



SHIRE OF  
**HARVEY**

*A Breath of Fresh Air*



## **Policy 1.1.9 – Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country**

### 1. Introduction

The Shire of Harvey encourages reconciliation in our community through strong relationships, recognition of Traditional Custodians of the land and celebration of our rich cultural diversity and history. This includes ensuring that the appropriate protocols for the recognition of the Noongar people as Traditional Custodians of country are observed through the formal processes of Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country.

### 2. Policy objectives

- To acknowledge the Noongar people as the original inhabitants and traditional custodians of the land within the Shire of Harvey, being in the Gnaala Karla Boodja region;
- To engage with the Aboriginal Elders in decisions relating to Welcome to Country ceremonies and acknowledge the value of the Aboriginal community and their intellectual Cultural property;
- To acknowledge the importance of paying respect to the traditional custodians of the land, their Elders past and present and the continuing cultural and spiritual practices of local Aboriginal people; and
- To provide direction and support to Councillors and Officers of the Shire for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgment of Country protocols.

### 3. Policy

#### **Welcome to Country**

A Welcome to Country is delivered by Traditional Custodians, or Aboriginal people who have been given permission from Traditional Custodians, to welcome visitors to their Country offering them safe passage and protection of their spiritual being during the journey. It can take many forms including dancing, singing, smoking ceremonies or a speech in traditional language or English (Reconciliation Australia, 2017).

The Shire encourages all officers to include a Welcome to Country for all major Shire and Civic events such as:

- Significant Regional or State-wide events, hosted by the Shire whereby;
  - invitations are sent to several dignitaries, Members of Parliament, Politicians, Department Heads (e.g. Major launches, exhibitions, award ceremonies);
  - there is significant media marketing of the event.
- Citizenship ceremonies - it is considered significant due to its role in welcoming people from diverse cultures;
- 'Turning the Sod' ceremonies for major development sites (Shire owned); and
- The Swearing in of new Councillors may include either an official Welcome or Acknowledgement of Country at a Special Meeting of Council.

### **3.1 Negotiating a Welcome to Country**

Officers, where necessary, may wish to consult with local Aboriginal Elders, Traditional Land Owners and Custodians or groups as part of the event as to what is appropriate for the occasion.

It is essential that the correct Aboriginal representative organisation has been contacted by phone/ email well in advance of the event and then through a formal letter of invitation to Gnaala Karla Booja (Appendix 1 – Part 1). All arrangements thereafter for the Welcome to Country should be mutually negotiated between the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council, the Elder who has been selected to carry out the Welcome Ceremony and Shire staff.

It is very important that the Aboriginal representative/s has been involved in, and is comfortable with the arrangements. This may include the format of the ceremony and the type of 'Welcome to Country' that is to be held and how that person will be recognised for their time and commitment.

### **3.2 Service Fees**

In providing cultural services such as Welcome to Country, artistic performances and ceremonies, Aboriginal people are using their intellectual property. It is courteous to make an offer of an honorary payment. It is then up to the nominated person giving the Welcome to Country to accept the offer or to negotiate a different payment amount. (This amount needs to be mutually acceptable to both parties). Importantly, both parties have the right to withdraw from these negotiations if a mutually agreeable payment amount cannot be agreed upon.

Financial allocations for Welcome to Country protocols to be observed will be included in the Shire's budget on an annual basis.

### **3.3 Thanking the Traditional Custodians**

Choosing the right words and forms of address is particularly important. Always ask Aboriginal people how they would like to be addressed.

A brief acknowledgement is given after the Aboriginal representative has given the Welcome to Country, by the Shire President or other nominated officer who is present to represent the Shire in accordance with Appendix 1 – Part 2.

## Acknowledgement of Country



The Shire encourages all Council and civic events to include an Acknowledgement of Country at the commencement of meetings and events such as;

- Ordinary Council meetings;
- Exhibition openings;
- Annual art awards;
- Significant policy, report or project launches;
- Whole of organisation functions;
- Formal gatherings, functions or ceremonies.

An Acknowledgement of Country should be delivered in accordance with the standards set out in Appendix 2 unless specific wording has been approved by the Chief Executive Officer of the Shire on a case-by-case basis

## 4. Strategic objective

The policy aligns to the following strategic objective:

	<p>Provide a safe and welcoming community, which embraces its diversity and heritage, where everyone is valued and has the opportunity to contribute and belong.</p>
	<p>Strong civic leadership representing the whole of the Shire which engages in effective partnerships and reflects the aspirations of an engaged community.</p>

## 5. Definitions

**Acknowledgement of Country** is a way for non-Aboriginal people to show awareness of and respect for the traditional custodians of the land on which a meeting or event is being held, by recognising the continuing connection of Aboriginal people to their country. It can be informal or formal and involves visitors acknowledging the Aboriginal people as the original/traditional owners of the land as well as the long and continuing relationship between Aboriginal people and their country.

**Elders** are the custodians of Aboriginal knowledge. Elders are chosen by their own communities. They are highly respected keepers of the knowledge, and pass that knowledge on to younger Aboriginal people.

**Gnaala Karla Booja** is the region that encompasses the towns of Capel, Donnybrook, Balingup, Wickepin, Narrogin, Williams, Mundijong, Kwinana, Brookton, Pingelly, Wagin, Harvey, Collie, Pinjarra, Mandurah and Boddington.

**Kaya** is the Noongar word for hello

**Noongar** is the name for Aboriginal people of the south-west of Western Australia.

**'the Shire'** refers to the local government of the Shire of Harvey.

**wanju** is the Noongar word for welcome.

**Welcome to Country** is a ceremony performed by Aboriginal people to welcome visitors to their traditional land. It can take on many forms, depending on the particular culture of the traditional owners, and can include singing, dancing, symbolic ritual or a speech in traditional language or English

## 6. Legislation

- Nil.

## 7. Related documents

- Nil.

Responsible officer	Director Communities		
Responsible team	Community Development		
Responsible area	Community Services		
Version control	Date	Resolution	Number
Version 1	25.06.2019	Resolution	19/151

## APPENDIX 1

### 1. Welcome to Country

#### 1.1 Contact Details

##### **Gnaala Karla Booja Details**

Gnaala Karla Booja Regional Development Coordinator  
South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council  
1490 Albany Highway  
Cannington WA 6987  
(08) 9358 7400  
reception1@noongar.org.au

#### 1.2 Responding to a Welcome to Country

Verbal:

*"I/ we would like to thank (name of person) and would also like to pay my respect to the Traditional custodians the Gnaala Karla Booja people and Elders past present and future on whose country we are meeting."*

### 2. Acknowledgement of Country

#### 2.1 Council documentation/electronic contents (Text):

*"The Shire of Harvey acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land and their continuing connection to the land, waters and community. We pay our respects to all members of the Aboriginal communities and their cultures; and to Elders both past and present"*

#### 2.2 Opening a Meeting (Verbal):

Greeting:

"kaya" or "wanju"

Below are three examples of Acknowledgments of Country that can be used on Noongar land provided by the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council;

*"I/We wish to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on, the Gnaala Karla Booja people. I/We wish to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region."*

*"I/We would like to acknowledge that this meeting is being held on the traditional lands of the Noongar people."*

*"I/We would like to acknowledge that this meeting is being held on Aboriginal land and recognise the strength, resilience and capacity of Noongar people in this land."*