

Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country

Background

For thousands of years there have been accepted protocols for welcoming visitors to Country. Crossing a border into another group's Country required a request for permission to enter. Once permission was granted, the hosting group would welcome the visitors, offering them safe passage and protection of their spiritual being during their journey, and showing them where they could traverse within the Country. Visitors were expected to respect these protocols and rules while on the Country of the Traditional Custodians of the land.

Today, similar protocols are still observed but they have been adapted for a contemporary setting – welcoming visitors and respect for Country. A Welcome to Country or an Acknowledgement of Country can be thought of like knocking on someone's front door to request entry and should therefore be the first item on an event's agenda.

Welcome to Country

A Welcome to Country occurs at the beginning of a formal event and can take many forms including singing, dancing, smoking ceremonies, or a speech in traditional language and/or English. A Welcome to Country is only delivered by Traditional Custodians, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have been given permission from Traditional Custodians to welcome visitors to their Country.

If the Traditional Custodians are unavailable to do Welcome to Country, an Acknowledgement of Country may be delivered.

Acknowledgment of Country

An Acknowledgement of Country is an opportunity for anyone to show respect for Traditional Custodians and the continuing connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to their Country. An Acknowledgement can be given by both non-Indigenous people or by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are not descended from the Traditional Custodians of the Country on which the Event is being held.

Example:

"I acknowledge this Country and its Traditional Custodians. I acknowledge and respect the spiritual relationship between Traditional Custodians and this Country, which has inspired language, songs, dances, lore and Dreaming stories over many thousands of years. I pay my respects to the Elders, those who have passed into the dreaming; those here today; and those of tomorrow. May we continue to peacefully walk together in gratitude, respect, and kindness in caring for this Country and one another."

More information about Council's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs and our Reconciliation Action Plan can be found on [Council's website](#).



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