

**TRADITIONAL CUSTODIAN WELCOME TO COUNTRY AND
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

Intent	That Council will have an inclusive, consistent and sensitive approach to working with Traditional Custodian groups across the Cairns Regional Council Local Government Area.
Scope	This policy applies to elected Councillors, employees, contractors and consultants who deliver services on behalf of Council to ensure that correct protocols are adhered to.
Purpose	This policy assists Council representatives to understand the requirements and processes relating to Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country protocols, which are different but both honour Traditional Custodian groups and Elders and their connection to 'Country', meaning the lands, waters, seas, flora and fauna of a particular area. The appropriate provision of an Acknowledgement of Country or Welcome to Country in each instance upholds cultural protocols and provides an interface for shared learning, safety, care and respect, and contributes to advancing reconciliation.

DEFINITIONS

Term	Description
Welcome to Country	'Welcome to Country' is a traditional practice where Traditional Custodians, or those authorised by them, 'welcome' visitors onto their ancestral lands, reflecting the historical protocols of seeking permission to enter another group's territory and provide safe ancestral (spiritual) passage. Often, contemporary adaptation of this ancient custom can involve a combination of speeches, dances, or smoking rituals.
Acknowledgement of Country	An 'Acknowledgement of Country' is an opportunity for anyone to show respect for Traditional Custodians and the continuing connection of First Peoples to 'Country' on which they are gathered. It can be conducted regardless of a Welcome to Country being delivered prior.

PROVISIONS**THE 'ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY'**

An 'Acknowledgement of Country' can be delivered by any person and is a way of showing respect by acknowledging the Traditional Custodians' history and ongoing connection with the land on which a particular activity is taking place. An Acknowledgement of Country should be conducted by the Chair/ Master of ceremony/ Event facilitator and occur:

- at the start of formal functions, forums, exhibitions, workshops etc.
- at the start of formal meetings when people from external organisations are present.
- when a Welcome to Country is appropriate (in line with the provisions in this policy) but cannot be performed by the invited Traditional Custodian group, for example during 'sorry business'.

An Acknowledgement of Country can also be expressed on behalf of Council in different forms of written and digital communications, such as email signature blocks, websites, videos and social media.

Council representatives are encouraged to refer to the *First Peoples Engagement Guidelines* for suggested wording for an Acknowledgement of Country.

THE 'WELCOME TO COUNTRY'

A Welcome to Country can only be delivered by a Traditional Custodian representative and is encouraged for major public events, significant regional activities or milestones of significance occurring within the Cairns LGA. Appropriate functions include Council-organised, funded and co-funded events such as:

- openings of festivals
- award ceremonies
- conferences
- major regional events
- significant community events and forums
- events with a focus on First Peoples programs or services.

A Welcome to Country should always occur at the opening of the activity, preferably as the first item. A Chair/ Master of Ceremony/ Event facilitator should introduce the Traditional Custodian representative to provide a Welcome to Country at the commencement of the proceedings.

A Welcome to Country is conducted by a representative/s of the relevant local Traditional Custodian group (a direct descendant of the Traditional Custodian group of the particular area where the event or activity is taking place).

For an event where a Welcome to Country is appropriate, Council representatives will invite a representative from the Traditional Custodian group who holds Native Title determination, or a current registered Native Title claim over the event or activity location. In the instance there are multiple overlapping registered Native Title claims over a geographic area, representatives of each registered claimant Traditional Custodian group can be invited.

In the instance that a Welcome to Country would be appropriate for a Council event or activity taking place in an area where no registered Native Title claim/s or determination exists, the Chair/Master of Ceremonies / Event Facilitator will conduct an Acknowledgement of Country.

NEGOTIATING A 'WELCOME TO COUNTRY'

Council representatives should ensure Traditional Custodian groups are notified at the earliest stages of planning to ensure timelines are respectful and allow for planning and coordination by the Traditional Custodian group for Welcome to Country ceremonies.

Council representatives are encouraged to refer to the *First Peoples Engagement Guidelines* for further information on cultural protocols and an indicative fee schedule which can support staff to negotiate remuneration with the Traditional Custodian group/s providing a Welcome to Country for their service, in recognition of their cultural knowledge, skill and responsibility.

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This policy is to remain in force until otherwise determined by Council.

ORIGINALLY ADOPTED: 12/08/2009

CURRENT ADOPTION: 10/12/2025

DUE FOR REVISION: 10/12/2029

REVOKED/SUPERSEDED:



**Ken Gouldthorp
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**