

WELCOME TO COUNTRY PROTOCOLS POLICY

Responsible Directorate:	Community and Place
Responsible Service Unit:	Community Development
Contact Person:	Manager Community Development
Date of Approval:	12 June 2023
Council Resolution No:	CE03-06/23

1. POLICY STATEMENT

The City of Wanneroo supports following Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country protocols to acknowledge and pay respect to the Traditional Custodians of the land upon which the City is situated; the Whadjuk Noongar people

2. OBJECTIVE AND PURPOSE

Objective

The objective of this policy is to demonstrate respect for and recognise its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents and employees.

Observing Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country protocols shows respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' traditional cultural practices. The practice recognises the Whadjuk Noongar people as the Traditional Custodians of the Wanneroo area.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Outline general principles and practices of Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country protocols; and
- Provide guidance on which events, activities and documents are appropriate for including a Welcome to Country and/or Acknowledgement of Country.

3. KEY DEFINITIONS

Acknowledgement of Country – An Acknowledgement of Country is an opportunity for anyone to show respect for the Traditional Custodians of the land they are on, and the continuing connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Country.

Country - Country is the term often used by Aboriginal peoples to describe the lands, waterways and seas to which they are connected (a specific geographical location). The term contains complex ideas about law, place, custom, language, spiritual belief, cultural practice, material sustenance, family and identity.

Noongar – Noongar is a term which is used to broadly identify Aboriginal people who come from the South West of Western Australia and includes areas encompassed between Jurien Bay in the north through to Esperance in the south.

Reconciliation - Reconciliation involves building mutually respectful relationships between Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians that encourages us to work together to solve problems and generate success that is in everyone's best interests.

Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) - A RAP is a strategic document that includes practical actions that will drive an organisation's contribution to reconciliation internally and in the communities in which it operates.

Smoking Ceremony - A Smoking Ceremony is a traditional Noongar ritual used to cleanse and purify a specific area, the spirit, body and soul whilst on Noongar Country.

Traditional Custodians - Aboriginal representatives of the traditional language group that inhabited the area prior to European settlement and are recognised as Traditional Custodians by local Aboriginal communities.

Welcome to Country - A Welcome to Country ceremony gives Traditional Custodians, the Noongar peoples, the opportunity to formally welcome people to their land. It shows respect for people, respect for rights and a respect for country.

Whadjuk - Whadjuk is the name of the Noongar dialect group (of which there are 14) from the greater metropolitan area of Perth.

4. SCOPE

This policy applies to all Council Members and employees.

5. IMPLICATIONS

This policy aligns to the City's **Strategic Community Plan 2021-2031: Priority 2.1 - Valuing cultures and histories**: *Wanneroo will be a City that utilises the strength of cultural diversity and the unique history of the area to shape a stronger community. The people of Wanneroo will appreciate and celebrate the City's unique Aboriginal and other diverse global cultures and histories.*

By the City supporting Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country protocols the City is appreciating and celebrating the City's unique Aboriginal culture and history.

In providing cultural services such as a Welcome to Country, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are using their intellectual property and should be appropriately remunerated.

Any budget required to facilitate Welcome to Country ceremonies will be considered in the City's annual operational planning and budgeting cycle.

6. IMPLEMENTATION

The below is general information, detailed implementation of this Policy is guided by appropriate City processes and procedures. These processes and procedures are informed by the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council's *Noongar Welcome to Country Protocols*.

When to observe a Welcome to Country ceremony

A Welcome to Country should be observed at all official major City events including but not limited to:

- All events celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and culture, for example NAIDOC and Reconciliation Week celebrations that are external facing;
- Opening of new significant buildings or other infrastructure;
- Major City run events and other relevant smaller events;
- Australia Day Citizenship Ceremonies; and
- Opening of major exhibitions and annual art awards.

This Policy's accompanying operational processes will guide decisions regarding when it is appropriate to observe a Welcome to Country ceremony when an event or activity is not listed above.

Who performs a Welcome to Country ceremony

A Welcome to Country is delivered at the beginning of an event or activity and can include a speech in Noongar language, traditional dance, singing and smoking ceremony.

A Welcome to Country ceremony should be undertaken by a Whadjuk Noongar Elder and acknowledged as such by their family and community.

The City acknowledges the importance of having Elders who are recognised in the local community as being the most appropriate people to conduct a Welcome to Country for the City. Where a local Whadjuk Noongar Elder is not available, it is acceptable for a Noongar Elder from another area to give the Welcome to Country or by an Aboriginal person that has been given permission to do so by an Elder.

When to perform a smoking ceremony

A Smoking Ceremony can also be part of a Welcome to Country, or stand-alone ceremony. A Smoking Ceremony can often be performed at larger celebration events, the launching of something new, or its renewal e.g. development or opening of a new building or the swearing in of new Council members.

When to deliver an Acknowledgement of Country

An Acknowledgement of Country should be conducted by a Council Member or appropriate City officer at significant events, meetings and ceremonies prior to the commencement of the activity.

It can also be used at appropriate discretion when wishing to acknowledge the Whadjuk Noongar people at smaller meetings and/or gatherings.

Written Acknowledgement of Country

An Acknowledgment of Country should be included in written format on the City's website, within City email signature blocks, in key City publications, and on Council meeting agendas.

7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Community Development service unit is responsible for the implementation of this Policy and all associated procedures.

Service units within the City that engage Elders to deliver a Welcome to Country or a Smoking Ceremony are responsible for ensuring all protocols are followed as per the policy and associated procedures.

8. DISPUTE RESOLUTION (if applicable)

All disputes regarding this policy will be referred to the Manager Community Development in the first instance. If an agreement cannot be reached, the matter will be submitted to the Director Community and Place for a ruling.

9. EVALUATION AND REVIEW

This policy shall be reviewed every three years to evaluate its effectiveness, including measurement against annual key performance indicators. This may include, but not limited to:

- The Policy and accompanying processes are clear and provide adequate direction
- The Policy and accompanying processes are being followed accurately
- Welcome to Country ceremonies, and Acknowledgment of Country practices are effective at:
 - demonstrating respect for and recognises the City's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents and employees
 - demonstrating appreciation for and celebrating the City's unique Aboriginal culture and history

10. RELATED DOCUMENTS

City of Wanneroo Reconciliation Action Plan
Civic Events Policy
City Event Management Procedure
Welcome to Country Guidelines
City of Wanneroo Welcome to Country Elders list

11. REFERENCES

South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council (n.d). Living Culture-Living Land and its people: Noongar Protocols Welcome to Country. Available at:
<http://www.noongar.org.au/noongar-protocols>

12. RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Manager Community Development

REVISION HISTORY

Version	Next Review	Record No.
1 – 22 July 2014 - CD01-07/14	March 2016	14/37415v1
2 – 19 September 2017 - CE01-09/17	December 2019	14/37415v2
3 – 22 September 2020 – CE02-09/20	October 2023	14/37415v3
4 - 12 June 2023 - CE03-06/23	June 2026	14/37415v4