



LEETON
SHIRE COUNCIL

**ABORIGINAL RECOGNITION
AND PROTOCOL POLICY**

DOCUMENT CONTROL

POLICY NUMBER:	005				
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Manager IPR & Governance				
REVIEWED BY:					
LINK TO CSP/DELIVERY PROGRAM/OPERATIONAL PLAN:	A community that is friendly and inclusive 3e: Acknowledge the Wiradjuri people and strengthen relationships with the indigenous community of Leeton Shire.				
DATE ADOPTED:	22 February 2017				
ADOPTED BY:	Leeton Shire Council				
RESOLUTION NO: (IF RELEVANT):					
FOR PUBLICATION:	<input type="checkbox"/> INTRANET <input type="checkbox"/> COUNCIL WEBSITE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BOTH				
REVIEW DUE DATE:	June 2021				
REVISION NUMBER:	17/018				
PREVIOUS VERSIONS:	DATE	DESCRIPTION OF AMENDMENTS	AUTHOR/EDITOR	REVIEW/SIGN OFF	MINUTE NO (IF RELEVANT)
12/367	19 Dec 2012				
	26 Jun 2013				

REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

This Policy will be reviewed every 4 years or as required in the event of legislative changes. The Policy may also be changed as a result of other amendments that are to the advantage of Council and in the spirit of this Policy. Any amendment to the Policy must be by way of a Council Resolution or the approval of the General Manager.

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1. Purpose

This policy establishes the key cultural protocols Council staff should observe at particular Council functions, dates and other key ceremonies when recognising Australia's Indigenous people, and in particular the traditional custodians of the local area, the Wiradjuri people. Observing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols demonstrates respect for the cultural traditions, history and diversity of these communities. It is important that Aboriginal culture is acknowledged to show respect for Aboriginal people and to continue to foster and build strong equal partnerships.

2. Policy

2.1 Types of Ceremonies

a) Welcome to Country

A 'Welcome to Country' is where an Aboriginal custodian welcomes people to their land at the beginning of a meeting, event or ceremony. An appropriate person within the Wiradjuri community from the local area needs to conduct this welcome. Welcome to Country enables Traditional Custodians to give their blessing for the event. It is an important mark of respect for Aboriginal people. Local Aboriginal organisations may be contacted to recommend an appropriate Elder to conduct a Welcome to Country. A list of current contacts is provided at the end of this document.

b) Acknowledgement of Country

An 'Acknowledgement of Country' is where other people acknowledge and show respect for the traditional custodians of the land on which an event is taking place. It is sign of respect. The following options are able to be utilised for the "Acknowledgement of Country".

Option 1

"Leeton Shire Council acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Land, the Wiradjuri people on which we are meeting"

Option 2

"I would like to respectfully acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today, the Wiradjuri people, and pay my respects to Elders both past and present."

Option 3

"I would like to respectfully acknowledge the Wiradjuri people who are the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we stand"

If you are making an Acknowledgement of Country at meetings attended by Aboriginal people, the name of the relevant people and nation should be included.

c) Indigenous Flags

The Aboriginal Flag and the Torres Strait Islander Flag were proclaimed as flags of Australia under section 5 of the Flags Act 1953 in July 1995.

- The Aboriginal Flag

This is now well recognised as the flag of Aboriginal people. The black top half of the flag symbolises the Aboriginal people. The red bottom half represents the earth and the yellow circle in the centre

represents the sun. Mr Harold Thomas, an Aboriginal Elder, holds the copyright for the flag. The Australian Aboriginal Flag was proclaimed on 14 July 1995. Permission is not required to fly the Australian Aboriginal Flag.

- The Torres Strait Island Flag

This flag has three horizontal panels, the top and bottom are green and the middle one blue. The panels are divided by thin black lines. The green represents the land, the blue represents the sea, and the black represents the Torres Strait Islander people. In the centre is a white dari (dancer's headdress), which is a symbol of the Torres Strait Islander people. Underneath the dari is a white five-pointed star. This represents the island groups in the Torres Strait and the white represents peace. Bernard Namok of Thursday Island created this flag.

- Flying Indigenous Flags

The Australian Aboriginal Flag is displayed at Aboriginal centres and is well recognised as the flag of Aboriginal peoples of Australia. A listing of dates when the Australian Aboriginal Flag is to be flown at the Council Chambers is listed below. There may also be other occasions and events for which it is appropriate to fly the Australian Aboriginal Flag.

- Flag Flying Protocol

The Australian National Flag should always take precedence. It should be flown on the far left of the person/s facing the flags. After the Australian National Flag, the order of precedence of flags is:

- national flag of other nations
- state and territory flags
- other Australian flags prescribed by the Flags Act 1953 (including Indigenous flags) ensigns and pennants.

Always make sure that Indigenous flags are reproduced, hung and depicted in the correct way and are used for business relating to Indigenous communities. Permission needs to be sought if either Indigenous flag is being reproduced for commercial use.

d) Smoking Ceremonies

Smoking ceremonies are undertaken in Aboriginal communities in order to cleanse a space. The Smoking Ceremony is a purification ritual and is always undertaken by an Aboriginal person with specialised cultural knowledge. Aboriginal people may request a Smoking Ceremony in a workplace where a death or other traumatic event has occurred. This request is of tremendous significance to them and should be respected. Failure to do so may cause significant distress.

2.2 Observation of Aboriginal Protocols

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 Aboriginal Elders and organisations.

a) Council Meetings and Other Minor Events/Public Meetings

As a minimum requirement, an Acknowledgement of Country should be undertaken at the commencement of the meeting/event.

b) Major Official Events

All major official events, where members of the public, representatives of other Governments 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 Government policies and programs
- Conferences held or sponsored by the Leeton Shire Council
- Citizenship ceremonies

c) Aboriginal Flag

On the following occasions, Leeton Shire Council will fly the Aboriginal Flag outside the Leeton Shire Council Chambers:

- Australia Day/Day of Mourning Survival – 26 January
- National Reconciliation Week – 26 May - 3 June
- National Sorry Day – 26 May
- National Aboriginal Islander Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) Week – held in July
- National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day – 4 August

2.3 Current “Welcome to Country Representatives” of the Leeton Community

Council utilizes local representatives of the Wiradjuri Nation to carry out “Welcome to Country” ceremonies when undertaken.