

G 4 – Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country

1 Objectives

The objectives of the Acknowledgement to Country Policy are to:

- 1.1. Acknowledge Kaneang, Pibelmen and Wadandi peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the land upon which the Shire of Bridgeown-Greenbushes is situated and demonstrate respect for the original custodians.
- 1.2. Support the wider community in recognising, respecting and sharing in Aboriginal culture and heritage to improve community relations and understanding.
- 1.3. Provide direction to Councillors and employees on the delineation between a Welcome to Country and an Acknowledgement of Country and when each should be used.
- 1.4. To ensure that Acknowledgement of Council is included in all Council communications (e.g. website, social media, significant corporate documents and publications, public spaces etc.).

2 Scope

This policy applies to all workers responsible for representing the Shire in any capacity (e.g. organising or administering events, public functions, ceremonies, communications and meetings) where an Acknowledgement of Country or Welcome to Country should be included in official proceedings.

3 Definitions

3.1 Councillors

means members of an elected body that make decisions on behalf of a local government through a formal meeting process. Generally, local government Councillors, who include the Mayor or President and Councillors, do not have any authority to act or make decisions as individuals.

3.2 Employee

means a person that's hired to provide a service to a company either on a full-time, part-time or casual basis in exchange for payment. Also known as staff.

3.3 Worker

means a part-time or full-time employee, casual employee, contractor, subcontractor, self-employed person, outworker, apprentice or trainee, work experience student, employee of a labour hire company placed with a 'host employer' and volunteers.

3.4 Welcome to Country

means a traditional Aboriginal ceremony performed by Indigenous Australians to welcome visitors or outsiders to their land. The ceremony typically involves elders or traditional owners with a local connection to the land, conducting a ceremony that may include singing, dancing, and speaking in traditional language to acknowledge and recognise the traditional custodians of the land. The ceremony is meant to show respect for the land, the history, and the original inhabitants, and to bring unity and harmony between different cultures.

A Welcome to Country occurs at the beginning of a formal event.

3.5 Acknowledgement of Country

means a formal written or spoken statement made at the beginning of a meeting, event, gathering and documents by non-Indigenous people to recognise and pay respect to the Traditional Custodians of the land on which the event is taking place. The statement is a way to show respect for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their culture, and their connection to the land.

An Acknowledgement of Country is a way to honor the history and ongoing presence of Indigenous peoples in Australia and to foster a spirit of reconciliation and respect.

4 Policy

4.1 When a Welcome to Country is Appropriate

A Welcome to Country is valuable and appropriate when used at these (and other) significant events:

- Major Shire led events.
- Openings of significant new public buildings, facilities and developments.
- Events that include dignitaries, Members of Parliament, Politicians etc.
- Shire led NAIDOC and Reconciliation events.

4.2 When an Acknowledgement of Country is Appropriate

An Acknowledgement of Country is valuable and appropriate when used at these (and other) recurrent and important events:

- Council Meetings.
- Employee Meetings.
- Citizenship ceremonies.
- Award ceremonies.
- Exhibition openings.
- Launches.
- Whole-of-organisation functions.
- Shire funded events.
- Invitation only Shire President events.

4.3 Locations where an Acknowledgement (or Welcome) of Country is Appropriate

An Acknowledgement or Welcome to Country is valuable and appropriate when used in these (and other) locations:

- Council and committee agendas and minutes.
- Employee meeting agendas and minutes.
- Corporate documents (e.g. Community Strategic Plan, Corporate Business Plan, Asset Management Plan etc.).
- Employee and Councillor email signatures.
- Shire managed public facilities (library, Leisure Centre, Administration Building and Visitor Centre)
- Shire websites, Facebook Page and social media.

4.4 Council's Acknowledgement of Country

Council's written Acknowledgement of Country is:

'We acknowledge the cultural custodians of the land, the Kaneang, Pibelman and Wadandi people. We acknowledge and support their continuing connection to the land, waterways and community. We pay our respects to members of the Aboriginal communities and their culture; and to Elders past and present, their descendants still with us today, and those who will follow in their footsteps.

Council's spoken Acknowledgement of Country is:

'We acknowledge the cultural custodians of the land on which we gather, the Kaneang, Pibelman and Wadandi people. We acknowledge and support their continuing connection to the land, waterways and community. We pay our respects to members of the Aboriginal communities and their culture; and to Elders past and present, their descendants still with us today, and those who will follow in their footsteps.'

4.1 Community Acknowledgement of Country

Council is committed to raising awareness and providing access to Council's Acknowledgement to Country for community use.

5 Accountabilities & Responsibilities

5.1.1 Council is accountable for:

- Ensuring the organisation has in place a lawful, transparent, and accountable policy framework, supported by a suite of compliant and appropriate policies and procedures.
- Endorsing (or not) each organisational policy document in a timely and effective manner.
- Delegating implementation of each policy document to the CEO.

5.1.2 The CEO is accountable for ensuring the development, implementation, monitoring and review of this policy document, in accord with governing legislation and Council directives.

5.1.3 The Executive Management Team and Managers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that all employees under their direction comply with this policy document.
- Enacting process to redress non-compliance with this policy document.

5.1.4 All employees are individually responsible for complying with this policy document.

6 Risk Management

If G 4 - Welcome to and Acknowledgement of Country Policy is not in place the following risks include (but are not limited to):

6.1.1 Increasing the possibility of a misunderstanding regarding when it is appropriate to perform a Welcome to Country verses an Acknowledgement of Country.

6.1.2 Increasing the risk of Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country not being continued because it is not embedded in policy.

By providing an approved Acknowledgement of Country, composed by an Elder of this region, for use by Council and community, Council lead by example and provide community with a culturally appropriate and locally specific Acknowledgement of Country to use for their own purposes.

7 Legislation, Policy & Other Related Documents

Act	<i>Local Government Act 1995</i> s.2.7(2)(b) – The council is to determine the local government’s policies
Regulation	
Local Law	
Policy	
Procedure	
Other Documents	Corporate Business Plan and Strategic Community Plan

8 Version Control

Version	Date	Author	Amendments
V1	27 August 2015	T Clynch	Original Document
V2	28 April 2022	T Clynch	Reviewed
V3	29 August 2024	N Gibbs	Three-year review
Scheduled Reviewed Date	29 August 2027		