

Recognising Traditional Owners



Council Policy Number	167
Date adopted	25 June 2019
Scheduled for review	June 2023

Purpose

To set out the protocols for recognising Traditional Owners at Campaspe Shire Council's ('Council') civic functions and in business activities.

To share in Aboriginal culture and heritage, enabling better relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal People.

Policy Statement

This policy will assist Council in observing the appropriate protocols when recognising the Traditional Owners of the land. The process of 'Welcome to Country' and 'Acknowledgement of Country' acknowledges the unique position of Aboriginal people in Australian culture and history.

A 'Welcome to Country' and 'Acknowledgement of Country' are applicable to Council related civic functions and business activities as outlined in this policy.

It is the responsibility of the chair of the meeting, the event organiser or the publication's editor to ensure that the appropriate acknowledgement is undertaken or included.

1. Registered Aboriginal Parties in the municipality

The Victorian *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* recognises Aboriginal people as the primary guardians, keepers and knowledge holders of Aboriginal cultural heritage. At a local level, Registered Aboriginal Parties ('RAPs') are the voice of Aboriginal people in the management and protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage in Victoria.

The municipality incorporates three RAPs reflecting the three Traditional Owners: Dja Dja Wurrung Aboriginal Corporation, Taungurung Land and Waters Council; and Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation. Council's role in protecting and conserving places of Aboriginal cultural heritage significance, and in promoting community awareness of Aboriginal history and cultural heritage can only be achieved through effective relationships with RAPs.

2. Welcome to Country

A Welcome to Country ceremony is performed by Aboriginal Traditional Owners for people visiting their country. These ceremonies vary from speeches of welcome to traditional dance and smoking ceremonies.

When is a Welcome to Country appropriate?

If a function has broad impact on, or significance for, Aboriginal people or is connected to a significant Aboriginal site, a welcoming ceremony will be appropriate. A Welcome to Country may also be conducted as part of Reconciliation Week or National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee ('NAIDOC') week activities as per the current protocols.

A Welcome to Country should be conducted prior to the swearing in of a newly elected Council (every four years).

A Welcome to Country may also be conducted at other major public functions or events at the discretion of the organisers.

It is at the discretion of the organiser whether to give an Acknowledgment of Country prior to a Welcome to Country but it is not a requirement.

Who can perform a Welcome to Country?

A Welcome to Country should only be performed by a representative of the Traditional Owner group.

Asking an Aboriginal person to perform a Welcome to Country when they do not belong to the Traditional Owner group may cause them embarrassment and may offend the Traditional Owners.

The organiser will need to determine the Traditional Owners for the land on which the event is to be held through the appointed RAP area maps. Contact should be made directly with the relevant RAP to engage Welcome to Country services.

What wording should be used in performing the Welcome to Country ceremony?

There is no exact wording for Welcome to Country. As such, the content of the ceremony should be negotiated between the Council organiser and the provider with reference to the nature of the event and community practices. It is very important that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative has been involved in and is comfortable with the arrangements.

Is there a fee for a Welcome to Country?

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

The RAPs all have set fee schedules for the delivering of a Welcome to Country.

3. Acknowledgement of Country

An Acknowledgement of Country recognises that the Shire of Campaspe has a strong and proud Aboriginal history and complex ownership and land stewardship systems stretching back many thousands of years. It pays respect to the Traditional Owners.

When is an Acknowledgement of Country appropriate?

Generally, an Acknowledgement of Country should be given at all formal events, public forums and functions.

As a rule, an Acknowledgement of Country should be given at the following specific events/functions:

- All official Council Meetings
- All citizenship ceremonies
- Any public event/function
- Any official opening/unveiling/ launch
- Any event/function hosting external groups in the Shire

Who should give the Acknowledgement of Country?

The first speaker at an event or function (following the welcome or in the absence of a welcome) should give the Acknowledgment of Country.

Subsequent speakers may also give an acknowledgement; however, this is a matter of personal preference and judgement in relation to the particular occasion.

It is the responsibility of the Council officer organising an event to ensure that an Acknowledgement of Country is conducted.

If a Councillor is present at a public event and an Acknowledgment of Country has not been given, then they should give a general Acknowledgment of Country as outlined in example 3 below.

What form should the Acknowledgement of Country take?

For Council meetings or events/functions that represent the whole of the Shire the following Acknowledgement should be used:

Acknowledgement of Country (1)

The Shire of Campaspe is the traditional lands of the Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung and Yorta Yorta Peoples.

We respect and acknowledge their unique Aboriginal cultural heritage and pay our respect to their ancestors, descendants and emerging leaders as the Traditional Owners of this Country.

We acknowledge their living culture and their unique role in the life of this region.

For events/functions that are located in a specific place and if you are clear about whom the Traditional Owners of an area are, you should use:

Acknowledgement of Country (2)

To start the official proceedings I would like to acknowledge that we are meeting on [the Traditional Owner's name] Country. Elders of the [the Traditional Owner's name] community and their forebears are the traditional owners of this land and have been custodians for many centuries and have performed age old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal. We acknowledge their living culture and their unique role in the life of this region.

If you are uncertain about whom the Traditional Owners of an area are, you should use:

Acknowledgement of Country (3)

I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we are meeting. I pay my respects to their leaders and Elders, past, present, and emerging and the Elders from other communities who may be here today.

Special Acknowledgement of Country for Reconciliation Week

The acknowledgement for Reconciliation Week should be stated after the standard Acknowledgement of Country and is as follows:

Reconciliation is about unity and respect between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and non-Indigenous Australians. It is about respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage and valuing justice and equity for all Australians.

Special Acknowledgement of Country for NAIDOC Week

The acknowledgement for NAIDOC week should be stated after the standard Acknowledgement of Country and is as follows:

Today we honour the Aboriginal Peoples of this land, the oldest continuing cultures in human history. We reflect on their past mistreatment and acknowledge these wrongs of the past so that we can move forward with confidence to the future. A future based on mutual respect, mutual resolve and mutual responsibility.

4. Smoking ceremony

A Smoking Ceremony is undertaken in Aboriginal communities to cleanse the space. The ceremony is a purification ritual and is always undertaken by a Traditional Owner who has specialised cultural knowledge.

When is a smoking ceremony appropriate?

If a function has broad impact on, or significance for, Aboriginal people or is connected to a significant Aboriginal site, a smoking ceremony may be accompany a Welcome to Country.

5. Flying the Aboriginal Flag

Flying the Australian Aboriginal flag confirms our respect for Aboriginal Australians. Flags are to be flown in accordance with the *Excerpt from the booklet Australian flags – Part 2: The protocols for the appropriate use and the flying of the flag – Order of Precedence.*

<https://www.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/australian-flags-excerpt.pdf>

6. Significant Dates & Events – celebrate, support and acknowledge

Council recognises the significant dates and celebrations in relation to Aboriginal history and culture and commits to acknowledge, celebrate and support along with the local Aboriginal Community the following dates:

- NAIDOC Week
- Reconciliation Week

Exclusions

Nil

Human Rights

This policy has considered and complies with the Human Rights and Responsibilities contained in the Victorian Charter of *Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.

Definitions

Aboriginal	An Aboriginal is a person of Aboriginal descent; identifies as an Aboriginal; and is accepted as such by the community in which he or she lives or has lived.
Torres Strait Islander	Is a person or descendant from the Torres Strait Islands, which is located to the north of Cape York Peninsula between mainland Australia and New Guinea. The term ‘Torres Strait Islander’ refers to people of Torres Strait Islander origin, whether or not they are also of Aboriginal origin.
Aboriginal people or peoples	‘Aboriginal people’ is a collective term for the original people of Australia and their descendants. However, this term does not emphasise the diversity that exists within Aboriginal culture and communities. Using the term ‘Aboriginal peoples’ and adding an ‘s’ to ‘people’ emphasises the diversity of Aboriginal languages, communities, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs.
Traditional Owners	<p>Traditional Owners are directly descended from the original Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inhabitants of a culturally defined area of land or Country. Traditional Owners have ongoing spiritual and cultural ties to this Country that are derived from the traditions, observances, customs, beliefs or history of the original Aboriginal and Torres Strait inhabitants of the area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use ‘Traditional Owner’ to refer to an Aboriginal person or group as defined above. <p>Council’s municipal boundary falls within the traditional lands of the Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung and Yorta Yorta Peoples being the Traditional Owners.</p>
Koori and other terms	‘Koori’ and other terms are directly derived from Aboriginal languages and are often used by Aboriginal peoples in specific areas when referring to themselves.
Indigenous (Australian)	‘Indigenous people’ or ‘Indigenous peoples’ is often used as a non-specific term to describe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
Elder	Elders are highly respected members of their communities and are recognised as the custodians of cultural knowledge and beliefs passed on from generation to generation. Elders are chosen and accepted by their communities as people who have permission to disclose cultural knowledge and beliefs. They have a significant role in preserving and passing on culture, guiding younger members of the community and making guiding decisions for the wellbeing of the community as a whole.

Country	Term used to describe a culturally defined area of land associated with a particular culturally distinct group of people or nation. Country also refers to the diverse relationships, deep connections and understandings that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to the land and environment.
Reconciliation	Reconciliation is about acceptance, respect and understanding of one another.
Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP)	Registered Aboriginal Parties ('RAPs') are organisations that hold decision-making responsibilities under the <i>Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006</i> for protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage in a specified geographical area.
NAIDOC Week	National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee. NAIDOC is a celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and an opportunity to recognise the contributions of Indigenous Australians in various fields. NAIDOC is celebrated in the first week of July every year.
Reconciliation Week	National Reconciliation Week ('NRW') is celebrated across Australia each year between 27 May and 3 June. The dates commemorate two significant milestones in the reconciliation journey—the anniversaries of the successful 1967 referendum and the High Court Mabo decision.

Related Legislation

- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*
- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001*

Attachments

Nil

Review Period Responsible Officer

Four years Corporate Strategy Manager

Administrative Updates

It is recognised that, from time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this document. Where an update does not materially alter the policy, such a change may be made administratively. Examples include a change to the name of a Council department, a change to the name of a Federal or State Government department, and a minor update to legislation which does not have a material impact. However, any change or update which materially alters this document must be by resolution of Council.

Approval History

Adopted	25 June 2019	Minutes Book Reference No	1995 (Item 7.3)
Revised	22 February 2021	Administrative update to apply consistent reference to	Campaspe Shire Council ('Council') and abbreviations

Chief Executive Officer: 

Date: 24/2/2021