

## Section 1

# Ceremonies, protocols & cultural awareness

Protocols for welcoming visitors to Country have been a part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures for thousands of years. Crossing into another group's Country required a request for permission to enter - like gaining a visa - and when that permission was granted the hosting group would welcome the visitors, offering them safe passage. Today, the cultural practices of a Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country enables the wider community to share in these cultures and leads to better community relationships and understanding. It also promotes awareness of the past and ongoing connection to place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, and contributes to the process of reconciliation.

A Welcome to Country or Traditional Welcome is a ceremony performed by the Traditional Custodians of the land in which the event or meeting is being held. It can take many forms and may include an opening speech (sometimes in traditional language and in English), traditional dance, song, music, educational information, or smoking ceremony.

### **1.1 Ceremonies and Protocols**

#### **1.1.1 WELCOME TO COUNTRY**

A Welcome to Country is performed by the Traditional Custodians of the land at the commencement of a meeting, event, or occasion.

It is recommended that a Welcome to Country be considered for significant or large community, government or public events, conferences, or gatherings particularly where official guests and dignitaries are in attendance, and especially when the event involves Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people.

A 'Welcome to Country' or 'Traditional Welcome' is the responsibility of the Traditional Custodians of the area in which a Welcome is proposed to take place. Where a Welcome is being considered at a major community, government, or public event the Traditional Custodians are the first to be consulted.

A Welcome is an opportunity for the Traditional Custodians to apply the “Speaking for Country” principle. Historically, this was not recognised, and the Ancestors of the Traditional Custodians of Ipswich did not have the opportunity to welcome the newcomers to Ipswich, to their homelands.

A Welcome to Country protocol, under the guidance from the Traditional Owner Representative Steering Committee, is an Action Item of the Accord 2020 -2025.

Until established, the following ‘draft/proposed’ procedure is provided to guide Council on Welcome to Country protocols.

1. A Welcome to Country or Traditional Welcome undertaken within the Ipswich Local Government area must be delivered by an Elder of the Yugara/Yagara Nation, consisting of the Jagera, Yuggera and Ugarapul People’s.
2. The individual requested to undertake the Welcome to Country or Traditional Welcome must be supported by the Traditional Owner Representative Steering Committee (*once established*). Prior to formation of the Traditional Owner Representative Steering Committee, Council will continue to include Welcome to Country as part of a cultural performance only, to be delivered by the two recognised dance troupes in Ipswich, as per Section 1.1.3.
3. It is Council’s expectation that all Welcome to Country &/or Traditional Welcomes delivered, must acknowledge all the Traditional Owner Clan Groups of the Yugara/Yagara Nation – the Jagera, Yuggera and Ugarapul People’s.
4. The Traditional Owner Representative Steering Committee (TORSC) once formed, will provide Council with a list of Elders from the Jagera, Yuggera and Ugarapul Elder community who are willing and interested in performing a Welcome to Country at Council events.
5. The TORSC once formed, will provide Council with an agreed set rate - ‘fee for service’ for Elders to perform a Welcome of Country at Council Events.
6. The Native Title and Cultural Heritage Officer will collate a database of the list of Elders
7. The Native Title and Cultural Heritage Officer will assist Council Officers (event coordinators) with engaging an Elder for their events from the ‘list of Elders’ provided by the TORSC.
8. It is unacceptable that a member of the organisation or company coordinating the event/activity undertake the Welcome to Country, or that a person of Aboriginal descent undertakes the Welcome to Country other than a Jagera, Yuggera and Ugarapul Person endorsed by the Traditional Owner Representative Steering Committee.
9. Council Officers coordinating an event/activity understands that a Welcome to Country is a service and fees are attached. This will need to be accounted for when budgeting for an event/activity.
10. The TORSC once formed, will provide Council with an agreed set rate - ‘fee for service’ for Elders to perform a Welcome of Country at Council Events.
11. It is important Elders are engaged well in advance, with ample time and notice. For a major event requiring a large-scale welcome (ie a traditional dance group) a minimum of one month is required.

12. After the Welcome to Country has concluded, the first following speaker or master of ceremony should respond with an Acknowledgement of Country. It is not necessary for each additional speaker to repeat this gesture, however they are welcome to show their respect with an Acknowledgment of Country if they wish. An example is provided below:

*‘Let me begin by acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of this land and extending a warm and sincere thank you to them for welcoming us all to their Country today.’*

13. If on the day of an event the Elder is unavailable to perform the Welcome to Country, then it might be appropriate to engage a Community Elder to undertake an Acknowledgement of Country, if present.

14. Alternatively, if no Community Elder is available, the MC will undertake the Acknowledgement of Country.

15. If under these circumstances an Acknowledgement of Country is to be undertaken in lieu of the Welcome to Country, the wording of the Accord Acknowledgement of Country can be used (wording provided in next section) or if preferred to identify the Traditional Owners in the delivery, then all three Traditional Owner Clan Groups of the Yugara/Yagara Language Group are to be Acknowledged – the Jagera, Yuggera and Ugarapul. It is unacceptable and culturally inappropriate to acknowledge only one clan group and/or to leave one of the clan groups out.

### 1.1.2 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

An Acknowledgement of Country is a way for people to show awareness of, and respect for, the Traditional Custodians of the Country on which a meeting or event is being held. It also recognises the continuing relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their Country.

It is recommended that an Acknowledgement of Country be made at the commencement of any public meeting, event, or formal occasion. It is also recommended to consider making an Acknowledgement to Country at the beginning of large internal meetings.

As a sign of respect, it is recommended an Acknowledgment of Country is made in reciprocity to a Welcome to Country.

An example is provided below:

*‘Let me begin by acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of this land and extending a warm and sincere thank you to them for welcoming us all to their Country today.’*

An Acknowledgment of Country can be undertaken by any non-Indigenous person as well as by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people who are not Traditional Custodians of the Country you are meeting on.

An acknowledgement can be undertaken in place of a Welcome to Country at smaller community events, internal organizational workshops or meetings.

There is no set wording for an Acknowledgement to Country, however an example taken from the Accord 2020-2025 is provided for your consideration when preparing for an Acknowledgement. You will note that an Acknowledgement will often:

- acknowledge the Traditional Custodians (or Owners) of the land
- pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

### **Accord 2020 -2025 Acknowledgment of Country (*generic version*):**

*Ipswich City Council respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners as custodians of the land and waters we share. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging, as the keepers of the traditions, customs, cultures and stories of proud peoples.*

### **Acknowledgement of Country (*full version*):**

*Ipswich City Council respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners, the Jagera, Yuggera and Ugarapul People of the Yugara/Yagara Language Group, as custodians of the land and waters we share. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging, as the keepers of the traditions, customs, cultures and stories of proud peoples.*

## **1.1.3 TRADITIONAL DANCING AND CULTURAL PERFORMANCES**

The cultural knowledge passed down to the descendants of the Jagera, Yuggera and Ugarapul People is still very rich and active. They consider their culture to be a living culture and will continue to pass down to generations to come.

Traditional Welcome to Country performances through song, dance, didgeridoo playing, smoking ceremonies and welcome songs can only be conducted by Traditional Owner Dance Groups. Currently, there are two Traditional Owner Dance Groups for the Ipswich LGA. These being:

1. Nunukul Yuggera Aboriginal Dance Group, and
2. Yugara Aboriginal Dance Group

Council Officers coordinating an event/activity understands that Traditional Dancing and Cultural Performances have fees and costs attached. This will need to be accounted for when budgeting for an event/activity.

The Native Title and Cultural Heritage Officer will continue to coordinate all internal Traditional Dancing and Cultural Performance requests.

## **1.2 Cultural Awareness**

There are many cultural and historical considerations to be aware of when working with the Traditional Owners, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. A brief overview of some identified customs is covered here to increase knowledge and understanding by Council Officers. Important to note that some of these practices may or may not be observed by all Traditional Owners and/or the different Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities.

Council's Native Title & Cultural Heritage Officer and/or Indigenous Australian Community Development Officer can provide guidance with each of the customs and protocols covered below.

### **1.2.1 CULTURALLY SENSITIVE, SECRET, OR SACRED INFORMATION**

It is important to recognise when working with Traditional Owners and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that the right to 'keep secret and sacred their cultural knowledge' should be upheld by Council officers and respected at all times. Even when information has been recorded in past historical documents it may have been done so without permission. The Traditional Owners and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

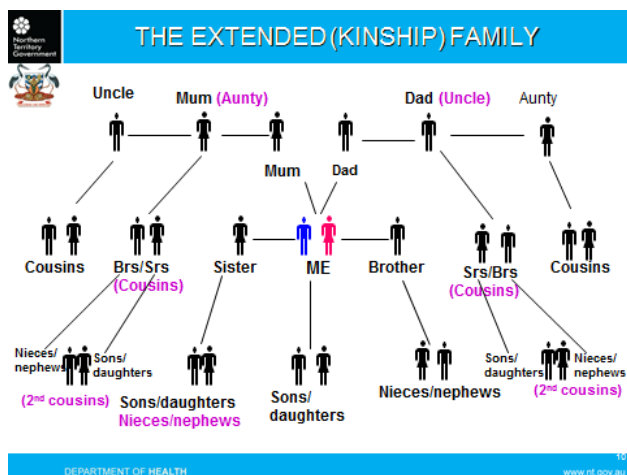
communities have the right to protect their own cultural practice, knowledge, and affairs (including secret or sacred objects, ceremonial items or places). The appropriation or distribution of such knowledge should only be undertaken with proper permissions.

### 1.2.2 FAMILY AND KINSHIP

Understanding family relationships and kinship ties are important concepts for Traditional Owners and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. 'The family structure is linked with the community and with this knowledge comes a complex system of roles and obligations within the community' and 'kinship systems define where a person fits into the community.

Example:

Blood Uncle or Aunty are also your Father or Mother. Whereas, married in (non-biological) Aunty or Uncle are your Aunty or Uncle. Refer to the diagram below:



### 1.2.3 ELDERS

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders are highly respected by their communities for their wisdom, cultural knowledge and community service. It is important to note that age alone does not establish whether someone is recognised as an Elder in their community.

Elders are respectfully referred to as 'Aunty' or 'Uncle' in their communities. However, it is recommended that non-Indigenous people check with the Elder or Leader first before referring to them as 'Aunty' or 'Uncle'.

### 1.2.4 MEN'S AND WOMEN'S BUSINESS

The Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities observe gender specific cultural practices to protect customary laws. It is important that this is respected by Council officers. Should this circumstance arise, you may be asked to leave the room for discussion of sensitive matters.

### 1.2.5 SMOKING CEREMONIES

Smoking ceremonies are a traditional method used to cleanse an area and get rid of bad spirits using smoke. Traditionally, these are private ceremonies undertaken in some Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities (ie. sorry business or anniversary of sorry business).

Council may include a smoking ceremony as part of Cultural Performance request (i.e at the launch or official opening of an event or space).

The Native Title and Cultural Heritage Officer will continue to coordinate all internal Cultural Performance requests (refer 1.1.3 Traditional Dance & Cultural Performance Requests).

#### **1.2.6 SORRY BUSINESS (TIME OF MOURNING)**

A time of mourning (referred to by Traditional Owners and in some Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities as “sorry business”) may be observed when there has been a death within the community. This is a private time of mourning where cultural practices are observed. During this time, it is inappropriate to:

- expect people to attend meetings, workshops or functions, including those previously arranged
- to mention the name of a deceased person or show pictures of them (this may be for a long period of time after they have passed away)

talk about the deceased person, including well-intentioned enquiries into how family members are feeling about it or circumstances surrounding the passing.

#### **1.2.7 REPRESENTATION OF DECEASED PEOPLE**

For some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities seeing images of deceased persons in photographs, film and books or hearing them in recordings may cause sadness or distress and, in some cases, offend against strongly held cultural prohibitions.

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities refrain from using or writing a deceased person’s name. Use of their name or their image in photographs or videos may be offensive to that community’s cultural beliefs.

Prior to taking photos or videos consent must be granted, and permission should also be granted from a deceased person’s family to ensure cultural protocols are observed. Reference to a deceased person should be removed from public materials including but not limited to websites, photographs, publications, reports or videos immediately on their passing, unless permission has previously been granted for post-humous appearances.

Permission must be granted in writing from family members or appropriate community representatives for use of a deceased person’s name, image, or voice. This permission should be publicly acknowledged and include appropriate disclaimers to alert others that such images of a deceased person have been included.

There may be periods of avoidance that need to be observed, for example during times of mourning. In some circumstances observed periods of avoidance may be longer than others.

#### **1.2.8 PHOTOGRAPHY, FILMING, AND OBTAINING CONSENT**

Consent must be obtained before photographing, filming, or recording any Council officer or community member. However, particular care and consideration should be exercised prior to photographing, filming, or recording Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Individuals or groups should be asked if there are any cultural protocols or customs that should be considered, and written consent must be obtained from all individuals and parents/carers of any children.

This should include the option of consent being automatically withdrawn if the subject passes away. It may be useful to take examples of how any images may be displayed (such as in documents or reports) to demonstrate what consent is being given for.

At events you may need to consider how people who do not wish to be filmed or photographed can be recognised by photographers and recorders, so that they can easily respect their wishes and avoid these individuals. You could consider using brightly coloured lanyards, nametags, or different coloured seats in larger venues to ensure photographers and recorders can easily recognise and avoid these individuals.

### 1.3 Terminology, Acronyms and Definitions

This list of terms attempts to guide Council staff and seeks to objectively represent our understanding at the time of writing. However, it should be implemented with sensitivity and is subject to change over time, and it may be viewed differently by different people.

#### 1.3.1 ACCEPTABLE TERMINOLOGY

Term	Explanation
<b>Aboriginal person</b>	Refers to Aboriginal people of Australia's mainland and does not include Torres Strait Islander people.
<b>Applicant/s</b>	Are those who have been authorised by the Native Title Claim Group to make the Native Title Claim application on behalf of the group. Also, referred to as Native Title Party.
<b>Country</b>	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people often use the word 'Country' to describe their traditional lands.
<b>Elder (Aunty or Uncle)</b>	An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Elder is someone who has gained recognition as a custodian of knowledge and lore, and who has permission to disclose cultural knowledge and beliefs. Eldership is about understanding and culture and not necessarily age. It is customary to refer to Elders as 'Aunty' or 'Uncle', which is seen as a title of respect. While it is acceptable for a non-Indigenous person to refer to Elders in this way, each person is different so it is best to check if an individual would like to be referred to in this way.
<b>Historical Connections</b>	Born, raised, and connected to an area after being displaced from cultural homelands (i.e Aboriginal Missions).
<b>First Australians</b>	A term used to emphasise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples lived on this continent prior to European arrival.
<b>First Nations People</b>	A collective term for the original people of Australia – the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People and their descendants (similar in meaning to Indigenous People).
<b>Indigenous People</b>	A collective term for the original people of Australia – the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People and their descendants (similar in meaning to the term First Nations People).
<b>Kinship</b>	Is at the heart of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and community. Kinship establishes where a person fits in their community (relationships, obligations, and behaviours towards each other).
<b>Native Title Party</b>	Are those who have been authorised by the Native Title Claim Group to make the Native Title Claim application on behalf of the group. Also, referred to as Applicant/s.

<b>Native Title Claim Group</b>	All persons who are a part of a registered Native Title Claim – all descendants of the Apical/s listed on the Form 1: Native Title Application.
<b>Sorry Business</b>	The mourning period when a family member (including kinship) dies and all responsibilities that follow in accordance with traditional lore and custom.
<b>Torres Strait Islander person</b>	The Torres Strait Islands is a group of Islands in the northern part of Queensland. People from the Torres Strait are of Melanesian origin and are distinct from the Aboriginal people of the rest of Australia.
<b>Traditional Custodian / Traditional Owner</b>	It is appropriate to replace the term 'Traditional Custodian' with 'Traditional Owner' if you wish. Both terms are acceptable, and use of 'Traditional Owner' is generally preferred by the community.

### 1.3.2 INAPPROPRIATE TERMINOLOGY

Inappropriate terms	More appropriate
aboriginal, torres strait islander (not capitalised)	Aboriginal people/s
Aborigines	Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people/s
The Aborigines	Aboriginal people/s
The Torres Strait Islanders	Torres Strait Islander communities
ATSI	A&TSI (but only if it is not possible to write in full. It is not appropriate to speak the acronym "ATSI").
Indigenous	Indigenous Australian people/peoples (capitalised)  First Australians
Bands	groups
Hordes	language groups
Nomads	peoples
Clans or Tribes (to a lesser extent)	nations  communities
European settlement	European arrival
Caste or any reference to how 'Aboriginal' someone is	Do not use
Blacks / Whites / Coloured	



## 1.4 Annual events

Date	Event
26 January	Australia Day *
13 February	National Apology Day
21 March	Harmony Day
Mid-late March	National Close the Gap Day
26 May	National Sorry Day / National Day of Healing
27 May - 3 June	National Reconciliation Week
3 June	Mabo Day
1 July	Coming of the Light Festival (Torres Strait Islander celebration)
First week of July	NAIDOC Week (NAIDOC = National Aborigines' and Islanders' Day Observance Committee)
4 August	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day
9 August	International Day of the World's Indigenous People

\*Australia Day is seen by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as a *Day of Mourning*, as it does not represent a time of happy celebration. Many people see Australia Day as an opportunity to build awareness and have a conversation about what the day actually means to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the broader population. Important to acknowledge there are many legitimate responses to the date and the concept, from pride to anger and contempt. Each person's individual feelings are for their own reasons and should be acknowledged and respected.

## 1.5 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags

### 1.5.1 AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL FLAG

The Aboriginal flag is an official flag of Australia and was recognised under Federal legislation in July 1995. It was designed by artist Harold Thomas and first flown at Victoria Square in Adelaide, South Australia, on National Aborigines Day, 12 July 1971. It has become a widely recognised symbol of the unity and identity of Aboriginal people.

The meanings of the three colours in the flag are:

- Black (top) – represents the Aboriginal people of Australia
- Yellow circle – represents the Sun, the giver of life and protector

- Red (bottom) – represents the red earth, the red ochre used in ceremonies and Aboriginal peoples’ spiritual relation to the land

### 1.5.2 TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER FLAG

The Torres Strait Islander flag is an official flag of Australia and was recognised under Federal legislation in July 1995. It was designed by the late Bernard Namok as a symbol of unity and identity for Torres Strait Islanders.

The meanings of the colours in the flag are:

- Green – represents the land
- Black – represents the Indigenous peoples
- Blue – represents the sea
- White – represents peace

The white Dhari (traditional headdress) represents Torres Strait Islander people, and the five-pointed star represents the five island groups within the Torres Strait. The star is also a symbol for seafaring people as it is used in navigation.