

Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country

Cultural Significance of 'Welcome to Country' and 'Acknowledgment of Country'

Traditionally, when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people travelled, they would not enter another's Country until they were welcomed by the Traditional Owners of the land.

"Country is a living entity with a yesterday, today and tomorrow"

Deborah Bird Rose, Nourishing Terrains

Aboriginal* people have a unique relationship with the land, involving the responsibility to look after the environmental and spiritual wellbeing of their Country.

What is Welcome to Country?

Welcoming people to Country is a traditional practice, which has special significance. The Welcome to Country should only be delivered by the Aboriginal people in their own local homelands and community. This could be an Elder, or an adult who belongs to that Country.

What is Acknowledgement of Country?

This can be performed by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, both children and adults.

How do I respectfully address and perform this ceremony?

Examples of what someone would say if addressing any formal or informal gathering are as follows:

Welcome to Country

As a representative of the _____ people of this land, I would like to welcome you to our Country and pay respect to our Elders who have gone before us and to all Aboriginal people who are present here today. I would also like to recognise our non-Indigenous people who have joined us today.

Acknowledgement of Country

I would like to acknowledge the _____ people, the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we are meeting. I would also like to pay my respects to Elders both past and present and extend that respect to other Aboriginal people present here today.

For further information and advice

- Aboriginal Land Council www.alc.org.au
- Reconciliation Australia www.reconciliation.org.au a "Q&A" on Welcome to Country ceremonies or offering an Acknowledgment of Country.
- Meet with local Aboriginal community organisations and find out what is happening in your community.

*Aboriginal refers to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People