

YOUR LAW, OUR LAW: PROTOCOLS FOR VISITING JAWOYN AND NMNRC COMMUNITIES¹

Australian law has changed so that non-Aboriginal people no longer need a permit to visit Aboriginal township areas. This means there will be more visitors to our communities. We ask these visitors to work with the structures and principles that we have in place, and to abide by our protocols concerning country, kin and culture:

‘You can change your law. We don’t change our law. Our law is one law—one law, unchanging.’ Nell Brown, traditional owner, Bagala clan lands.

Arrival

1. On arrival in our community, you should proceed directly to the council office and introduce yourself to the Community Manager who will then introduce you to the President of the community and, if relevant, the senior traditional owner. This means that the people who are responsible for the day-to-day running of the community are aware that you are visiting, and can tell you about anything specific that you will need to know (such as no go areas and whether there is “Sorry Business” going on).

Appropriate Behaviours

2. Always be modest in your behaviour. You should speak quietly, walk at a moderate pace, and try not to be intrusive in your general behaviour. Women, in particular, should dress modestly, as Aboriginal women do.

Visiting the Surrounding Country

3. While the permit system has changed to allow access to the public areas of communities, please remember that this does not entitle you to enter without permission into the private and residential parts of the communities and you still need a permit to apply to enter Aboriginal land outside of the community areas. In order to do this, you should go through the normal processes implemented by the Northern Land Council.

4. Once you have received a permit, you are not to approach any Jawoyn rock art or archaeological sites without the permission and guidance of Aboriginal Elders. This is because there are many sacred sites, which cannot be visited by everyone, and some of these sites contain important things that should not be disturbed. Old people know the location of the best sites, and they will guide you to the places that it is appropriate for you to visit, and will protect you from going to places that could hurt you. Old people have to be paid for this service. If you only visit country with old people, we know that you are serious about learning about Aboriginal culture, and that you have not disturbed sites that are sacred to us.

5. Some places are family places, and you should only visit these areas accompanied by relevant clan members endorsed by the Elders.

Taking Photos

¹ Subject to final amendment and ratification by the Executive Boards of the Jawoyn Association and Nyirranggulung Mardrulk Ngadberre Regional Council (NMNRC).

6. You should ask for permission before you take photos. If they are photos of the community as a whole, you should ask at the Council office. If they are photos of people, you should ask the individuals involved.
7. Copies of photos should be given to the people involved.
8. You should ask for permission before you publish any photos.

Publishing

9. Permission to publish a photograph is given for one time only. Permission should be re-sought for any further publications.
10. If you are given permission to publish photos, you should pay a small sum to the appropriate people. The idea here is that people publish photographs in order to further their careers, and that they get monetary benefit from this, so Aboriginal people should get a small monetary benefit as well.
11. If you wish to publish about a sensitive area you should get permission from the people involved.
12. Copies of publications should be given to the community people involved, as well as to the Jawoyn Association and the NMNRC

Sales and Services

13. We ask people who have goods or services to sell to register with the local council on their arrival in the community. They should also give advance warning of their visit to the Jawoyn Association and to the NMNRC.

Visiting People's Homes

14. It is not polite to enter people's houses unless you have a very clear invitation. Mostly, people will want to talk with you outside. If you visit someone's house, you should call out from the front yard, or knock on the door, but stand away from the door, so they have privacy.

Other Visitors

15. If you have your friends visit you in our communities, or conduct research with us, we ask that you make sure these people act according to the protocols outlined in this document.

Always Ask

16. If you have any doubt about how you should act, just ask. Sometimes you might have to wait a little while for an answer, to give family time to agree, but we will always be willing to guide you. We want to look after Non-Aboriginal people, too.

PLEASE.

RESPECT OUR CULTURE, RESPECT OUR LAND, RESPECT US.

Drafted by Claire Smith and Gary Jackson, under instruction from Phyllis Wijnjorroc, Peter Manabaru, Jimmy Wesan, Nell Brown, Sybil Ranch, Wes Miller and Michael Berto.

Contacts: Wes Miller, wes.miller@jawoyn.org
Claire Smith, Claire.smith@flinders.edu.au