

ABORIGINAL CONNECTION TO COUNTRY (LAND)

POLICY

POL-CMR 08

Objective:

- 1) To formally acknowledge Aboriginal people's connection to Country (land and waterways) and its importance to them.
- 2) To guide the City of Mandurah, in decision making associated with; City works, Strategic document preparation, Assessment of private development and Submissions to State and Federal Government

Statement:

For the purpose of this policy, 'land and waterways' refers to all the lands and waterways within the boundaries of the City of Mandurah.

The City of Mandurah (the 'City') acknowledges that:

- The Aboriginal people of the South West area of Western Australia have resided on and had cultural connection with the land for over 45,000 years;
- Aboriginal lore is characterised by a strong spiritual connection to Country which includes caring for the natural environment and for places of significance;
- activities are undertaken on the traditional lands of the Bindjareb people of the Bibbulmun nation, within the boundaries of the City of Mandurah.

The City is committed to delivering a range of cultural awareness activities for its officers to better inform their decision making for projects relating to the use of land or waterways. The cultural awareness training aims to increase officer's ability to understand:

- the cultural responsibility Aboriginal people have to care for the land and waterways;
- the law and lore of local Aboriginal people, and how they relate to land and water use;
- local Aboriginal people, their culture and their stories.

Opportunities for officers to use this understanding of connection to Country include:

- sharing knowledge about the spiritual, social, cultural and physical connection to Country of Aboriginal people with colleagues, agents and contractors;
- incorporating cultural and historical accounts from Aboriginal people during project design and implementation stages.

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The City will continue to appropriately acknowledge the importance of Aboriginal people's connection to land by:

- Supporting the use of Aboriginal names or dual naming for public facilities and infrastructure
- Acknowledging the importance of connection to land in relevant strategic documents;
- Consulting with local Aboriginal people where possible to integrate cultural information into activities, events and the development of public facilities and infrastructure.
- Seeking opportunities to utilise the local historic cultural (Aboriginal) content in activities and projects that relate to land or waterways. This may include;
 - Interpretive art, signage or naming
 - Providing information or contacts to private developers to utilise with Development Applications or Outline Development Plans

NB: public facilities and infrastructure include the built and landscaping components of public and active open spaces, parks and reserves, as well as trails, conservation projects, community buildings and facilities.

Definitions:

Bindjareb - Refers to the specific territory where the Aboriginal people live. This territory borders other territories and extends from Mount Brown In Naval Base, across through Wungong Brook between Armadale and Byford to the Albany Highway, and extends to the river where the township of Williams is and across to Myalup, into the ocean and extending back to where Mount Brown is located.

Country - In the context of Australia's Aboriginal culture, "Country" refers to a specific place within Australia and not Australia itself. Country refers to "this" place, or the area of a traditional language group. Aboriginal people have a special relationship with the land. It has a unique place in their hearts, more like a relative than an object. They have a deep, enduring spiritual connection to Country. The connection of Aboriginal people to Country forms their culture and sovereignty (self-governance), including Aboriginal law and spirituality that is intertwined with the land, people and creation.

Elders - Elders are often the knowledge keepers of their people's history, stories, culture and language. They are usually older people but some families may agree to a younger person to take on this cultural responsibility. This is the family's prerogative.

Traditional Owners - Aboriginal representatives of the traditional language group that inhabited the area prior to European settlement are often recognised as traditional owners by local Aboriginal communities.

Responsible Directorate: Sustainable Communities

Reviewer: Manager Community Development

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Creation date:	Minute G.14/6/15, 23 June 2015
Amendments:	Minute G.12/7/19, 23 July 2019 Minute G.25/6/20, 23 June 2020
Related Documentation:	City of Mandurah Reconciliation Action Plan Procedure PRO-CMR 05 Aboriginal Connection to Country Consultation