

POL 0046: Cultural Protocols

Purpose

To establish protocols for Shire staff with regard to appropriate and consistent recognition and acknowledgement of Kapa Kurl Wudjari People of the Nyungar Nation and Ngadju People as the Traditional Custodians of the land, on which the Shire of Esperance is situated.

Scope

This Policy outlines cultural protocols of “Welcome to Country”, “Acknowledgement of People and Country”, and “Cultural Performances”, and provides guidance as to their appropriate use.

Definitions

Welcome to Country: a formal welcome onto Nyungar and Ngadju land given by an Elder or Traditional Custodian of that land.

Acknowledgement of People and Country: a statement of recognition of the Traditional Custodian of the land. An Acknowledgement can be given by any person.

Cultural Performance: includes but is not limited to, dance, song or musical performance, and/or other means of artistic expression.

Elder: is defined as someone who has gained recognition as a custodian of knowledge and lore, and who has permission to disclose knowledge and beliefs. It is important to understand that age alone doesn't necessarily mean that one is recognised as an Elder.

Practice

The Shire of Esperance recognises the Kapa Kurl Wudjari people of the Nyungar Nation and Ngadju people's custodianship of country, and is committed to observing appropriate protocols for acknowledging this custodianship at formal Shire events, to which members of the public and external stakeholder groups attend.

The Shire of Esperance is committed to greater visibility and promotion of First Nation people's culture and connection to country.

Welcome to Country

A Welcome to Country can only be performed by Elders who are recognised as Traditional Custodians of Nyungar or Ngadju country, as this gives Traditional Custodians the opportunity to formally welcome people to their land.

The Welcome to Country should be the first item on the order of proceedings for the event and may comprise of a single speech with or without an accompanying cultural performance.

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

1. Official civic receptions by invitation;
2. Where visiting dignitaries are being hosted by Shire staff or Elected Members. These can include Members of Parliament, state and federal government Ministers, Heads of State and their representatives, and/or visiting persons of high renown or esteem;
3. Openings of significant new public buildings or facilities;
4. NAIDOC and Reconciliation Week events hosted by the Shire or Council;
5. Openings or official launches of large public events;
6. Shire of Esperance civic and significant awards presentations; and
7. Conferences organised or hosted by the Shire, where people from outside the municipality are in attendance.

Where it is identified that a Welcome to Country should be performed, the following should occur -

1. The Shire employee (project leader, manager) should record that a Welcome to Country is required and forward a request to the Executive Assistant to the Chief Executive Officer (Executive Assistant) no less than four weeks prior to the event.
2. The Executive Assistant will inform the Shire President and the CEO of the event details and requirement for a Welcome to Country.
3. The Executive Assistant will organise arrangements for the Welcome to Country inclusive of sourcing an appropriate Elder or Traditional Custodian, liaising with the recognised Traditional Custodian's body corporate for the area where the Welcome to Country will take place.

Acknowledgement of People and Country

An Acknowledgement of People and Country can be performed by anyone, and is a respectful public acknowledgement of the Traditional Custodians of the land. Generally, an acknowledgement will be performed by the host or Master of Ceremonies of the event or gathering, unless a specific person has been requested to perform this.

Events where an Acknowledgment should be considered include -

1. Preceding Council or Committee meetings;
2. Citizenship ceremonies;
3. Large meetings where external stakeholders are present;

4. Official openings or launches of intimate public events, either by invitation or not and;
5. Special events as determined by staff managing the event.

Where it is identified that an Acknowledgement of People and Country should be performed, the following should occur -

1. The Shire employee (project leader, manager) should prepare suitable agendas and/or speech notes and insert the requirement for an Acknowledgement of People and Country.
2. The preferred Acknowledgement of People and Country is as follows:
 “I’d like to begin by acknowledging the Kepa Kurl Wudjari people of the Nyungar nation and Ngadju people, who are the Traditional Custodians of this Land, and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past, present and emerging and we extend that respect to other Aboriginal Australians today.”

Cultural Performance

Cultural Performances include dance, song, artistic expression and music, and are an optional addition to a Welcome to Country or Acknowledgement of People and Country.

Cultural Performances will most commonly accompany a Welcome to Country, however can also be considered to accompany an Acknowledgment of People and Country.

Where it is identified that a Cultural Performance is necessary or possible the following should occur -

1. The Shire employee (project leader, manager) should record that in addition to a Welcome to Country or Acknowledgement of People and Country, an opportunity to include a Cultural Performance with the program is necessary or possible. This should be forwarded to the Executive Assistant no less than four weeks prior to the event.
2. On confirmation from the Executive Assistant that the event has been approved, the Shire employee (project leader, manager) should discuss options for a Cultural Performance.
3. The Executive Assistant will organise arrangements for the Cultural Performance inclusive of sourcing an appropriate program and liaising with the event coordinator regarding run sheets, logistics and the management of honorarium payments.

The determination of whether a Cultural Performance is necessary or possible shall be made by the Chief Executive Officer, Shire President and Project Manager. Contingent factors shall be accounted for including but not limited to -

1. Logistical constraints of the event or function – including physical and time constraints; project budgets; and appropriateness.

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Document Information

Responsible Position	Executive Assistant
Risk Rating	Medium

Referencing Documents

- *Local Government Act 1995*

Revision History

Date	Version	CM Reference	Reason for Change	Resolution #	Next Review
Nov 2020	1	D20/34718	New policy	O1120-360	Nov 2022
Jan 2022	2	D20/34718[v2]	Move citizenship ceremonies from Welcome to Country section to Acknowledgement section	O0122-012	Jan 2024
May 2022	3	D20/34718[v3]	Change references to Traditional Owner to be Traditional Custodian, change Nyungar identification to be 'Kepa Kurl Wudjari people of the Nyungar Nation'.	O0522-114	May 2024
Jan 2024	4	D20/34718[v4]	Include scope, move second sentence in Welcome to Country definition to the welcome to country section, remove third paragraph under practice section, minor grammar and wording updates.	O0124-004	Jan 2026
Dec 2025	5	D20/34718[v5]	Biennial review, no change	O1225-098	Dec 2027