

WELCOME TO AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY COUNCIL POLICY

POLICY STATEMENT

The City of Bunbury (“the City”) recognises the Wardandi Noongar people as the traditional owners of the land upon which the City is situated and respects the ongoing relationship these original custodians have with their land.

The City is committed to achieving genuine reconciliation in the community through strong relationships, recognition of traditional land owners and celebration of our rich cultural diversity and history.

The City acknowledges the cultural importance of Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country for Wardandi Noongar people and its importance to Bunbury’s heritage and identity.

POLICY SCOPE

This policy applies to all staff and Elected Members organising events, ceremonies, commemorations and public functions and meetings as well as documentation on behalf of the City where Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country should be included.

Activities where it is appropriate for a Welcome to Country to be performed include:

- Major City-led events and conferences;
- Openings of significant new City public buildings, facilities and developments;
- Welcoming new Councillors;
- City-led NAIDOC and Reconciliation Week events.

Activities where it is appropriate for an Acknowledgement of Country to be performed include:

- Council meetings;
- Citizenship ceremonies;
- City-led award ceremonies;
- City-led exhibition openings;
- Significant City-led policy, report or project launches;
- Large meetings where significant external stakeholders are present;
- Whole-of-organisation functions;
- City-funded events;
- Invitation-only Mayoral events.

Locations where it is appropriate for an Acknowledgement of Country to be included include:

- Strategic plans, strategies and studies;
- Council and committee agendas and minutes;
- Staff and Elected Member email signatures;
- Plaques erected on City-owned facilities;
- City of Bunbury websites.

POLICY DETAILS

The South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council (SWALSC) is the native title representative body of the Noongar people, the traditional owners of the South West of Western Australia extending from Leeman in the north-west to Cape Arid in the south-east. The land on which the City of Bunbury sits is originally owned by the Wardandi people, one of the fourteen different language groups that comprise the Noongar nation. Among other duties, the SWALSC advances and strengthens Noongar culture, language, heritage and society.

The City of Bunbury lies within the Gnaala Karla Booja Indigenous Land Use Agreement Area and is the traditional home to the Wardandi Noongar dialectical group.

According to the SWALSC;

“A Welcome to Country ceremony gives traditional owners, the Noongar peoples, the opportunity to formally welcome people to their land. This ceremony should be undertaken by Elders acknowledged as such by their family and community.

An Acknowledgement of Country is a way that non-Aboriginal people can show respect for Noongar heritage and the ongoing relationship of traditional owners of the land. The Chair of the meeting, or the principal speaker begins the meeting by acknowledging that the meeting is taking place in the country of the traditional owners.”

The SWALSC produces a Noongar Protocols document which outlines how organisations can give recognition to the first people of the south west region of Australia. The City shall use the guidelines contained within this document when organising Welcome to and Acknowledgement of Country in collaboration with the Greater Bunbury Elders Group.

POLICY PROCEDURE

The following advice is adapted from the abovementioned SWALSC document.

Organising a Welcome to Country

A Welcome to Country ceremony gives traditional owners the opportunity to formally welcome people to their land. This ceremony should be undertaken by Elders acknowledged as such by their family and community. Goomburrup Aboriginal Corporation (“Goomburrup”) should be contacted to facilitate the selection of an available Elder. If there are no Elders available or willing to give a Welcome to Country, authority to do so may be delegated by the Elders group.

There is no exact wording when conducting Welcome to Country. The content of the ceremony should be negotiated between the City, Goomburrup and the Elder to ensure it references the

nature of the event and the Elder is comfortable. Generally, the Elder will offer provide local Wardandi Noongar history and cultural information followed by a welcome to attendees to their land, however they may vary from a single speech in language or English, a cultural performance, smoking ceremony or a combination.

It is important that organisers allow enough time to discuss with Goomburrup and the Elders what form of welcome will be undertaken and whether there are any particular protocols that must be observed.

A Welcome to Country is a cultural service wherein Aboriginal people use their intellectual property. As such they must be appropriately remunerated. The exact amount of payment is negotiated between the City, Goomburrup and the Elder however may range from \$400 to \$1,000 depending on the nature of the ceremony.

Organisers must provide equipment where appropriate, for example a microphone. The first speaker/master of ceremonies should always invite the Elder to perform the Welcome to Country, and then acknowledge and thanks the Elder for their contribution after the ceremony is complete.

It is the responsibility of the relevant staff member to organise a Welcome to or Acknowledgement of Country ceremony with the Community Partnerships Team providing a conduit to Goomburrup and the Elder.

Organising an Acknowledgement of Country

An Acknowledgement of Country is a way in which non-Aboriginal people can show respect for Noongar heritage and the ongoing relationship traditional owners and custodians have with their land.

It is the responsibility of the first speaker/master of ceremonies/meeting chair to begin the meeting by acknowledging that it is taking place in the country of the traditional owners. Whilst the SWALSC provides examples of typical Acknowledgement of Country statements, the City will use the following:

'I/we/The City of Bunbury acknowledges the traditional owners of the land, the Noongar Wardandi people and their continuing connection to the land, waters and community. I/We pay my/our respects to all members of the Aboriginal communities and their cultures; and to Elders past, present and emerging.'

It is the responsibility of the document owner to ensure the abovementioned statement is listed on all appropriate documentation.

COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS

LEGISLATION

- *Local Government Act 1995*

INDUSTRY

ORGANISATIONAL

- Bunbury Geographe Reconciliation Action Plan “Reflect”
- Strategic Community Plan 2018 – 2028
- South West Aboriginal Land & Sea Council Noongar Protocols

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