

COUNCIL POLICY NO: 001

Responsible Directorate	Office of the CEO
Responsible Section	Office of the CEO
Responsible Officer	Chief Executive Officer

OBJECTIVE:

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that the correct protocols are used by the Town of Cambridge for 'Welcome to Country' and 'Acknowledgement of Country', and flying of flags.

SCOPE:

This Policy applies to all Directorates of the Town of Cambridge.

1. The process of 'Welcome to Country' and 'Acknowledgement of Country' recognises the unique position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australian culture and history as the Traditional Owners of the land. It is important that this unique position is recognised and incorporated as part of the Town's official protocol and events to enable the wider community to share in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage, and to facilitate better relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians.
2. This Policy reaffirms that the Whadjuk people from the Noongar nation are the Traditional Owners of the land upon which the Town of Cambridge is located. Noongar people have lived in harmony with the natural environment for tens of thousands of years, and have a strong spiritual connection to country. The Town acknowledges the significance of the Noongar land and water within Cambridge.

POLICY STATEMENT:

This Policy applies to all Town of Cambridge events, functions, ceremonies and meetings, to ensure 'Welcome to Country' and 'Acknowledgement of Country' ceremonies are included in proceedings and as appropriate, the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Flags are displayed.

1. THE 'WELCOME TO COUNTRY'

1.1 Definition of 'Welcome to Country'

A 'Welcome to Country' is where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples welcome people to their land by providing historical and cultural information to those in attendance. Steps should be taken to ensure that the appropriate representative is invited to perform the 'Welcome' as it is a significant recognition and a formal process. The 'Welcome to Country' is a right of the Traditional Owners and not a privilege.

1.2 Appropriate Place

A 'Welcome to Country' must always occur at the opening of the event, preferably as the first item in the order of proceedings.

1.3 Events

'Welcome to Country' will be included (but is not limited to) the following events:-

- (a) Significant events involving State or Federal Government representatives;
- (b) Significant civic functions and launches;
- (c) Opening of new buildings and parks;
- (d) Major festivals and events where the Town of Cambridge has provided significant sponsorship or grant funding; and
- (e) Other events, functions, ceremonies and meetings, as deemed appropriate.

1.4. Who Can Conduct

The 'Welcome to Country' is conducted by a recognised representative(s) of the local Aboriginal community (such as an Elder of the Noongar people), who welcomes the delegates and all in attendance. If there is uncertainty as to whether an 'acknowledgement' or a 'welcome' is appropriate, advice should be sought from the Chief Executive Officer.

1.5 What Does a Ceremony Include?

A 'Welcome to Country' may consist of a single speech by the representative of the local Aboriginal community, or it may also include a performance of some description. Performances may include a:-

- (a) Traditional Welcoming Song;
- (b) Traditional Dance;
- (c) Digeridoo Performance;
- (d) 'Smoking' Ceremony; or
- (e) Combination of any of the above.

1.6 Protocol

It is necessary for the speaker who follows immediately after the 'Welcome to Country' ceremony to provide a response. Part of the response should acknowledge the person who delivered the 'Welcome to Country'. The following is a recommended response: "I respectfully acknowledge the past and present Traditional Owners of this land on which we are meeting, the Noongar people. It is a privilege to be standing on Noongar country".

2. THE 'ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY'

2.1 Definition of 'Acknowledgement of Country'

An 'Acknowledgement of Country' is an acknowledgement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Traditional Owners of the land in order to pay respect to them. It is a means by which all people can show respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage and the ongoing relationship the Traditional Owners have with the land. The 'Acknowledgement of Country' can be performed by any person, Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal.

2.2 Appropriate Place

An 'Acknowledgement of Country' must always occur at the beginning of the event.

2.3 Events

An 'Acknowledgement of Country' will be included (but is not limited to) the following events:-

- (a) Events where members of the public, representatives of governments and/or the media are present;
- (b) Council Briefing Sessions and Council Meetings;
- (c) Conferences and seminars;
- (d) Festivals and events where the Town of Cambridge has provided sponsorship or grant funding; and/or
- (e) Other functions, events, ceremonies or meetings, as deemed appropriate.

2.4 Phraseology

Particular wording used for an 'Acknowledgement of Country' may differ, and includes (but is not limited to), any of the following suggested wording:-

- (a) I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land, the Whadjuk people of the noongar nation, and pay respects to Elders past, present and emerging;
- (b) I would like to acknowledge the Whadjuk people from the Noongar nation who are the Traditional Owners of this land we are meeting/gathering on today;
- (c) I acknowledge the traditional lands of the Whadjuk Noongar people. We pay our respect to their Elders, past, present and emerging, and we recognise their strength and resilience.
- (d) I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of this land, the Noongar people, on whose land we are meeting, and pay my respects to the Elders past, present and emerging for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia;
- (e) I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land, the Noongar people, and pay my respects to Elders, past and present.

3. DISPLAY OF FLAGS

- 3.1 The organiser of an event or function must ensure that the presenter has the opportunity to display the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander flags (if appropriate) when he/she delivers a 'Welcome to Country' speech.
- 3.2 Where the above flags are displayed at an event, the Australian National Flag Protocols apply. The flags shall be placed left to right from the perspective of the audience; the Australian flag, the Western Australian flag, the Aboriginal flag, and the Torres Strait Islander flag (if applicable).
- 3.3 The Town will fly the Aboriginal flag outside the Administration and Civic Centre and in the Council Chamber and Administration and Civic Centre Reception Room.

- 3.4 The flying and/or displaying of flags must be in accordance with the Flags Act 1953 (Commonwealth) and any announcements/directives given by the relevant State or Federal Department and/or in accordance with the book "Australian Flags" produced by the Awards and national Symbols Branch, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

DEFINITIONS:

Definitions are taken as those detailed in the *Local Government Act 1995* and associated legislation.

Document Control	
Office Use Only:	
Previous Policy No	Policy No.1.2.4
Statutory Legislation and Compliance	<i>Local Government Act 1995; Flags Act 1953 (Commonwealth)</i>
Related Documents/Legislation	"Australian Flags" produced by the Awards and National Symbols Branch, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.
Date of Adoption by Council	Council Meeting – 25 June 2019 (Item CR19.72)
Date Reviewed/Amended	25 June 2019 (Adopted) 28 July 2020
Next Review Date	April 2024