



# WELCOME TO AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY POLICY

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RELATED STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS, POLICIES OR PROCEDURES:

RELATED LEGISLATION: Local Government Act 1989  
Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001  
Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010  
Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006  
United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples  
Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2013-2018

EVIDENCE OF APPROVAL:

  
Signed by Chief Executive Officer

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**This document is available in alternative formats (e.g. larger font) if requested.**

## 1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to set out the guiding principles to observe the appropriate protocols when acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of the land at Council civic functions and business activities, and in Council publications.

The practice of giving recognition to Traditional Custodians is commonplace and is seen as an appropriate and respectful way of breaking down cultural barriers and progressing reconciliation.

## 2 SCOPE

This policy applies to Councillors, staff and consultants/contractors of Loddon Shire Council.

## 3 POLICY

This policy will assist Council in observing the appropriate protocols when recognising the Traditional Custodians of the land. The process of 'Welcome to Country' and 'Acknowledgement of Country' acknowledges the unique position of Aboriginal people in Australian culture and history.

A 'Welcome to Country' and 'Acknowledgement of Country' are applicable to Council related civic functions and business activities as outlined in this policy.

It is the responsibility of the chair of the meeting, the event organiser or the publication's editor to ensure that the appropriate acknowledgement is undertaken or included.

### 3.1 'Welcome to Country'

'Welcome to Country' is a ceremony performed by Traditional Custodians to formally welcome people to their land.

A 'Welcome to Country' can take many forms including singing, dancing, smoking ceremonies or a speech in traditional language or English.

#### 3.1.1 When to conduct a 'Welcome to Country'

A 'Welcome to Country' will be conducted if a function has a broad impact on or significance for Aboriginal people.

Where it is not possible to have a 'Welcome to Country' at these events, an 'Acknowledgment of Country' will be delivered.

#### 3.1.2 Who conducts a 'Welcome to Country'

'Welcome to Country' is delivered by Traditional Custodians or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have been given permission from Traditional Custodians, to welcome visitors to their Country.

The Traditional Custodians of the Loddon Shire Council area are represented by Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation. All arrangements for a welcoming ceremony should be mutually negotiated with the Traditional Custodians.

### 3.1.3 When is a 'Welcome to Country' given

A 'Welcome to Country' should always occur during the opening of the function, preferably as the first item or early in the proceedings.

### 3.1.4 Remuneration

Council recognises the 'Welcome to Country' is a service and representatives should be appropriately remunerated for their time and commitment. The fee should be negotiated prior to the event with the representative/s.

## 3.2 '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.

### 3.2.1 When to conduct an 'Acknowledgement of Country'

An 'Acknowledgement of Country' will be conducted through the reciting of a statement of acknowledgement at the commencement of:

- ordinary meetings of Council that are open to the public
- public meetings organised by Council officers where external agencies or members of the public are present
- public events organised and conducted by Council officers where external agencies or members of the public are present.

An 'Acknowledgement of Country' may be delivered in other circumstances when an officer or representative of Council deems it appropriate, or is requested to do so.

An 'Acknowledgement of Country' can occur with or without a 'Welcome to Country'.

### 3.2.2 When is an 'Acknowledgement of Country' given

An 'Acknowledgement of Country' is performed at the beginning of the proceedings, preferably as the first item or early in the proceedings. It is not necessary for subsequent speakers to give an acknowledgement.

### 3.2.3 Who conducts an 'Acknowledgement of Country'

An 'Acknowledgement of Country' can be performed by any person, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal.

### 3.2.4 Statement of acknowledgement

A typical 'Acknowledgement of Country' statement is as follows:

*I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we are gathered and pay my respects to their Elders both past and present.*

## 3.3 Acknowledgement in Council publications

In addition to including a 'Welcome to Country' or 'Acknowledgement of Country' at functions, the following acknowledgement will be included in Council publications. Publications appropriate for an acknowledgement are official Council strategic publications, available to or distributed to the public.

A typical 'Acknowledgement of Country' statement to include in publications is as follows:

*Loddon Shire Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land comprising the Loddon Shire Council area. Council would like to pay respect to their Elders both past and present.*

## 4 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS OR ABBREVIATIONS USED

Term	Definition
Aboriginal	Aboriginal is used to refer to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
Acknowledgement of Country	An 'Acknowledgement of Country' is where any person can acknowledge and show respect for the traditional custodians of the land on which a function is taking place.
Civic functions and business activities	Includes meetings, events, forums, festivals, official openings and launches, or other special occasions where external agencies or members of the public are present.
Major public forums and functions	Examples of a major public forum or function include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• official opening of a new or renovated facility or program</li> <li>• a forum or conference of significance with participants from across the municipality or region</li> </ul>
Publications	Includes all strategic documents produced by Council and distributed or available to the public.  Council's website will be treated as a strategic publication for the purpose of 'Acknowledgement of Country'.
Traditional Custodians	Traditional Custodians is the term to describe the recognised Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people who inhabited an area. Traditional Custodians today are descendants of the original inhabitants and have ongoing spiritual and cultural ties to the land and waterways where their ancestors lived.
Welcome to Country	A 'Welcome to Country' is where a Traditional Custodian welcomes people to their land at the beginning of a meeting, event or ceremony. An appropriate person such as a recognised Elder within the local area needs to conduct this ceremony. 'Welcome to Country' enables Traditional Custodians to give their blessing for the event.

## 5 HUMAN RIGHTS STATEMENT

It is considered that this policy does not impact negatively on any rights identified in the Charter of Human Rights Act. Loddon Shire Council is committed to consultation and cooperation between management and employees. The Council will formally involve elected employee Health and Safety Representatives in any workplace change that may affect the health and safety of any of its employees.

## 6 REVIEW

The Director Community Wellbeing will review this policy for any necessary amendments no later than 4 years after adoption of this current version.