



# City of Greater Geraldton Welcome to Country Guide

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are advised that the following publication includes images and names of deceased persons.

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Mr David Ronan and Mr Rob Ronan (dec)  
*Photo used with permission from the Ronan family*

# City of Greater Geraldton Welcome to Country Guide

In 2015, the City of Greater Geraldton Council endorsed the Welcome to Country Guide. The Welcome to Country Guide reinforces the City's commitment to ensuring that a Welcome to Country is observed whenever appropriate in a manner that is consistent and respectful.

The Welcome to Country Guide includes up to date and accurate information for City Officers and Councillors about the protocols and processes of both Welcome to Country and an Acknowledgement of Country for the City of Greater Geraldton



Mr Ross Boddington

## What is Welcome to Country?

**A** Welcome to Country is a ceremony that is performed by Aboriginal people to officially welcome visitors to their land. Generally a Traditional Owner will perform a Welcome to Country through speech, dance or song as a means of recognition and acknowledgement of the local ownership of the land. Welcome to Country is a respectful appreciation of the Aboriginal people who have historically lived in the region and acknowledges

Aboriginal people's unique culture and history including an affiliation with the Land.

The City of Greater Geraldton values all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and culture acknowledging Aboriginal people through Welcome to Country. This further recognises the Traditional Owners as the first people in the cultural history of the City of Greater Geraldton.





Eadie, Nadine, Rosealie, Jenni and Jacqui  
Irra Wangga Language Centre Staff

## Yamatji Welcome to Country

The recognised Aboriginal group of Greater Geraldton are the Southern Yamatji Native Title Claimants whose lands encompass the Mid-West area of Western Australia. A Welcome to Country or Acknowledgement of Country is to be observed at major City of Greater Geraldton events and all events significant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people including but not limited to:

- **NAIDOC and Reconciliation Week celebrations**
- **Australia Day events and Citizenship Ceremonies**
- **Opening of Local Exhibitions and Art Awards and**
- **Opening of Council meetings**



# Selecting the person to deliver a Welcome to Country

The Yamatji region has been home to many groups of Aboriginal people over thousands of years. It is important to understand that the Yamatji region is made up of numerous language groups and that within the municipal boundary of Greater Geraldton there is currently one large claim which is the Southern Yamatji Native Title Claimants. It is recommended that a due and proper inquiry needs to occur before choosing a person to provide a Welcome to Country. Choosing the appropriate person to provide a Welcome to Country is of paramount importance.

The local government area for the City of Greater Geraldton is covered by one claim which is the Southern Yamatji claim (WAD 6002 of 2004). The Southern Yamatji claim area includes the major population centres within the City of Greater Geraldton, including Mullewa and the City of Geraldton. Outside the boundary for the City of Greater Geraldton the Southern Yamatji Claim covers country to the northeast of the local government area, which is affected by three different claims, they are: Wajarri Yamatji (WAD 6033 of 1998), Mullewa Wadjari (WAD 6119 of 1998) and Widi Mob (WAD 6193 of 1998). These three claims have a degree of overlap in the outer local government area boundaries. The delivery and nature of a Welcome to

Country is both cultural and personal and may vary from each Traditional Owner and by the significance of the event. A listing of recognised Owners and their contacts for the Greater Geraldton area is attached to this guide.

Consideration may also be given to include young Aboriginal people to perform part of the Welcome to Country, particularly if the focus of the event is aimed at Youth. On these occasions it is appropriate to ensure that all people delivering part of the welcome are made aware of each other's role.

It is also important to ensure that Aboriginal people performing Welcome to Country are afforded the courtesy, respect and time to make an informed decision concerning who should provide the service within their respective groups.

In addition to the registered Native Title Claimant Groups, it is also important to be aware that there are other Aboriginal people who have an historical link to the City of Greater Geraldton through long term residency. It is recommended that the facilitator of an occasion where a Welcome to Country has been delivered thank both the particular group of Traditional Owners and the wider Yamatji community.



## Recommended service fees

In providing cultural services such as Welcome to Country, artistic performances and ceremonies, Aboriginal people are using their intellectual property. It is courteous to make an offer of an honorary payment. It is then up to the nominated person giving the Welcome to Country to accept the offer or to negotiate a different payment amount. (This amount needs to be mutually acceptable to both parties). Importantly, both parties have the right to withdraw from these negotiations if a mutually agreeable payment amount cannot be agreed upon. On the other hand, Traditional Owners who are performing (i.e. presenting a song or story-telling), is an addition to a standalone Welcome to Country and should

be viewed as "Aboriginal Arts Performance". If the event organiser is happy to proceed with the additional performance aspect of a Welcome to Country, then it is recommended that an offer of an additional payment be paid.

It is recommended that the opportunity to provide Welcome to Country be rotated amongst all eligible groups regardless of the different fees each may charge for the service.

This will ensure the City maintains impartiality between family and Native Title groups and is fair and transparent. It can be expected that a Welcome to Country could cost from \$150 - \$400. However, these prices are provided only as a general guide.





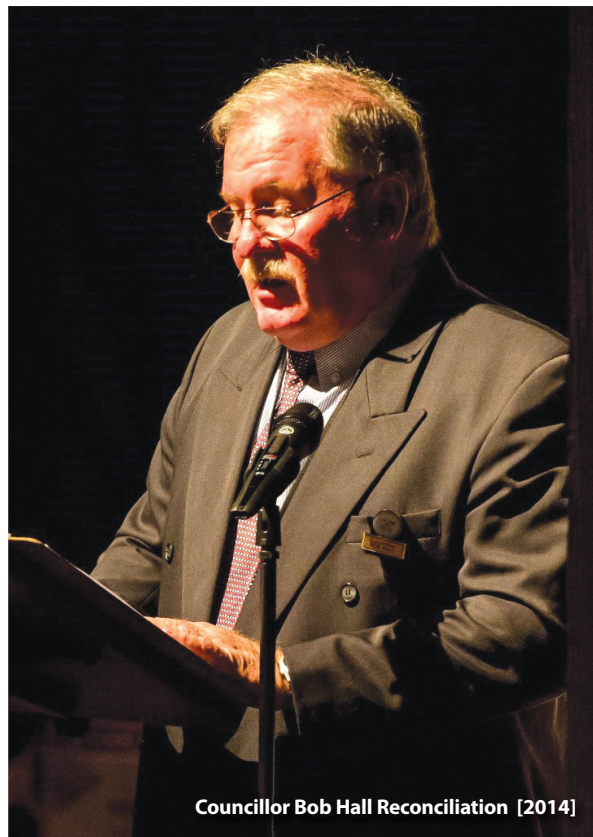
# Thanking the Traditional Owner

Choosing the right words and forms of address is particularly important. Always ask Aboriginal people how they would like to be addressed. Only use the terms 'aunty' or 'uncle' when invited to do so.

A brief acknowledgement is given after the Traditional Owner has given the Welcome to Country, a suitable response would typically include the following wording:

*'I would like to thank (name of person) and would also like to pay my respect to the Traditional Owners the (names of groups) people and Elders past present and future on whose country we are meeting.'*

If no language group is given then one should substitute with Yamatji Peoples.



Councillor Bob Hall Reconciliation [2014]





# Yamatji Peoples Acknowledgement of Country

An Acknowledgement of Country is a way for the wider community to show their awareness of and respect for the First Peoples, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, on whose land the meeting, or event, is being held. It also recognises the Aboriginal peoples continuing connection to the land. Unlike a Welcome to Country, an Acknowledgement of Country can be performed by both an Aboriginal person and a non-Aboriginal person.

An Acknowledgement of Country can take place with or without a Welcome to Country and /or when a less formal gathering is taking place. Subsequent speakers may also choose to acknowledge the Traditional Owners. If the event does not have an official Welcome to Country by a Traditional Owner then the Acknowledgement to Country should be included within a general welcome and before any of the event proceedings start.

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## **An Acknowledgement of the Yamatji Peoples as the Traditional Owners should be worded as follows for the City of Greater Geraldton:**

*'I would like to respectfully acknowledge the Yamatji Peoples who are the Traditional Owners and First People of the land on which we stand. The Nhanhagardi, Wilunyu, Naaguja. I would like to pay my respect to the Elders past, present and future for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and hopes of the Yamatji Peoples.'*

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## **Acknowledgement of Yamatji Peoples as the Traditional Owners should be worded as follows for the Town of Mullewa:**

*'I would like to respectfully acknowledge the Yamatji Peoples who are the Traditional Owners and First People of the land on which we stand. I would like to pay my respect to the Elders past, present and future for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and hopes of the Yamatji Peoples.'*



# Additional information

**D**ue to the nature of the Native Title claimants and local perceptions, it is recommended that the City rotate requests to various Traditional Owners for Welcome to Country opportunities, and to periodically review recommended Traditional Owners and their contact details. For any matter causing concern or needing clarification, or for events that include or impact on the Aboriginal community please contact the City of Greater Geraldton Community and Aboriginal Development Officer.

## Contact list

See attached list (page 13) of Native Title Claimants authorised to give a Welcome to Country.

## Definitions

*Welcome to Country* – A ceremony performed by Aboriginal people to officially welcome someone to their land.

*Acknowledgement of Country* – A way for the wider community to show an awareness of and respect for the First Peoples of the land by acknowledging them before events commence.

*Traditional Owner* – The descendants of the identified original inhabitants of the area, having a spiritual and cultural connection to the lands and waters of their ancestors.

*Native Title* – Recognition of Indigenous peoples rights to Land, Sea, Traditional Laws and Culture through the Australian Legal System.

*Wilunyu People* – is a positional descriptor in the Wajarri language meaning “coastal”, “seaward” or “westward”. Some Yamatji members may choose to describe themselves and their country using this word.

*Nhanagardi Peoples* – is a traditional name for the people and Country in the Southern Yamatji Native Title Claimant area.

*Amangu People* – is the word for “man” or “person” in the traditional language of the Country in the Southern Yamatji Native Title Claimant area. This is a way that some Yamatji claimants choose to describe themselves.

*Naaguja People* – Naaguja is a sociolinguistic label associated with the northwest of the Southern Yamatji Native Title Claimant area and the Bowes River. This word is used by some of the traditional owners of this northwest area to describe themselves, their language and their Country.

*Mullewa Wadjari People* – Name of the Native Title Claimant Group for the Mullewa/ Murchison area.

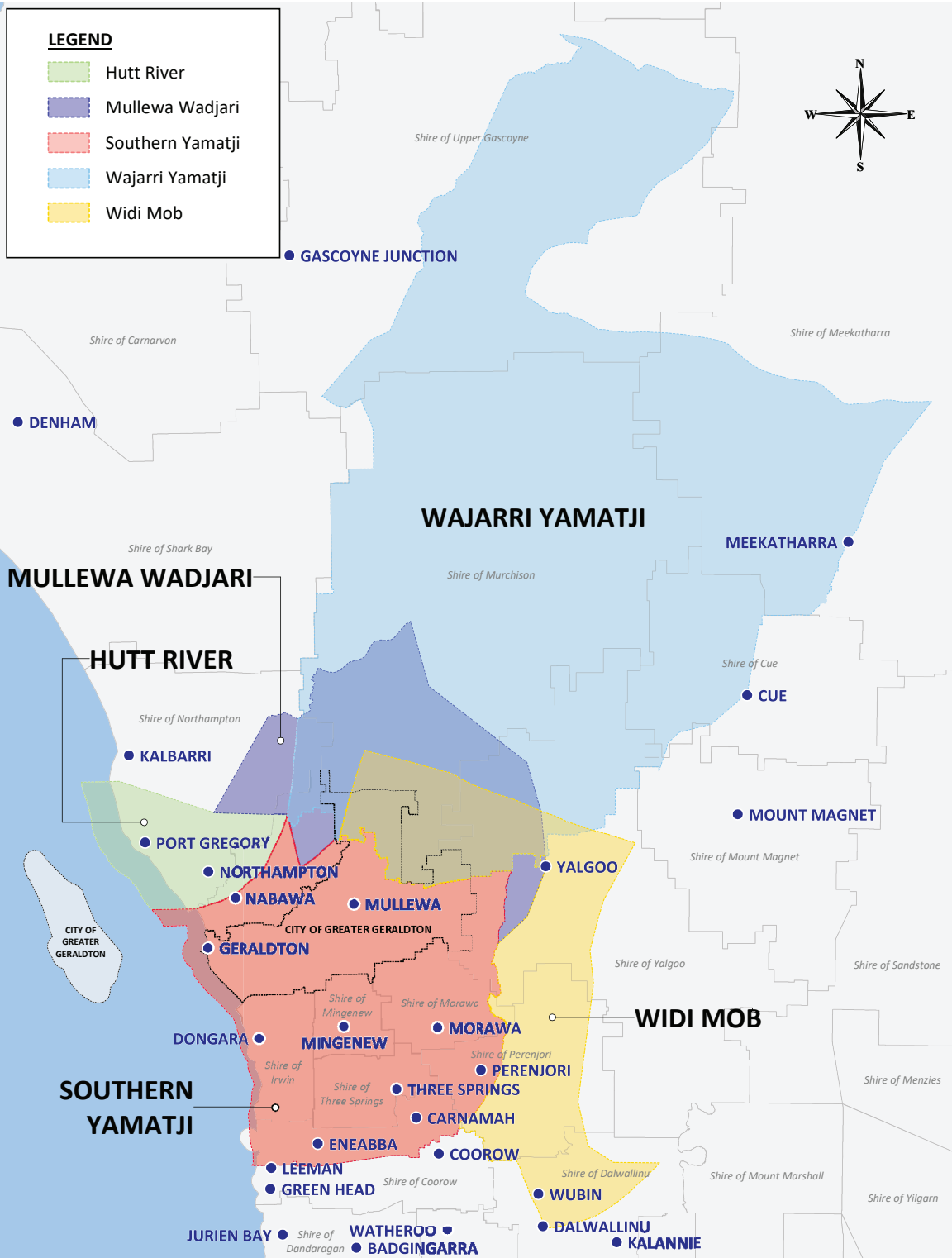
*Yamatji* – Yamatji is the Wajarri word for Aboriginal man, however, today the meaning of Yamatji has been extended to mean any Aboriginal person from the Midwest/Murchison region. Speakers of Wajarri refer to their language as Wajarri, and to themselves as both Yamatji and Wajarri people (Mackman 2011, p 231).

## REFERENCE LIST

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG  
[uow.edu.au/about/policy/uow15134.html](http://uow.edu.au/about/policy/uow15134.html)

YAMATJI MARLPA ABORIGINAL CORPORATION  
[ymac.org.au](http://ymac.org.au)

WAJARRI DICTIONARY  
Mackman 2011, p 231



**Disclaimer:** Whilst all care has been taken in the preparation of this data, this information is provided as a guide only and no responsibility shall be taken for any omissions or errors in this documentation. The accuracy provided is not to be used for legal purposes, but reference made to original documentation, which includes Certificate of Titles, Survey Diagrams and legal versions of the Town Planning Schemes.





# WELCOME TO COUNTRY MONITORING

The City's Community and Aboriginal Development Officer will be responsible for ensuring the information contained in the Welcome to Country Guide remains current. This role is responsible for:

- **Periodic review of the Welcome to Country contact list**
- **Providing advice and support to councillors and staff regarding Welcome to Country**
- **Liaising with Native Title Representative Groups for up to date and current Native Title information**
- **Providing support and advice to Councillors and staff on all events that include and have an impact on the Aboriginal community**



Mr Graham Taylor [2017]



# WELCOME TO COUNTRY PROCESS

1	Find out who the Traditional Owners are in the area where your event is being held (see map page 9). If you are still not sure speak to the Community and Aboriginal Development Officer who will be able to assist you.
2	Once you have identified the Traditional Owners go to the list located on page 13. Before you make contact with them please make sure that you have read and understand pages 4 & 5
3	Make contact with the Traditional Owner inviting them to give a Welcome to Country. It is important that you discuss the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Negotiate a fee for service</i></li><li>• <i>Provide them with as much information as possible about your event, including the date, time and theme of the event</i></li><li>• <i>Encourage them to tell their story around the event theme</i></li></ul>
4	Ask the Traditional Owner to provide an ABN if they have one, otherwise they will need to complete a statement by supplier form (see page 12)
5	Once you have spoken to the Traditional Owner you will need to send an official letter of invitation. Make sure that you have all of their correct details and keep them updated regarding your event. (see list page 13)
6	If on the day of your event for some reason the Traditional Owner does not turn up you will need to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Contact the City's Community and Aboriginal Development Officer</i></li><li>• <i>Contact another Elder from the relevant claimant group (see list on p13)</i></li><li>• <i>Conduct an Acknowledgment of Country</i></li></ul>







# Native Title claimant groups list

Correct as of 13 January 2020. Details such as phone numbers are subject to change.  
Please check with the Community and Aboriginal Development Officer for current details.

Name /Group - Yamatji	Contact Number	Address	Email
Mr Kevin Cameron	0458 165 378		None
Mrs Rhodda Capewell	0458 269 243		None
Mr Derek Councillor	0474 891 305	PO Box 244 Meekatharra WA 6642	Derekcouncillor2@gmail.com
Ms Kathy Councillor	0476 161 125		kmcouncillor@gmail.com
Ms Donna Ronan	0448 430 277		Donnamaree434@gmail.com
Mr Wayne Warner (Dec)	Mob: 0475 887 812		Yamatji2016@gmail.com
<b>Representative Group</b> Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation	Ph: (08) 9965 6222 Fax: (08) 9964 5646 Mob: 0400 239 616	171 Marine Tce Geraldton WA P.O. Box 2119 Geraldton WA 6531	Claim Lawyer Brooke Creemers bcreemers@ymac.org.au
Name /Group - Mullewa Wadjari	Contact Number	Address	Email
Mr Leedham Papertalk	0487 331 385		
Ms Charmaine Green	9965 3440		info@Yamatjiart.com
Mr Kevin Merrit	0417 808 462		
<b>Representative Group</b> Corser and Corser Lawyers	Ph: (08) 9215 0900 Fax: (08) 9218 9961	Level 4 Irwin Chambers 16 Irwin Street Perth WA 6000	Claim Lawyer Lesleigh Bower lesleigh.bower@corsers.com.au
Name /Group - Wajarri Yamatji	Contact Number	Address	Email
Mr Kevin Merrit	0417 808 462		
David Jones	0499 849 544		
<b>Representative Group</b> Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation	(08) 9965 6222	171 Marine Tce Geraldton WA 6530	Claim Lawyer David Taft dtaft@ymac.org.au
Name /Group - Widi People	Contact Number	Address	Email
Kathleen Pinkerton	0408 807 651		k.e.pinkerton@hotmail.com
Shirley McPherson	0417 801 255		Shirley.McPherson@afisportsready.com.au
<b>No Representative Group provided</b>			
<b>City of Greater Geraldton Contact Person</b>			
Courtney Whyte Community and Aboriginal Development Officer	(08) 9956 6762		courtneyw@cgg.wa.gov.au

The City of Greater Geraldton acknowledges the passing of Aboriginal Elders Mr Wayne Warner. Mr Warner is listed in this second edition publication which was reprinted in late 2019 prior to his passing.



**Disclaimer**

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**Acknowledged by the City of Greater Geraldton Council on February 2018.**

**Next review due December 2019.**