Organising functions and events

A guide to protocol for culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) communities

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November 2014
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What is a dignitary?

A dignitary, or VIP, is someone who holds a high rank or office and who should be treated with special courtesy. Dignitaries include the Governor, the Premier, Ministers, Members of Parliament, Members of Consular Corps, community and religious leaders.

What is protocol?

Protocol is defined as ‘the customs and regulations dealing with diplomatic formality, precedence and etiquette’. It means following correct procedures to make sure that official (and unofficial) occasions, visits, meetings and functions are planned and conducted in accordance with a set of rules that are accepted and expected by the people involved.

Following protocol helps to create positive relations and outcomes.

Steps in planning and arranging a function

1. SCOPING OF FUNCTIONS AND EVENTS

The scoping of each function is an important step in the overall planning process. Scoping should clearly identify:
- purpose of the function
- desired outcomes
- budget
- catering requirements
- staffing requirements and duties
- audience/guests
- any limitations that exist or may have been imposed on planning.

2. ESTABLISHING AN ORGANISING COMMITTEE

Where possible, form an organising committee/group that is responsible for the event. This group should be formed and meet as early as possible.

At the first meeting:
- discuss and agree on a detailed outline of the event
- take into consideration all the issues mentioned in Section 1
- establish clear expectations and responsibilities for all parties.

3. ADDRESSING CULTURAL ISSUES

Cultural issues can have an impact on the success of a function or event and can affect:
- where the function is held
- who should be invited
who should speak
when the function should be held
what food and drinks should be served.

Customs related to greeting etiquette, seating arrangements and eating can be of great importance. For example, followers of many religions observe particular dietary requirements, and an awareness of these and other cultural customs can prevent embarrassment.

The event organiser should consider all details of the function—particularly the guest list—to determine if specific cultural issues need to be noted. The organiser should then seek advice on these issues from local key stakeholders or other bodies such as consular representatives or the Office of Multicultural Interests (OMI).

Culture and religion information sheets that will assist with many of your questions are available on the OMI website www.omi.wa.gov.au.

4. **SETTING THE DATE AND TIME OF THE FUNCTION**

It is vital to confirm the date and time of the function as early as possible. The date and time may be specified by the organisation, indicated by the nature of the event itself, or determined by the availability of a particular guest or speaker.

It is important to make sure that the following are all available before setting the date and time of the function:
- special guests and/or key contributors
- venue
- function host.

When these are all confirmed it is appropriate to issue invitations.

If you would like the Premier or the Minister to attend your event, contact the person responsible for their appointments as early as possible to assist with the selection of a date and time.

The sitting dates for Parliament may also be a consideration. The earlier that you can confirm the date and time for the event, the earlier you can begin detailed planning. Check the Parliament of Western Australia website to find out sitting dates: http://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/parliament/sitsched.nsf/LASSCalendar.
5. **CHOOSING A VENUE**

Venue selection is another critical requirement. Choose a venue that suits the format and size of the occasion and give careful consideration to matching the requirements of the event. For example, if people with disabilities are invited, a venue with suitable access and facilities must be selected.

The organiser should inspect the venue as early as possible to make sure it is suitable. An early inspection allows the organiser to identify advance set-up requirements such as the positioning of equipment and furniture ranging from public address systems to registration or name tag tables.

If an outdoor event is planned, make sure that a wet-weather contingency plan is prepared. This includes alternative means of access, umbrellas and other coverings to enable the event to continue.

6. **SELECTING MENU AND BEVERAGES**

The food and drinks selected for the function will be determined by:
- budget
- availability
- format of the event
- type and purpose of the occasion
- any cultural or religious considerations
- venue.

Cultural or religious considerations include whether members of some religions and cultures cannot consume particular food or drinks. Dietary requirements for special guests should also be determined.

Where possible, use Western Australian foods and beverages.

7. **INVITING A PRINCIPAL SPEAKER OR GUEST OF HONOUR**

The principal speaker may be a dignitary especially invited to the event, such as the Premier or the Minister.

Guests of honour are usually people being honoured for their achievements.

It is important to contact the principal speaker or guest of honour as early as possible to make sure that they are available. Considerations that may affect their availability include:
- the nature and purpose of the occasion
- the importance of the function
- the availability of officials
- competing events.
When inviting important guests:

- Send a written letter of invitation to all proposed speakers and guests of honour:
  - give plenty of advance notice
  - outline the details of their role at the event
  - provide your contact details (see below)
  - request that they RSVP to you by a certain date.

When the Premier, Minister or a representative has confirmed that they will attend the function:

- Provide information about the function to the officer who will prepare briefing notes for the Premier or Minister (see Sample A1 for details).

- In most cases, someone from the Office of Multicultural Interests (OMI) will contact you to request the information. It is important that your invitation to the Premier or the Minister include the contact details of someone who is able and available to provide the required information. Try to include both during and after-hours telephone numbers (including a mobile phone number) as well as preferred times for contact.

8. **ORDER OF SPEAKERS**

The order of speakers at most functions is:

1. Introduction by the master of ceremonies (MC)
2. Welcome by the host
3. Introduction of the principal speaker or guest of honour by the host or the master of ceremonies
4. Main speech by principal speaker or guest of honour
5. Speeches by other dignitaries
6. Conclusion by the MC, including any administrative arrangements such as an invitation to guests on behalf of the host to join them in refreshments, or to move to another area.

As a general rule of protocol, the Premier, the Minister or their representative should speak after the host and before any other dignitaries.

Sample A2 provides an example of an order of proceedings.

9. **THE GUEST LIST**

Care should be taken to ensure all relevant persons are invited to attend.

In particular, give consideration to inviting the Members of Parliament (MPs) in each relevant electorate and surrounding areas, and make sure that both government and opposition MPs are invited.

Representatives from Australian and local government should also be considered.

10. **SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS**

Security is a major consideration for government and public events, particularly if VIPs are attending.

It is the host’s responsibility to ascertain the level of security required. Dependent on the venue and event, you might have to engage security staff or crowd controllers. Contact your local police station for advice either in person or by email to info@police.wa.gov.au.
11. **SPECIAL EQUIPMENT**

Depending on the occasion and venue selected, you may need to hire special equipment. This could include:
- speaker’s lectern
- public address (PA) system
- audio visual system (including data projector)
- an unveiling curtain
- bollards and rope to close off areas or for queues
- marquee
- tables
- chairs
- dais
- red carpet
- directional and parking signs
- umbrellas.

When the Premier, the Minister or their representative is speaking at your function, it is strongly recommended that you provide a speaker’s lectern in addition to the PA system.

Remember that your venue may already have some or all the equipment you need for your function, so it is advisable to check before you confirm the venue.

You may need to source equipment from other agencies or hire from commercial operators. If the event is outdoors, consider having equipment available for use in wet weather.

12. **PHOTOGRAPHY**

You may want a photographer to record the occasion. This is especially important for events that are of historical significance, such as building openings.

If photographs are being taken:
- advise relevant people where they need to be
- and at what time they need to be there
- note that you may need to ask people in the photos to sign a photography consent form so that the photos can be used for publicity purposes
- consider providing photos taken of guests on the day as mementos.
Protocols during the function

Hosting the Premier, Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests (or their representatives), other Ministers or Members of Parliament

If you have invited the Premier, the Minister or any Members of Parliament to your function, there are several protocols that you need to observe during the event.

- The most senior person from the host organisation must meet the Premier, Minister or their representative when they arrive, and accompany them at all times during the function.
- A parking space should be provided for the Premier, Minister or their representative.
- For information on how to address members of State Parliament: http://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/WebCMS/webcms.nsf/content/members-addressing-a-member.
- For information on how to address members of the Parliament of Australia: http://www.aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members/Guidelines_for_Contacting_Senators_and_Members/How_to_address_Senators_and_Members

The Western Australian Government has a Protocol Branch to ensure correct protocol is applied at State occasions, visits, ceremonies and official functions. This branch is located within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet on 6552 6333.

More information

For more information please contact:

OFFICE OF MULTICULTURAL INTERESTS
Department of Local Government and Communities
GPO Box R1250 PERTH WA 6844
Phone: (08) 6552 8700  Fax: (08) 6552 1555
Email: harmony@omi.wa.gov.au
Website: www.omi.wa.gov.au

See below for an example of the information required if the Premier, Minister or representative is attending a function. Event organisers need to supply the following details to the officer responsible for preparing briefing notes for the Premier or Minister.

**Event name:**  
Perth Multicultural Concert and Celebration

**Location:**  
Supreme Court Gardens, Riverside Drive

**Arrival time and date:**  
5.30pm, Saturday 3 October 2014

**Contact on the day:**  
Mr Cin Persic, Secretary, Perth Multicultural Association Inc (PMA)  
Mobile: 0400 123 456

**Audience:**  
Approximately 2000 people will attend the event

**Dress:**  
Smart attire

**Met by:**  
Ms Chris Istocani, President, Multicultural Association Inc (PMA)

**ORDER OF PROCEEDINGS:**

- **5.30pm**  
  Arrival of Hon Dr Mike Nahan MLA, Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests
- **6.00pm**  
  Welcome by President, PMA
- **6.05pm**  
  Speech by Hon Dr Mike Nahan MLA
- **6.10pm**  
  Speech by representative of the Opposition
- **6.15pm**  
  Performance begins
- **7.45pm**  
  Interval
- **8.00pm**  
  Performance resumes
- **9.00pm**  
  Refreshments
- **9.55pm**  
  Event concludes

**Minister’s role:**  
To open the event and give a short speech

**Speech duration:**  
Three to five minutes

**Introduced by:**  
Ms Yasmin Kara, Master of Ceremonies and Chairperson of PMA

**Logistics:**

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</table>

A parking space has been reserved for the Minister in the car park at the front of the venue

**Cultural protocols:**  
There are no cultural protocols for this event

**Acknowledgements:**  
Event organisers need to supply a list of names of VIPs attending the event
See below for an example of an Order of Proceedings for a function. This information should be given to the officer responsible for preparing briefing notes for the Premier or Minister, as part of the information contained in Sample A1.

The details and length of the Order of Proceedings will vary according to the complexity of the event, how many speeches there are, and how long the event runs for.

The Order of Proceedings should always include the following:

- the time that the Premier, Minister or representative is requested to arrive
- the time that the Premier, Minister or representative should give a speech (if applicable)
- the time that the event finishes
- if times are approximate, make a note of this in the Order of Proceedings.

**ORDER OF PROCEEDINGS**

10.00am  Guests arrive  
10.15am  Welcome by Mr Said Smith, President, Multicultural Association  
          Vice President, Multicultural Association, introduces Premier’s representative  
10.25am  Speech by representative of Premier of WA  
10.30am  Speech by Mayor of Fremantle  
10.35am  Speech by State President of Multicultural Veterans Association  
10.38am  Thank you by Mr Said Smith, President, Multicultural Association  
10.40am  Introductory video on Multicultural Association Inc  
10.50am  Dance performance: Sirocco Dancers  
11.00am  Musical interlude: A Night in Perth  
11.15am  Dance performance: Perth Central School pupils  
11.25am  Performance by students from Perth Multicultural Drama School  
12.00 noon  Entertainment concludes  
12.15pm  Lunch is served  
          Talent show (runs through afternoon)  
          Raffle  
2.45pm  Presentation of talent show prizes  
3.00pm  Event concludes  

- See also the Order of Proceedings in Sample A1.