



SHIRE OF
HARVEY

A Breath of Fresh Air



Policy 3.1.4 – Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country

1. Policy Purpose

The Shire of Harvey (the Shire) 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 peoples as Traditional Custodians of Country are observed through the formal processes of Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country.

2. Policy Scope

This policy applies to Shire of Harvey Elected Members and Officers.

3. Policy

3.1. Policy Objectives

This Policy aims to:

- Acknowledge the Bindjareb people of the Noongar Nation as the original inhabitants and Traditional Custodians of the land within the Shire being in the Gnaala Karla Boodja region as defined by the South West Native Title Settlement.
- Engage with Aboriginal Elders in decisions relating to Welcome to Country ceremonies and acknowledge the value of the Aboriginal community and their Cultural intellectual 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.
- Provide direction and support to Elected Members and Officers of the Shire for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgment of Country protocols.

3.2. Welcome to Country

A Welcome to Country is delivered by Traditional Custodians or Aboriginal peoples who have been given permission from Traditional Custodians to welcome visitors to Country offering 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 the following major Shire and Civic events:

- Significant Regional or State-wide events, hosted by the Shire whereby invitations are sent to several dignitaries, Members of Parliament, and Politicians.
- Citizenship ceremonies as it is considered significant due to its role in welcoming people from diverse cultures.
- 'Turning the Sod' ceremonies for major development sites that are Shire owned.
- The Swearing In ceremony of new Elected Members may include either an official Welcome or Acknowledgement of Country.
- The Shire's Annual Community Awards.

3.2.1. Negotiating a Welcome to Country

When planning an official event, Shire Officers will prioritise the inclusion of a 'Welcome to Country' where appropriate. In cases where a traditional welcome is not feasible, an 'Acknowledgement of Country' should be given instead (refer Section 3.3). This practice respects and honours the Traditional Custodians of the land on which the event is taking place.

Shire Officers arranging a 'Welcome to Country' must engage with the Traditional Custodians by phone/ email well in advance of the event. Officers should provide information about the event's theme and purpose, allowing Traditional Custodians to integrate traditional elements into the welcome if they choose. Additionally, Shire Officers will request translations of any welcoming messages delivered in a Noongar language to ensure understanding by all attendees. To assist this understanding Shire Officers will fill out and give to the Traditional Custodians the 'Welcome to Country information form'. This form is to be signed by both the Shire Officers and the Traditional Custodian conducting the ceremony.

Shire Officers will prioritise the well-being and comfort of the Traditional Custodian delivering the welcome. This acknowledgment reflects the importance of valuing and respecting the individuals representing Noongar communities and their contributions to the event. Once contacted, the Traditional Custodians will communicate the availability of an appropriate Traditional Custodian to the Shire Officer. In situations where a Traditional Custodian is unavailable, it is appropriate for the Shire President, a Councillor or a member of the Executive to conduct an Acknowledgement of Country.

3.2.2. Service Fees

In providing cultural services such as Welcome to Country, artistic performances and ceremonies, Noongar people are using their Cultural intellectual property. It is courteous to make an offer of an honorary payment.

The fee for a Welcome to Country will be:

- Senior Elder: \$680 (\$748 including GST if GST registered)

- Emerging Elder: \$500 (\$550 including GST if GST registered).

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

3.2.3. Thanking the Traditional Custodians

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

A brief acknowledgement is given after the Traditional Custodian has given the Welcome to Country, by the Shire President or other nominated person who is present to represent the Shire in accordance with Appendix One.

3.3. Acknowledgement of Country

The Shire encourages all Officers to include an Acknowledgement of Country for the following Shire and Civic events:

- Ordinary Council meetings
- Large meetings where significant external stakeholders are present.

It is appropriate for an Acknowledgement of Country to be included within:

- Council and committee agendas and minutes
- Strategic plans, strategies and studies
- The Shire's website
- Shire Officers and Elected Member email signatures.

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

3.3.1. Responsibility

This procedure is applicable to all Shire Officers involved in organising or initiating public functions or events within the Shire. The Director of Community and Lifestyle is tasked with establishing and maintaining a register of local Elders and Traditional Custodians authorised to conduct a Welcome to Country.


The appropriate Community Development Officer is responsible for connecting Elders and Traditional Custodians with event organisers upon request. In cases where external entities hosting events or activities within the Shire specifically request the Shire to invite a particular individual to perform a Welcome to Country, the Shire's role is to facilitate this request.

If, for any reason, the Community Development Officer and/or Director of Community and Lifestyle are unable to fulfill their duties outlined in this policy and procedure, the CEO will

have the final authority in determining these functions. This decision will be made in consultation with the CEO and the relevant Shire Officers.

4. Strategic Objective

The policy aligns with the following strategic objective:

	<p>Connected communities A connected community is resilient. People have opportunities to come together and celebrate success and to support one another in creating a sense of safety, well –being and belonging.</p>
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5. Definitions

Acknowledgement of Country means 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 Country. It can be informal or formal and involves visitors acknowledging Aboriginal people as the Traditional Custodians of the land as well as the long and continuing relationship between Aboriginal people and Country.

Bindjareb refers to the Country within the Noongar Nation which the Shire of Harvey is situated in.

Elders means 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 refers to the region defined by the South-West Native Title Settlement.

Kaya means hello in Noongar.

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

Welcome to Country means 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

Noongar (Koorah, Nitja, Boordahwan) (Past, Present, Future) Recognition Act 2016 (The Act)

- The Noongar people were officially recognised as the Traditional Owners of the Southwest region of Western Australia on June 6, 2016, through an Act of the Western Australian Parliament.
- The Act 2016 provides the legal support for local Elders to deliver Welcome to Country ceremonies on Noongar land. The purpose of the Act being to “recognise the Noongar people as the traditional owners of the Noongar lands”.

7. Related Documents

- Bunbury Geographe Reconciliation Action Plan 2019
- Strategic Community Plan 2021 – 2031

- South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council Noongar Protocols

<https://www.noongar.org.au/noongar-protocols>

Responsible officer	Director Community and Lifestyle		
Responsible team	Community Development		
Responsible area	Community Services		
Version control	Date	Resolution	Number
Version 1	25/06/2019	Resolution	19/151
Version 2	28/05/2024	Resolution	24/109
Version 3		Resolution	

Appendix 1 – Welcome to Country

Contact Details

Bindjareb Country

- South of Collie River – Australind, Binningup, Kingston, Myalup, Treendale:
Pastor and Senior Elder Dennis Jetta (OAM)
- North of Collie River – Cookernup, Harvey, Yarloop:
Senior Elder Lesley Ugle c/o Harvey Aboriginal Corporation
- Brunswick and Roelands:
Senior Elder Les Wallam

All contact for Elders can be made via Community Development Team

E: communitydevelopment@harvey.wa.gov.au

Responding to a Welcome to Country

Verbal:

“I/ we would like to thank (name of person) and would also like to pay my/our respect to the Traditional custodians the Bindjareb people of the Noongar Nation and Elders and Emerging Elders past present and future on whose country we are meeting.”

Appendix 2 – Acknowledgement of Country

Acknowledgement of Country Wording:

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 and Emerging Elders both past and present”.

Opening a Meeting (verbal):

Greeting: “Kaya”

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