

## Introduction Aboriginal Culture

Aboriginal Culture

**Most ceremonies practised in Aboriginal communities cannot be discussed fully due to their sensitive and sacred nature.**

When discussing specific ceremonies it is important to have a local Aboriginal person present.



There are many ceremonies and reasons for ceremonies in Aboriginal society, all have a firm place with The Dreaming.

Great Ancestral Spirits arranged the earth by creating people, animals, plants and birds and these were all put in their respective places according to the land forms and spirits surrounding them. These Ancestral Spirits made rules and the law to govern the land, its people, animals and plants. If life on earth was to continue, these rules would need to be followed. Ceremonies ensure that vital components of this law and The Dreaming stay intact. They provide a time where all people in a language group work together for the survival of The Dreaming.

All beliefs and stories of The Dreaming are individually owned and kept secure by individual members of a language group ensuring that they are protected for all people. These members of a language group had and continue to have the great task of ensuring that these stories were correctly remembered and passed on, and that the correct practise of rituals and ceremonies were performed to do this.

Aboriginal ceremonies are concerned with acting out The Dreaming, its laws and stories. Men and Women had different roles in ceremonies and these roles varied from language group to language group. In many areas men were given the role as guardians of a special spiritual site where a ceremony was performed. This role meant that the site would need to be cared for accordingly so that that particular spirit would continue to live there. Women were the guardians of a special knowledge and therefore hold great religious and spiritual power within the language group. Roles in ceremonies would vary considerably depending on the reasons why the ceremony was being held. Some ceremonies were for men only, others were for women only and both men and women had their own particular Spiritual and sacred objects. Sometimes this is talked about as men's business and women's business.

Neither men nor women possess greater spiritual needs than the other, they just coexisted in different ways to ensure that sacred elements of The Dreaming would be practised and passed on.

Ceremonies and rituals take on many different forms. Some were very private and involved only people in that language group while others involved all people belonging to the language group, even children. Sometimes the creation of special and sacred objects of drawings in sand and/or earth (sand painting), the moulding and carving of spirit figures in clay or wood, the painting of bark, the making of specific body design were used in many ceremonies. Often the objects or drawings made were placed in a bora ring or near the site where the ceremony was

to be held. That is the reason why we find many scarred trees marking the site where sacred ceremonies were once held or continue to be held. Special and sacred songs and dances were also created for these ceremonies.