

5.10 – Aboriginal Cultural Protocols and Practices Policy

1. POLICY PURPOSE

To observe appropriate protocols for the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at events which are organised or sponsored by the Shire of Merredin.

To promote respect and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage to the broader community.

2. POLICY SCOPE

This Policy applies to the Shire of Merredin properties and employees. It also applies to public community events organised or sponsored by the Shire of Merredin.

3. LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

The Flags Act 1953 [Cth]

4. POLICY STATEMENT

4.1 Community events

Incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols and practices into public community events organised by the Shire of Merredin.

Guidelines

The type of cultural practice, to be undertaken at an event, should be appropriate to the nature and size of each event, in consultation with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and organisations.

At events, where flags are shown, the order of display, from an audience perspective from left to right; the Australian flag, the Western Australian flag, the Aboriginal flag and the Torres Strait Islander flag.

As a minimum requirement, an Acknowledgement of Country ceremony should be undertaken.

Appropriate Ceremonies –

The **Welcome to Country** ceremony is to be undertaken at the beginning of a **public community** event by Elders or a locally recognised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community spokesperson. If participation cannot be achieved, an Acknowledgement of Country will be provided.

An **Acknowledgement of Country** is to be undertaken at the beginning of a **public community** meeting, speech or event when a Welcome to Country is not feasible.

Example – *I/We would like to acknowledge that this event is being held on the traditional lands of the Noongar nation.*

I/We acknowledge the traditional lands of the Noongar nation. I/We pay our respect to their Elders, past and present and we recognise their strength and resilience.

Smoking Ceremonies are conducted by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with specialised cultural knowledge. These ceremonies are usually only performed at major events.

4.2 Shire Properties and Employees

Incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols and practices into the Shire of Merredin properties and by Shire employees.

Guidelines

1. At Shire properties where flags are shown, the order of display, when entering the property from left to right; the Australian flag, the Western Australian flag, the Aboriginal flag and the Torres Strait Islander flag. If there are only two flagpoles available, the Shire will raise the Australian flag and Aboriginal flag as per the order of flying flags.
2. The only exceptions to this will be:
 - a. ANZAC Day, Long Tan and Remembrance where the Shire will be flying both the Australian and New Zealand flags only.
 - b. Where directed by the Chief Executive Officer to fly the Australian Flag, and another flag as determined for specific occasions/events.
3. An Acknowledgement of Country shall be included under all staff email footers.

Example: The Shire of Merredin acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Noongar Country, and recognise their continuing connection to the sky, lands and waters. We respect their continuing culture, and we pay our respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

4.3 Aboriginal Engagement

Incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols and practices into engagements with the Aboriginal community.

Guidelines

1. The practice of not mentioning the name of a deceased Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person or displaying photographic images of a deceased person unless approved by the relevant family.
2. Sensitivity to knowledge that is specific to gender (commonly referred to as 'Women's Business' or 'Men's Business')

5. KEY POLICY DEFINITIONS

Appropriate Ceremonies will be determined by the Chief Executive officer in consultation with Council. This includes at the commencement of Council Meetings which are open to the public.

Acknowledgement of Country is the practice of acknowledging the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as the Traditional Owners of the land. It is a means of showing respect to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' culture, heritage and their ongoing connection to land. The acknowledgement of country can be performed by any person, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal.

Welcome to Country is where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people welcome visitors to their traditional country and offer them safe passage through their land. The welcome to country can only be completed by a Traditional Owner, who is either an Elder or a person designated as a representative by an Elder.

Smoking Ceremonies are a cleansing ceremony for the space and an acknowledgement of past and future Elders and community members. A Smoking Ceremony should only be performed with permission from the Traditional Owners, by the Traditional Owners. Smoking ceremonies are also traditionally used to mark the commencement of significant gathering or celebrations.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All staff are responsible for the implementation of this policy.

7. MONITOR AND REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed by the Governance every 2 years.

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