

WIRADJURI ABORIGINAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND PROTOCOL

ES200



NARRANDERA SHIRE COUNCIL POLICY

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WIRADJURI ABORIGINAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND PROTOCOL



Policy No:	ES200
Policy Title:	Wiradjuri Aboriginal Acknowledgement and Protocol
Section Responsible:	Executive Services
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Objective

The purpose of this policy is to set out guiding principles for the Narrandera Shire Council, its Committees and Staff to observe the appropriate protocols for the acknowledgement of Wiradjuri people at official Council events or at events where the Narrandera Shire Council is a major sponsor. This policy applies to elected Council members, employees and consultants or contractors who deliver services on behalf of Council.

Statement

The process of 'Welcome to Country' and 'Acknowledgement of Country' acknowledges the unique position of Aboriginal people in Australian culture and history.

The Council acknowledges that Aboriginal people past and present are the Custodians of the land. It is important this unique position is recognised and incorporated as part of official protocol and events to enable the wider community to share in Aboriginal culture and heritage, facilitating better relationships between Aboriginal people and other Australians.

By incorporating Aboriginal cultural practices/ceremonies specific to the Wiradjuri people into official events we are able to:

- Recognise and pay respect to Aboriginal peoples, cultures and heritage.
- Communicate Aboriginal cultural practices to the broader community to promote respect and understanding.
- Demonstrate that Aboriginal cultures are living through maintenance and practice of ceremonies and protocols.
- Acknowledge Aboriginal people's unique position which can assist in building relationships and partnerships.

Provisions

The type of ceremony undertaken at an official event should be appropriate to the nature

and size of each event in accordance with the procedures set out below and negotiations with local Wiradjuri custodians and organisations who embody the Aboriginal community of Narrandera.

1. The 'Acknowledgement Of Country'

An 'Acknowledgement of Country' 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 Custodians have with their land. An 'Acknowledgement of Country' should occur at the beginning of a ceremony or an official meeting preferably as the first item.

An 'Acknowledgement of Country' would be used at public events or ceremonies. On such occasions, a Chair or Speaker may begin by Acknowledging that the meeting is taking place in the Country of the Traditional Custodians. Typical "Acknowledgement of Country" statements may include any of the following:

'I would like to acknowledge the Wiradjuri people who are the Traditional Custodians of the Land. I would also like to pay respect to their people both past and present and extend that respect to other Aboriginal Australians who are present'.

"I would like to acknowledge that this meeting is being held on the traditional lands of the Wiradjuri people".

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

Council, together with the re-established Wiradjuri Custodians Group, who reside within the Narrandera Shire Council boundaries, will nominate who can be called upon to conduct "Welcome to Country".

The register of Narrandera Custodians will be reviewed annually by Council, in consultation with the Aboriginal Advisory Committee and key Narrandera Wiradjuri stakeholders.

2. The 'Welcome To Country'

All major official events, where members of the public, representatives of Government and/or the media are present should include a 'Welcome to Country' ceremony. Events in this category include:

- commemorations and major festivals;
- major launches of policies and programs;
- conferences and major events held or sponsored by the Narrandera Shire
- citizenship ceremonies
- major sporting events.

- a) A 'Welcome to Country' is where the Traditional Aboriginal Custodians welcome people to their land. Steps should be taken to ensure that the appropriate representative is invited to perform the 'Welcome', because it is a significant recognition and a formal process. A 'Welcome to Country' should always occur in the opening ceremony of the event in question, preferably as the first item.
- b) The 'Welcome to Country' is conducted by a representative/s of the local Wiradjuri Custodian Group who will welcome the delegates and all in attendance. Protocols in relation to the performing of 'Welcome to Country' Ceremonies are well established within the Aboriginal community.
- c) A 'Welcome to Country' may consist of a single speech by the representative of the Local Wiradjuri community, or it may also include a performance of some description. Performances may include a traditional Welcome song, a Traditional Dance, a Didgeridoo performance or a combination of any of the above.
- d) *Smoking Ceremonies.* Smoking ceremonies are conducted by Wiradjuri people with specialised cultural knowledge. The ceremony aims to cleanse the space in which the ceremony takes place. Given the significant nature of the ceremony, smoking ceremonies are usually only performed at major events.

3. Negotiating A 'Welcome To Country'

- a) Initiation of any negotiation to perform a 'Welcome to Country' ceremony is to occur through the nominated and accepted representative.
- b) It is important that the Aboriginal representatives be contacted by telephone, (to be asked personally), and then through a formal letter of invitation. All arrangements thereafter for the 'Welcome to Country' should be mutually negotiated. It is very important that the Aboriginal representatives have been involved in, and are comfortable with, the arrangements. This may include the format of the ceremony, who should be invited, who should perform the 'Welcome to Country' and how that person will be recognised for their time and commitment. Other considerations may include the arrangement of transport for the Elder/s and ensuring that refreshments are provided.
- c) It is important to acknowledge that ceremonies and traditional practices by the Wiradjuri people can only be carried out/performed consistent with the Aboriginal Lore. It would be appropriate that any proposed part of a "Welcome to Country" to be undertaken that is deemed by the Wiradjuri Custodian Group to be inconsistent with Aboriginal Lore, that part of the ceremony should be excluded.

Other considerations may include the arrangement of transport for the Custodian/s and ensuring refreshments are provided. Remuneration will not be provided for conducting a Welcome to Country.

Legislation

N/A

Policy History

Adopted	14 December 2010
Reviewed	15 April 2014
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Signed: General Manager

Date: 28 April 2014