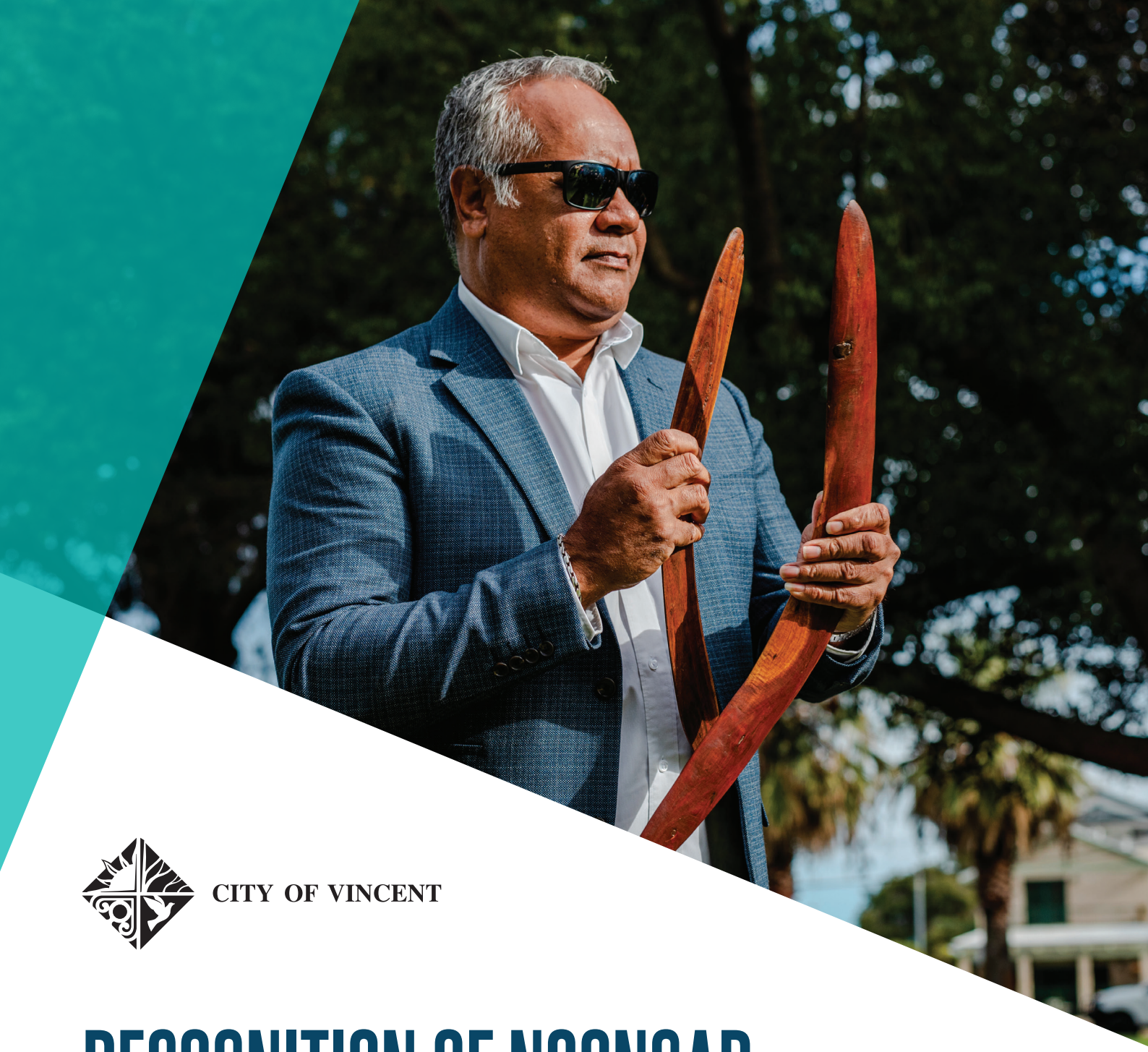

CITY OF VINCENT

RECOGNITION OF NOONGAR BOODJAR CULTURE AND HISTORY THROUGH WELCOME TO COUNTRY AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Guidelines and protocols for external stakeholders

Artwork by Charmaine Cole

The City of Vincent would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land, the Whadjuk people of the Noongar nation and pay our respects to Elders past and present. We would also like to acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia.

We recognise the contribution the Whadjuk people have made and continue to make to our culture and in our community. We will continue to seek the input of the Traditional Owners.

The land on which we live, meet, and thrive as a community always was and always will be Noongar land.

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WELCOME TO COUNTRY AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

This document has been designed to provide guidance and direction to groups and organisations when planning and facilitating a Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country in the City of Vincent.

The process of Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country recognises the unique position of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australian culture and history as the Traditional Owners of the land. It is important that this unique position is recognised and incorporated as part of official protocol and events to enable the wider community to share in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage. This will in turn facilitate better relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians.

The Whadjuk people from the Noongar nation are and always will be the Traditional Owners of the land upon which the City of Vincent is located. Noongar people have lived in harmony with the natural environment for tens of thousands of years and have a strong spiritual connection to country (Noongar Boodjar). The City acknowledges the significance of Noongar land and water within Vincent and is committed to gaining kaartdijin (knowledge) and understanding of Noongar Boodjar to ensure we support Aboriginal people, culture and tradition along our journey towards greater reconciliation.

Artwork by Charmaine Cole

WELCOME TO COUNTRY

A Welcome to Country Ceremony is where Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples welcome people to their land by providing historical and cultural information to those in attendance. Steps should be taken to ensure that the appropriate representative is invited to perform the Ceremony as it is a significant recognition and formal process. The Welcome to Country is a right of the Traditional Owners and not a privilege.

A Welcome to Country is conducted prior to the commencement of an official opening of a major event or activity, preferably as the first item in the order of proceedings, as a sign of respect to the Elders and Traditional Owners of the land on which the event or activity is taking place.

The following events are where a Welcome to Country is required to be included (but is not limited to):

- Significant events involving state or federal government representatives.
- Significant civic functions and launches.
- Openings of new buildings and parks/spaces.
- Major festivals and events where the City of Vincent has provided significant sponsorship or grant funding.
- Other events, functions, ceremonies and meetings as deemed appropriate.

The Noongar Elder or a person designated as a represetnative by an Elder should always be seated alongside other dignitaries and speakers at the event and organisers should always ask how they would like to be referred to (e.g. Aunty or Uncle etc).

The City can provide a list of Noongar Elders who can conduct a Welcome to Country ceremony. Noongar Elders recognised by family and community are the most appropriate people to conduct a Welcome to Country. If a local Noongar Elder is unavailable, it is appropriate to ask the local Noongar Elder for suggestions of a Noongar Elder from outside the area to conduct the Welcome to Country.

A Welcome to Country may consist of a single speech by the representative of the local Aboriginal community, or it may also include a performance of some description. Performances may include:

- traditional welcoming song
- traditional dance
- Noongar language and traditional stories
- traditional Noongar instruments
- didgeridoo performance
- smoking ceremony
- combination of any of the above

Immediately following the Welcome to Country ceremony, a speaker is required to provide a response. The response should acknowledge the person who delivered the Welcome to Country.

The following is a recommended response:

"I respectfully acknowledge the past and present Traditional Owners of this land on which we are meeting, the Noongar people. It is a privilege to be standing on Noongar country".

Artwork by Charmaine Cole

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

An Acknowledgement of Country is an opportunity to acknowledge Aboriginal and Torre of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Traditional Owners of the land in order to pay respect to them. It is a means by which all people can show respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage and the ongoing relationship the Traditional Owners have with the land. The Acknowledgement of Country can be performed by any person, Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal.

An Acknowledgement of Country must always occur at the beginning of the event.

Acknowledgement of Country is to be included at (but not limited to) the following events:

- events where members of the public, representatives of governments and/or the media are present
- council Briefing Sessions and Council Meetings
- conferences and seminars
- festivals and events where the City of Vincent has provided sponsorship or grant funding
- other functions, events, ceremonies or meetings as deemed appropriate

Particular wording used for an Acknowledgement of Country may differ, and includes (but is not limited to) any of the following suggested wording:

- I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land, the Whadjuk people of the Noongar nation and pay respects to Elders past, present.
- I would like to acknowledge the Whadjuk people from the Noongar nation who are the Traditional Owners of this land we are meeting/ gathering on today.
- I acknowledge the traditional lands of the Whadjuk Noongar people. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and we recognise their strenght and resilience.
- I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of this land, the Noongar people, on whose land we are meeting, and pay my respects to the Elders past and present. We would also like to acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia.
- I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land, the Noongar people, and pay my respects to Elders, past and present.

SMOKING CEREMONY

Within Western Australia, Noongar groups use the Smoking Ceremony as one aspect of welcoming people to country. The Smoking Ceremony is recognition of starting 'afresh' and acknowledging past and future Elders and community members.

The Smoking Ceremony aims to spiritually cleanse the space in which the ceremony takes place, so as to allow peace and recognise the importance of a meeting. Given the specific nature of the ceremony, smoking ceremonies are usually only performed on special occasions or at major events and places of spiritual significance.

The Smoking Ceremony continues to be a major element of welcoming people to the country of a specific Aboriginal group. The person conducting the Smoking Ceremony will be introduced to provide a brief explanation of what the ceremony involves and how it will be done. A Smoking Ceremony can be a small fire directly on bare earth with green eucalyptus leaves laid on top to create smoke or a fire in a metal pail which is filled with various leaves to create smoke. People can be invited to walk through the smoke.

A Smoking Ceremony is a significant ceremony and should only be performed with permission from the Traditional Owners.

FEES FOR SERVICE (PAYMENTS AND GRATUITIES)

In providing cultural services such as Welcome to Country, artistic performances, Smoking Ceremonies and other social ceremonies, it is important to acknowledge that Aboriginal people are using their intellectual property. For this reason it is appropriate that payment is received for their services. The remuneration should take into account travel to the event, time and complexity of the service, as well as the profile of the event.

Payments are the responsibility of the organisation planning and arranging these services.

CULTURAL PROTOCOLS TO BE OBSERVED

There are certain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander protocols that must be observed:

- Do not mention the name of a deceased Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person or display photographic images of a deceased person unless agreed and approved by the relevant family.
- Sensitivity to knowledge that is specific to gender (commonly referred to as Women's Business or Men's Business).
- Appropriate acknowledgement of guest artists that are either from or supported by the local community.

DISPLAY OF FLAGS AT EVENTS WITH A WELCOME TO COUNTRY

The organiser must ensure that the presenter has the opportunity to display the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags where he or she delivers a Welcome to Country speech.

Where the above flags are displayed at an event the Australian National Flag Protocols apply. The flags shall be placed left to right from the perspective of the audience: the Australian flag, the Western Australian flag, the Aboriginal flag and the Torres Strait Islander flag.