - a. A kilometre allowance per vehicle will be provided to persons upon completion of the form provided at the meeting

The FNLRS allowance rate payable is 55 cents per kilometre.

- b. The allowance should be paid for the kilometres travelled between the claimants' principal residence and the place of the meeting and return via the most reasonably direct route.

Kilometre allowance payments will be limited to a **maximum** distance of 1,000 kilometres per round trip. Distances will be calculated using Google maps and payments calculated accordingly.

Thus, these payments will be capped at \$550 per meeting.

- c. FNLRS will not pay for or reimburse any other private vehicle travel costs other than the kilometre allowance described above. Therefore, the costs of toll charges or incidentals will not be paid for or reimbursed by FNLRS.

Also, hire cars will not be arranged or reimbursed by FNLRS.

4. If public transport (including air travel) is used:

- a. The *actual costs* of travel (including necessary taxi fares) between the claimant's principal residence and the place of the meeting and return via the most reasonably direct route will be reimbursed on production of receipts or tickets.
 - b. The reimbursement is subject to a cap of \$550 per person per meeting.

5. In all cases:

- a. Payments will be made by electronic transfer where bank account details have been provided.

- b. FNLRS will make an advance payment of 50% of the total amount prior to the meeting, with the remaining balance due upon conclusion of the meeting and verified by signature on the attendance sheet.

Additionally, non-attendance at the meeting will result in the deduction of the outstanding balance from the payment for the next meeting. In such cases, no advance payment will be made.

- c. FNLRS reserves the right to provide alternative means of travel in place of personal vehicle or public transport use. For example, FNLRS could organise hire of vehicles such as buses or people movers if that were deemed to be more economical. In these circumstances, invitees who choose to take their own vehicle instead of accepting an offer of alternative arrangements from FNLRS will not receive any travel assistance.

Accommodation & Meals Assistance

As far as practical, starting times of meetings will be scheduled to allow participants to travel from home to the meeting without the need for accommodation. Similarly, meetings will be scheduled to finish at a time that will allow participants to travel home without the need for accommodation.

Where this is not practical the following will apply:

1. Accommodation and meal costs will be met by FNLRS only where the nature of the meeting and the distance travelled warrant it. Accommodation will be in the form of shared rooms, where appropriate.
2. Where a meeting is scheduled to run for greater than one day and a person must travel more than 100 kilometres from their principal residence to the place of the meeting, FNLRS may pay for overnight accommodation provided this is authorised by FNLRS **before** the meeting.
3. Accommodation and meals shall be booked and paid for by FNLRS. Invitees will not be given choices. Persons who do not wish to take up the accommodation and meals offer of FNLRS will be obliged to make their own arrangements at their own cost.
4. Costs met by FNLRS will be for accommodation and meals only. **Alcohol, mini- bar, telephone or other personal expenses must be paid by the persons incurring them and settled directly with the accommodation provider at the time of checkout.**

5. If FNLRS has booked accommodation and a person's plan changes such that they do not require that accommodation, that person must contact FNLRS ASAP (or the accommodation place directly) to cancel the arrangement. A failure to do so will mean that FNLRS will have the right to recover from that person any costs incurred by FNLRS arising from the booking.
6. Lunch will be provided at all full-day meetings, and at half-day meetings when considered appropriate. If lunch is not provided FNLRS will pay up to the value of \$25 per person.
7. Where overnight accommodation is involved, FNLRS will arrange meals: Evening meals up to the value of \$40 and breakfast to the value of \$25 per person.
8. FNLRS will not provide meals while travelling.

Data Allowance

FNLRS will pay \$20 to virtual meeting participants, to go towards data costs associated with attending virtual meetings. These payments will be made after the meeting to those who attend using their own device. If two or more people attend using the same device the payment will only be made to the owner of the device.