

Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures

11.5 Aboriginal cultural events

Policy summary

Corrective Services NSW (CSNSW) recognises the unique position of Aboriginal people in our culture and history. Significant Aboriginal cultural events occur throughout the year and CSNSW has authorised the observance of these three cultural events in correctional centres:

- National Aboriginal and Islander Day of Commemoration (NAIDOC)
- Survival Day (Australia Day)
- Sorry Day

Other significant dates for Aboriginal people may be celebrated with prior approval and funding.

Official events and ceremonies incorporate Aboriginal cultural practices which pay respect to Aboriginal people, culture and history by promoting understanding and building relationships and partnerships. There are a number of protocols that must be observed for these cultural events where CSNSW is a major sponsor.

Management of Public Correctional Centres Service Specifications

Service specifications	Decency and respect
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Scope

This section applies to all correctional centres and other facilities administered by or on behalf of CSNSW, and all CSNSW employees.

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1 Aboriginal cultural events

1.1 Policy

Official cultural events and ceremonies recognise and pay respect to Aboriginal people, culture and heritage. The type and ceremony undertaken at an official event must be appropriate to the nature and size of each correctional centre.

Cultural events and ceremonies must not contravene the centre's security.

Ceremonies and practices may differ from centre to centre. The timeframe for planning of official events should allow sufficient time for discussion and decision making with centre management and negotiations with Aboriginal communities.

Protocols must be observed for the recognition of Aboriginal people at official events or at events where CSNSW is a major sponsor.

Significant Aboriginal cultural events that are authorised to be celebrated in custody include:

- National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC)
- Survival Day (Australia Day)
- Sorry Day

1.2 NAIDOC

NAIDOC celebrations for Aboriginal people are held across Australia during the first full week of July to celebrate the history, culture, spirituality, rites and achievements of Aboriginal people.

NAIDOC has a different theme every year. Families, schools and community groups gather to share cultural activities, discuss current issues and celebrate historical and contemporary issues including Aboriginal people's achievements and contributions to Australia. www.naidoc.org.au

1.3 Survival day

Survival Day is on the 26th of January and commemorates over 200 years of colonisation for Aboriginal people.

1.4 National sorry day

National Sorry Day (Journey of Healing) is on the 26th of May and is a significant event for Aboriginal people, which marks the Commonwealth Government's response to the 'Bringing Them Home Report'. This arose from the National Enquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal Children.

1.5 Other special events

Other events that may be recognised as of significant cultural importance to Aboriginal people include graduation, award and memorial ceremonies. Further information about this can be found on the [Significant dates and events for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people](#) intranet page.

2 Official events and ceremonies

2.1 Policy

All major CSNSW official events and ceremonies, where members of the public, representatives of other governments, departments or agencies, and/or the media are present, should begin with a Welcome to Country. If a Welcome to Country is not to be conducted then, as a minimum requirement, an Acknowledgement of Country should be held. Events in this category include:

- commemorations and major festivals
- major launches of buildings, policies or programs
- conferences held or sponsored by CSNSW

Other ceremonies or practices by Aboriginal people, including dances and performances may also be undertaken when considered appropriate.

2.2 Welcome/Acknowledgement to country

A Welcome to Country is a very specific Aboriginal cultural protocol where an Aboriginal Elder, recognised member of the Aboriginal Community or locally recognised cultural service provider welcomes all of the participants to the country of their people and ancestors on which they are meeting for an event.

This should always be the first item of the opening ceremony. It may cause offence if the Welcome to Country is undertaken by someone who is not a descendent of the traditional occupants of the land where the event is taking place.

This practice is an official welcome and allows for attendees to reflect on the connection that Aboriginal people have with country and the importance it has to their existence, past and present. Where possible the use of Aboriginal language is encouraged when delivering the 'Welcome to Country'. After the Welcome to Country is delivered it is important that the presenter demonstrates gratitude for the welcome and thanks the speaker.

There is no exact wording for a Welcome to Country. The content of a Welcome to Country should be negotiated between CSNSW and the relevant/appropriate Aboriginal organisation, Aboriginal community representative or the Elder/Elders Group with reference to the nature of the event and community practices.

An Acknowledgement of Country is a practice that allows for any individual, Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal to pay their respects to Aboriginal people by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land and their ongoing connection to country and cultural heritage. Acknowledgements to Country can be used by each person who has an official task at the event.

In some circumstances country may be disputed and may be represented by two or more traditional owners. For this reason in an Acknowledgment of Country, if there is uncertainty about who exactly are the traditional owners, the owners can be acknowledged without being specific. Acknowledging Country in this way will not cause offence where there is some potential or actual dispute around ownership.

Advice regarding the name of the traditional custodians of the land on which the event is being held, or the name of the Aboriginal Nation, can be obtained by contacting the RAPO or the Local Aboriginal Land Council of that area.

Example statements of Acknowledgements to Country are:

“I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands on which we meet today (insert appropriate name here) and the Elders, past and present. I acknowledge the ongoing connection that Aboriginal people have to this land and recognise Aboriginal people as the original custodians of this land. I would also like to acknowledge any Aboriginal people that are present here today.”

“I would like to acknowledge the (appropriate name) people who are the Traditional Custodians of this Land. I would also like to pay respect to the Aboriginal Elders both past and present of the (appropriate name) Nation and extend that respect to other Aboriginals present.”

“I would like to acknowledge Aboriginal Elders past and present, that this meeting is being held on the traditional lands of the (appropriate group) people.”

“I would like to acknowledge Aboriginal Elders past and present, that this meeting is being held on Aboriginal land and recognise the strength, resilience and capacity of Aboriginal people in this land.”

“I would like to show my respect and acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the Land, of Aboriginal Elders past and present, on which this meeting takes place.”

2.3 Other cultural practices

Any other request for cultural practices should be made in consultation with the Governor and RAPO. An appropriate amount of time, cultural consideration and remuneration must be allowed for the process to be mutually respectful.

Local dance groups or musical performers may be included at an event or Aboriginal inmates may perform if it is appropriate and has been approved by the Governor.

Culturally, it may also be appropriate to conduct a minute’s silence prior to events to pay respects to Elders, past and present. Consultations with community organisations will assist in determining if this appropriate and how it would be conducted.

It is important to be mindful of other cultural commitments within the community at the time of the event, such as Sorry Business. This may have an impact on availability or attendance of people within the community for both the Welcome/Acknowledgement to Country and/or participation in the event.

2.4 Food

Cultural events, ceremonies or Aboriginal specific programs may be catered for at the discretion of the Governor.

The Governor or delegated officer may give prior approval, in consultation with the RAPO, to traditional food being brought into a correctional centre by outside parties for significant cultural events or Aboriginal specific programs. Such proposals from outside parties will only be considered where traditional foods are unable to be sourced from a licenced retail outlet and/or butcher (**refer to COPP section 11.4 *Aboriginal inmate access to traditional foods***).

2.5 Flags

At events where flags are flown, the order of display (from an audience perspective, from left to right) is the Australian flag, the New South Wales flag, the Aboriginal flag, Torres Strait Islander flag and the CSNSW flag.

2.6 Smoking ceremony

A Smoking Ceremony is a cultural practice that may be used at significant events. Smoking ceremonies can only be performed by appropriate members of the Aboriginal Community with specialised cultural knowledge and endorsed by the RAPO (**refer to COPP section 11.6 *Aboriginal community mentors***). This traditional practice is used to cleanse an area in general and in particular to cleanse bad spirits.

2.7 Funding for cultural events

The RAPO must seek external funding from Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) for NAIDOC celebrations.

The Manager, Aboriginal Strategy and Policy Unit (ASPU) will contribute supplementary funding for cultural events.

The Governor of the respective correctional centre may also contribute funds to cultural events and Aboriginal specific programs celebrated within the centre.

The RAPO may seek funding from other Government agencies at the discretion of the Governor.

2.8 Procedures for planning official events

	Procedure	Responsibility
1.	Consult with the Governor of each individual centre regarding whether an event can be hosted.	RAPO
2.	Approve local celebrations.	Governor
3.	Seek written approval from the Assistant Commissioner of Custodial Corrections (ACCC) for new or special events to be celebrated, other than NAIDOC, Survival Day or Sorry Day.	Governor
4.	Seek external funding from DPM&C and the Manager ASPU, and supplementary funding if required from the Governor of the correctional centre or other Government agencies Any submission for further supplementary funding must be forwarded to the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager of the ASU • Director of Corrections Strategic Policy and Planning Unit • Assistant Commissioner of Corrections Strategy and Policy. 	RAPO
5.	Consider all supplementary funding requests and maintain a record of application and result in EDRMS.	Principal Manager, ASPU
6.	Coordinate expenditure of funding and facilitate cultural events within correctional centres identified in their program and service delivery coverage area.	RAPO
7.	Establish a NAIDOC committee consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal and/or other interested staff • the Aboriginal Inmate Delegate (AID) • Aboriginal Inmate Committee members. 	RAPO
8.	Seek further consultation from external organisations such as the relevant LALC.	RAPO and NAIDOC Committee
9.	Forward an outline of the proposed plan to the Governor of the correctional centre within a suitable timeframe.	RAPO

2.9 Donations

Donations, gifts and benefits may be accepted by community members and CSNSW staff within the spirit of the event, but must be managed in line with the NSW Department of Justice Human Resources *Managing Gifts and Benefits Policy and Procedure*.

3 Quick links

- [Related COPP](#)
- [Forms and annexures](#)
- [Related documents](#)

4 Definitions

ACCC	Assistant Commissioner Custodial Corrections
AIC	Aboriginal Inmate Committee
AID	Aboriginal Inmate Delegate
ASPU	Aboriginal Strategy and Policy Unit
COPP	Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures
CSNSW	Corrective Services NSW
LALC	Local Aboriginal Land Council
NAIDOC	National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee
RAPO	Regional Aboriginal Pathways Officer
EDRMS	Electronic Document Records Management System
DPM&C	Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet

5 Document information

Business centre: Custodial Operations

Approver: Kevin Corcoran

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EDRMS container: 18/7302

Version	Date	Reason for amendment
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1.0		Initial publication (<i>replaces section 7.21 of the superseded Operations Procedures Manual</i>)
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1.1	12/03/20	General formatting update and improvements
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