



City of
Wagga Wagga

Wiradjuri and First Nations Community

CULTURAL PROTOCOLS

A GUIDE FOR COUNCILLORS AND COUNCIL STAFF

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are warned that the following publication may contain names and images of deceased persons.

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1 Introduction

1.1 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Wagga Wagga City Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land, the Wiradjuri people, and pays respect to Elders past, present and future and extends our respect to all First Nations Peoples in Wagga Wagga.

We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and continuing connection with the land and rivers.

We also recognise the resilience, strength and pride of the Wiradjuri and First Nations communities.

1.2 PURPOSE

Protocols are an important part of all cultures and are in place to ensure people behave and interact in an appropriate manner.

The aim of this document is to provide a comprehensive resource for all Council personnel to use when liaising, consulting and engaging with the Wiradjuri and First Nations Community.

This document also provides cultural and historical context to assist Council personnel when working with the local community.

Observing cultural protocols of a community demonstrates respect for the cultural traditions, history, diversity and the continued connection to Country of that community.

It illustrates a willingness to acknowledge that the processes and procedures of one cultural community are equally valid and worthy of the same respect as one's own cultural protocols. Cross cultural engagement requires patience, understanding and a commitment from all parties.



2 Brief history

OF THE WAGGA WAGGA AREA

Wagga Wagga local government area is located on traditional Wiradjuri Country in the Riverina region of southern New South Wales. The name of the City was derived from the language of the Wiradjuri people, the largest Aboriginal Nation in New South Wales. The word Wagga Wagga comes from the Wiradjuri word Waga meaning a place to dance. Waga Waga, meaning a place of dance, place of celebration. The repetition of a word expresses plural or emphasis, emphasis meaning special importance. Thus, Wagga Wagga could mean a place of many celebrations or a place of many dances.

The name Wiradjuri means, 'people of the three rivers' and traditionally these rivers (Lachlan, Murrumbidgee and Macquarie) were the primary source of food for the Wiradjuri people.

Wagga Wagga continues to be the traditional home of many Wiradjuri people. After years of Wagga being a government resettlement zone for Aboriginal people, it is now also home to First Nations Peoples from many surrounding Nations.

Wagga Wagga is also an increasingly culturally diverse local government area, and is a recognised Refugee Welcome zone. It is a youthful and vibrant community, with a higher than average proportion of persons in the 12-24 age group.

Wagga Wagga has a higher than state average representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. For an in depth look at Wagga's community profile, go to www.profile.id.com.au/wagga-wagga/home.

For more information on the history of Wagga Wagga please look at the Wiradjuri Heritage Study, go to [www.http://www.wagga.nsw.gov.au/city-of-wagga-wagga/community/aboriginal-services/wiradjuri-heritage-study](http://www.wagga.nsw.gov.au/city-of-wagga-wagga/community/aboriginal-services/wiradjuri-heritage-study).



Image: Wes Boney

3 Cultural Information

3.1 THE STOLEN GENERATIONS

The Stolen Generations are the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals who were removed from their families through official government policy from 1909 to 1969. In 1883 the NSW Government established the Aboriginal Protection Board taking control over nearly all aspects of Aboriginal people's lives, including the power to remove Aboriginal children without parental consent or a court order.

The City of Wagga Wagga is committed to the recognition of Sorry Day and acknowledges the lasting sorrow caused by past policy and laws regarding the forced removal of Aboriginal children.

For further information on the history of the Stolen Generations, go to www.nsdcc.org.au/stolen-generations-history.

3.2 ELDERS

Elders are members of the community who have been through various levels of initiations and hold the knowledge of their people's history, kinship systems, and cultural lore (equating to European Law) that govern their community.

They are the custodians of their people's traditional knowledge and customs and hold the responsibility to provide guidance on important matters as well as making decisions on the ceremonial and cultural obligations of their people.

3.3 TOTEMS

The "Gugaa" (Goanna) is the overarching totem for the Wiradjuri Nation. It is the symbol that connects all people, past and present, of Wiradjuri land.

4 Cultural Practices

4.1 USING THE TERMS ABORIGINAL, INDIGENOUS AND WIRADJURI AND FIRST NATIONS

Locally, Aboriginal is the preferred term when referring to Australia's First People and should always be adjoined to people, community etc. It is also respectful to use a capital letter when using both Aboriginal and Indigenous in the written form. It is highly offensive to question how 'Aboriginal' a person is who identifies as Aboriginal.

The term 'Wiradjuri and First Nations' peoples or community demonstrates a further understanding that Australia was many Nations prior to European settlement and acknowledges the sovereign owners of the land on which Wagga Wagga sits, the Wiradjuri Nation.

RECOMMENDED PRACTICE:

Refer to 'Aboriginal people' and 'Aboriginal community' not 'Aborigines'. Use capitals whenever Aboriginal or Indigenous are written. Abbreviation of "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander" to "ATSIS" is deemed inappropriate and at all stages the full words should be written.

The term Wiradjuri and First Nations people can be used interchangeably with Aboriginal. This term is preferred in Council's official documentation to demonstrate an understanding by Council of the many Nations Aboriginal people come from across Australia and the importance of the Wiradjuri Nation on which we work and play.

4.2 GENDER PROTOCOLS (MEN'S AND WOMEN'S BUSINESS)

It is important to be aware that there are matters where Wiradjuri and First Nations peoples view specific knowledge as sacred to men or women. This can vary between different First Nations Communities.

4.3 SACRED SITES

Sacred sites are places of cultural significance to Wiradjuri and First Nations people. They may be hills, rocks, trees and springs that are not always spectacular or interesting to the non-Wiradjuri and First Nations eye. They may be places that are significant because they mark a particular act of a creation or being. They also include burial grounds and places where particular ceremonies have been held.

Wiradjuri people have identified a number of significant sites in the Wagga Wagga area. A number of these sites have been gazetted in recent years.

Further information on significant sites can be found under Wiradjuri and First Nations Community Information at wagga.nsw.gov.au/city-of-wagga-wagga/community/aboriginal-services/aboriginal-significant-sites.

Under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974, the Office of Environment and Heritage, through the National Parks and Wildlife Service is responsible for the care, control and management of all 'on park' or reserved lands. While the Heritage Division is responsible for the care of all 'off park' heritage values including State Heritage items under the NSW Heritage Act. 1977.

4.4 NAMING THE DECEASED

Following the death of an Aboriginal person, it is offensive to show photographic images of the deceased or refer to them by name in publications during the mourning period, unless agreed to by the relevant family. The mourning period is not a set timeframe and may change depending on each family unit.

RECOMMENDED PRACTICE:

‘To avoid causing offence to the families of deceased persons, the following cultural warning may be used in publications, videos, websites and exhibitions- “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are warned that the following film/website/publication may contain voices/video/images of deceased persons.”

Where family contact details can be located it is recommended that agreement and approval is sought from the deceased persons immediate family prior to using their image.

4.5 WELCOME TO COUNTRY

A Welcome to Country is a cultural practise whereby the traditional custodians of the land welcome people onto their country. A Welcome to Country should be the first item at any Civic/ Mayoral reception, opening ceremony, conference, major cultural or recreational events for example: FUSION, NAIDOC Week and sporting events.

In the Wagga Wagga local government area a Welcome to Country can only be conducted by a Wiradjuri Elder". Included in recommended practice under existing text "It should be noted that if local Elders or community members have been engaged in the project or event in the first instant they should be consulted with to recommend the most appropriate Wiradjuri Elder to conduct the Welcome to Country".

RECOMMENDED PRACTICE:

A Welcome to Country should be performed at all significant/ major Council events throughout the calendar year, this includes openings, launches or where it is appropriate to welcome people into the local community.

4.6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

An Acknowledgment of Country is a means by which all people can show respect for Wiradjuri and First Nations culture and heritage and the ongoing relationship the traditional custodians have with their land.

An Acknowledgment of Country takes place at key and significant organisational meetings and functions and on choice is available for other minor meetings, in-house training, workshops and seminars. On such occasions, the chair or a speaker may begin by acknowledging that the meeting is taking place on the country of the traditional custodians. There is recommended practice for Wagga Wagga City Council when delivering an Acknowledgement of Country (Recommended Practice Box for approved wording of Acknowledgment page 11).

RECOMMENDED PRACTICE:

An Acknowledgement of Country is a minimum requirement for all Council events and meetings.

An example of an Acknowledgement of Country is: *Wagga Wagga City Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land, the Wiradjuri people, and pays respect to Elders past, present and future and extends our respect to all First Nations Peoples in Wagga Wagga.*

We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and continuing connection with the land and rivers. We also recognise the resilience, strength and pride of the Wiradjuri and First Nations communities.

4.7 SMOKING CEREMONY

Smoking ceremonies are undertaken to cleanse the space in which the ceremony is taking place. The Smoking Ceremony is a ritual of purification and unity and is always undertaken by an Aboriginal person with specialised cultural knowledge.

This is a very sacred ceremony to be performed only at events deemed appropriate on advice of local Wiradjuri Elders with cultural expertise.





5 Fees for service

In providing cultural services such as welcomes, specialised consultation, artistic performances and other social ceremonies it is important to acknowledge Wiradjuri and First Nations people are using their intellectual property.

For up to date information on fees paid by the Council for specific services, Wiradjuri and First Nations consultative groups available in Wagga Wagga and assistance with booking a Welcome to Country or Smoking Ceremony, please contact the Aboriginal Community Development Officer on 1300 292 442.

Community Engagement

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Before work begins on any Council project that relates to Wiradjuri culture and heritage matters or has implications for the Wiradjuri and First Nations community, it is important to engage the local Wiradjuri and First Nations community.

Community consultation is a process where the Wiradjuri and First Nations community members can openly share information about significant matters that may impact on the Wiradjuri and First Nations community, culture, heritage and traditional lore. The consultation process aids Council in becoming aware of the views, beliefs and sensitivities of the local Wiradjuri and First Nations community.

Achieving satisfactory outcomes from consultation involves forming strong relationships with Wiradjuri Elders and other First Nations community members utilising the fundamental principles of respect and readiness to learn, share and negotiate.

RECOMMENDED PRACTICE:

It is advisable to consult with as many Wiradjuri and First Nations community members as possible, where possible always ensuring a Wiradjuri Elder is present, especially on matters that are significant or have a high impact on the Wiradjuri and First Nations Community.

7 Reconciliation

The City of Wagga Wagga is committed to fostering reconciliation and has undertaken a commitment to celebrate significant Aboriginal events throughout the year including National Apology Day, National Sorry Day and various NAIDOC Week celebrations.



Aboriginal and Torres 8 Strait Islander Flags

Flags represent a country's historical past and signify the important symbols of the countries values, people and culture.

The Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags were proclaimed as official flags of Australia under section 5 of the Flags Act 1953 on 14 July 1995.

RECOMMENDED PRACTICE:

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags are flown each day alongside the National Australian flag at Council premises including the Civic Centre and the Lawn Cemetery.

When Council is notified a Wiradjuri Elder has passed, as a mark of respect, all flags are to be flown at half-mast.

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Significant dates and events for our community

Date	Event	Further information
January 26	Australia Day/ Survival Day	www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/history/australia-day-invasion-day
February 13	National Apology Day	www.nsd.org.au/events-info/apology-anniversary/apology-anniversary
March 20	National Close the Gap Day	www.oxfam.org.au/act/events/national-close-the-gap-day
March 21	Harmony Day	www.harmony.gov.au
April 25	Coloured Diggers Day/ Anzac Day	www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/history/anzac-day-coloured-digger-march
May 26	National Sorry Day	www.nsd.org.au
May 27-June 3	National Reconciliation Week	www.reconciliation.org.au/nrw
First full week of July	NAIDOC Week	www.naidoc.org.au
August 4	National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day	http://aboriginalchildrensday.com.au/

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