

POLICY NUMBER	- 7.21
POLICY SUBJECT	- Welcome to Country
DATE ADOPTED	- 21 December 2021
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	- Chief Executive Officer
REVIEWED	- 28 October 2025 (CMRef:XXXX)

Objective

The Shire of Dowerin recognises and respects the Ballardong people of the Noongar Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which it is situated. This policy provides guidance on when and how to apply Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country protocols at Shire events, ceremonies, and meetings.

Policy

The Shire is committed to showing respect for Aboriginal people by observing Ballardong cultural protocols at significant events and occasions. The use of Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country should be considered and applied where appropriate, rather than being a fixed requirement at every function.

To ensure authenticity, consistency, and cultural appropriateness:

- The Shire will consult with local Ballardong representatives or the Ballardong Aboriginal Corporation when reviewing or applying this policy to ensure it continues to reflect local customs and preferences.
- A standard Ballardong Acknowledgement of Country, created by Ballardong Noongar woman Shayna Campbell, is available for use at Shire functions.
- A Welcome to Country may be arranged and performed by a recognised Ballardong Elder for significant civic events.
- The Shire will allow for minor amendments or language updates in consultation with local Ballardong representatives to maintain accuracy and respect for living culture.

Protocols – Acknowledgement of Country

An Acknowledgement of Country is a respectful statement made to recognise the Traditional Custodians of the land and their continuing connection to Country, culture, and community.

Unlike a Welcome to Country, which can only be performed by a Traditional Owner or Elder, an Acknowledgement of Country can be delivered by anyone—Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal. It provides an opportunity for all people to show respect for the Ballardong people of the Noongar Nation and to acknowledge the unbroken relationship between Aboriginal people and their lands, waters, and skies.

Delivering an Acknowledgement of Country helps build awareness and understanding of Aboriginal culture and demonstrates the Shire's commitment to reconciliation and respect.

The Shire encourages use of the approved Ballardong wording created by Ballardong Noongar woman Shayna Campbell to ensure consistency and authenticity across all events.

The wording may be spoken in full or, where necessary, shortened to suit the setting, provided it remains culturally respectful.

Minor amendments or language updates may occur in consultation with Ballardong representatives or the Ballardong Aboriginal Corporation to ensure the text remains current and culturally accurate.

Any person, Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, may deliver an Acknowledgement. The Shire encourages use of the approved Ballardong wording (below) to ensure cultural integrity and consistency:

“Nidja Dowarran ngalak boodja-k yaak. Ngalak kaadatj birdiya Ballardong Noongar moort ngalak Ballardong Noongar boodja- k warn wer waab. Ngalang yanga-kadak Noongar birdiya baalabang moorditj boodja, kep wer worl kaadadj. Ngalak kaadatj bandang birdiya koora-koora wer yeyi. Ngalak yanga-kadak boola baalabang kaadadjiny.

The Shire of Dowerin respectfully acknowledge the Ballardong Noongar people as the Traditional Custodians of the land we live, work and play on. We embrace the Noongar community and their continuing connection to Country, water and sky and pay our respects to Elders past, present. As a Shire we are committed to fostering respectful relationships with the First Nations Peoples and are grateful for their knowledge, guidance and support.”

An Acknowledgement of Country may be considered for delivery at the beginning of:

- Ordinary and Special Council Meetings;
- Citizenship Ceremonies;
- Australia Day or ANZAC Day commemorations;
- NAIDOC Week events;
- Swearing-in ceremonies for Councillors;
- Public forums, community workshops, or meetings attended by the public, government representatives, or the media; or
- Other civic or community gatherings, as determined appropriate by the Chief Executive Officer or presiding officer.

While not mandatory, it is encouraged as a gesture of respect at any event where community members gather.

Protocols – Welcome to Country

A Welcome to Country is a formal ceremony performed by a Traditional Owner or Elder of the Ballardong people, who have been recognised by their community as having the authority to speak for and welcome others to Ballardong Country.

This ceremony holds deep cultural significance. It is not merely a greeting — it symbolises the Traditional Custodians giving permission for visitors to be present on their land. It recognises the ongoing connection of the Ballardong people to their Country, culture, and community, and reflects the Shire’s respect for this unbroken relationship.

A Welcome to Country may be simple or ceremonial in nature. It may take the form of a spoken address or include cultural elements such as traditional song, dance, didgeridoo, or smoking ceremony, at the discretion of the Elder performing it.

Only a Traditional Owner or Elder of the Ballardong people, recognised and accepted by their community as having the right to perform the welcome.

Initiated by the Chief Executive Officer or delegate, in consultation with local Ballardong Elders or the Ballardong Aboriginal Corporation. The Shire should allow sufficient time to contact the appropriate representative and discuss the format and any cultural requirements.

A Welcome to Country is generally reserved for major or significant occasions, including (but not limited to):

- Major civic ceremonies or commemorations (e.g., Australia Day, ANZAC Day, community celebrations);
- Special Citizenship Ceremonies;
- The swearing-in of the Shire President and Councillors following local government elections;
- The opening of new or significant Shire facilities, infrastructure, or public spaces — particularly where State or Federal representatives are present; and
- Other formal events where a traditional welcome is considered appropriate or where it enhances community understanding of Aboriginal culture.

The Welcome to Country should occur first on the program, before any other speeches or proceedings.

The format and delivery are determined by the Elder or Traditional Owner performing the welcome. It may consist of:

- A spoken address; and/or
- A cultural performance such as song, dance, didgeridoo, or smoking ceremony.

The Shire should ensure the event's Master of Ceremonies or host introduces the Elder respectfully and acknowledges their contribution following the Welcome.

Responsibilities

Chief Executive Officer

- Ensures correct use of Acknowledgement and Welcome to Country protocols, consults with local Ballardong representatives or the Ballardong Aboriginal Corporation when required, and gathers community feedback prior to finalising or reviewing this policy.

Council Representatives (Councillors, staff, consultants)

- Encourage and, where appropriate, deliver an Acknowledgement of Country and support arrangements for Welcome to Country ceremonies.

Community Engagement

- Feedback from residents, the Ballardong community, and relevant organisations may be sought during reviews of this policy to ensure it remains culturally accurate and respectful.

Related Documentation

Standard Ballardong Acknowledgement of Country (authored by Shayna Campbell, Ballardong Noongar woman)

Shire of Dowerin Guidelines / Procedures – Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country

Australian Government and State Government protocol guides on ceremonies

Related Delegation

Nil

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Next Review Due	This policy will be reviewed every two years or more often where circumstances require.