



Acknowledgement of Traditional Custodians of Land Policy

Department/Unit	Executive Services	First Implemented	March 2003	Review Date	August 2028
Origin	Chief Executive Officer	Reviewed	April 2024	Version	5
Authorising Officer	Endorsement by Council	Effective From	20 August 2024	TRIM Reference	E513/2

Purpose/Objective

It is customary to acknowledge Aboriginal communities throughout Australia as the traditional custodians of the land. Such acknowledgement is generally provided in the form of a short statement in recognition of the local Aboriginal community of the particular Country where this event is occurring. This short statement is referred to as an Acknowledgement of Country.

The traditional custodians of the Mansfield Shire municipality are the Taungurung people.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure Council reflects a consistent acknowledgment of the traditional custodians of Country at Council events.

Policy Statement

This policy relates to Council events and meetings, and is intended to include Council sponsored or funded events or activities.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Event	Meetings and other events, such as Ordinary meetings of Council, Additional meetings of Council, festivals, civic ceremonies, and official openings and launches.
Taungurung	Mansfield Shire is on land that is formally recognised as Taungurung Country. In 2009 the Taungurung Land and Waters Council (TLaWC) was registered as the formally Registered Aboriginal Party that represents the rights and interests of the Taungurung people and Country.

Term	Definition
Traditional Custodians	The indigenous people formally recognised as the traditional custodians within the Mansfield Shire are the Taungurung people.

Scope

This policy applies to all Mansfield Shire Council employees, Councillors, contractors, consultants, volunteers, and other authorised personnel of Mansfield Shire Council.

Responsibilities

All Mansfield Shire Council employees and Councillors are responsible for adhering to and implementing this policy.

Adherence to this Policy will be overseen by managers and supervisors, with any associated procedures implemented by the Chief Executive Officer.

Executive Services is the owner of this Policy. Any reviews of this Policy must be made in consultation with the Chief Executive Officer.

Acknowledgement of Country

Mansfield Shire Council will acknowledge the Taungurung people as the traditional owners of the land upon which all Council events take place.

The acknowledgement recommended for Council events is:

'Our [meeting/event/gathering] is being held on the traditional lands of the Taungurung people. We wish to acknowledge them as the traditional custodians and pay our respects to their Elders past and present. We extend that respect to all members of our community.'

This acknowledgement is presented by the Mayor, Councillor, Chief Executive Officer or other Council officer presiding at the meeting or event.

Acknowledgement of Country should be meaningful, respectful, authentic and inclusive. At times, the representative of Council may determine it is not appropriate to acknowledge Country, such as at a meeting where another party has already acknowledged Country or at an internal meeting.

Acknowledgements of Country may also be made more specific. For example, for an event that is specific to storytelling, Reconciliation Australia encourages the speaker to acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as storytellers. Changes to the acknowledgement can only be made with the approval of the CEO.

Written Acknowledgement of Country

Where it is relevant to publish a written Acknowledgement of Country, the recommended statement is:

Mansfield Shire Council acknowledges the Taungurung people as the traditional custodians and we pay our respects to their Elders past and present. Council extends that respect to all members of our community.

Public signage on buildings or other Council assets should comply with the Communications and Media Policy. This includes obtaining approval from the CEO for variances in changes to wording of the acknowledgement and approval for the sign to be erected.

Welcome to Country

For a large event with particular impact or significance for Aboriginal people, a Welcome to Country ceremony can be performed by an elder as nominated by the traditional custodians, the Taungurung Land and Waters Council. The ceremony may range from speeches of welcome to traditional dance and smoking ceremonies.

If a representative of the TLaWC is not able to perform a Welcome to Country ceremony, an Acknowledgement of Country can be delivered instead.

Flag Flying

The flying of the Aboriginal flag is governed by Council's *Flag Flying and Display Policy*.

As part of its commitment to recognising the contributions of Indigenous Australians, Council will fly the Aboriginal flag on a permanent basis in accordance with the Australian Government's *Australian Flags Protocol* and Council's *Flag Flying and Display Policy* at Council's municipal office (33 Highett Street, Mansfield) and the Mansfield Visitor Information Centre (175 High Street, Mansfield).

References / Related Policies

- ▶ Gadhaba Local Aboriginal Network (GLAN)
- ▶ Taungurung Land and Waters Corporation (TLaWC)
- ▶ Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet Australian Flags Protocol
- ▶ Mansfield Shire Council Flag Flying and Display Policy
- ▶ Ministerial Good Practice Guideline and General Guidance for Councils Engaging with Aboriginal Victorians

Gender Impact Assessment

The Acknowledgement of Traditional Custodians of Land Policy has had a Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) completed and is compliant with the obligations and objectives of the Victorian Gender Equality Act 2020.

Implementation

This Policy is effective from 20 August 2024.

Review Date

This Policy is to be reviewed by August 2028.

Authorisation to Implement Policy

Signed: _____

Councillor

Witnessed: _____

Chief Executive Officer

Approval dated: 20 August 2024

Mansfield Shire Council reserves the right to review, vary or revoke this Policy at any time.

DRAFT