

# Understanding Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country



## Welcome to Country

### What is a Welcome to Country?

A Welcome to Country is a traditional ceremony conducted by Aboriginal Traditional Owners to welcome people to their land and give their blessing for the event. This formal tradition is an important mark of respect for Aboriginal peoples as Australia's original inhabitants.

A Welcome to Country may involve musical and dance performances, stories, ceremony, or be a combination of these elements.

### Who can perform a Welcome to Country?

This traditional cultural practice must be conducted by an appropriate person, such as a significant person or Elder from the Traditional Owner Group where the event is being held.

It is important to note that non-Aboriginal people cannot deliver a Welcome to Country and this is considered offensive.

### When should Welcome to Country be conducted?

A Welcome to Country should always occur at the beginning of gatherings, meetings, events, or ceremonies.

### What is the purpose of arranging a Welcome to Country?

Arranging a Welcome to Country recognises and values Aboriginal cultural protocols, practised for thousands of years. It may also assist in improving relationships between Aboriginal peoples and the wider community while promoting a greater understanding of Aboriginal culture and a respect for cultural practices.

### How do I arrange a Welcome to Country?

To arrange Welcome to Country for an event or function, in Victoria, you should contact the local Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP). According to the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council, RAPs are the Traditional Owner Groups, legally recognised under the Aboriginal Heritage Act (2006), with responsibilities for managing and protecting Aboriginal Cultural Heritage on Country.

If there is no RAP within the locality where the event is to take place, or you are unable to verify the Traditional Owners, contact a local Aboriginal organisation, who would be best positioned to inform you who the Traditional Owner Group is. If you are unable to identify the local Traditional Owners, you may wish to pay recognition and respect by delivering Acknowledgment of Country.

### Are there a fees for a Welcome to Country?

Most Traditional Owner Groups will require a nominal fee for their services. Fees for Welcome to Country vary from one group to the next and may include additional costs if other traditional practices are requested to be performed. For example, you may request a dance or musical performance and/or have a Smoking Ceremony conducted as part of a Welcome to Country.

### For more information, follow these links:

[Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners - Aboriginal Victoria](#)

[Welcome to and Acknowledgement of Country \(2020\) - Reconciliation Australia](#)



# Understanding Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country



## Acknowledgement of Country

### What is an Acknowledgment of Country?

An Acknowledgment of Country is a respectful practice often delivered in place of Welcome to Country.

An Acknowledgment of Country recognises and pays respect to Traditional Owners of the lands on which an event occurs.

Conducting an Acknowledgment of Country demonstrates respect for Aboriginal peoples and protocols.

### Who can deliver an Acknowledgement of Country?

In contrast to a Welcome to Country, an Acknowledgement of Country can be performed by anyone, regardless of origin or race. Generally, the responsibility of delivering an Acknowledgement of Country sits with the first speaker, event host or Master of Ceremonies. In the workplace, the responsibility sits with the meeting organiser or Chairperson.

### When should an Acknowledgement of Country be conducted?

Like a Welcome to Country, an Acknowledgement of Country should always occur at the beginning of gatherings, meetings, events, or ceremonies.

### What is the purpose of an Acknowledgement of Country?

An Acknowledgement of Country demonstrates recognition of Aboriginal peoples as the Traditional owners of the land on which the event takes place. It signifies an understanding of Aboriginal peoples ongoing spiritual and cultural ties to Country.

### How is an Acknowledgment of Country conducted?

An Acknowledgment of Country is verbally conducted at the beginning of an event, meeting or gathering.

There are many versions of an Acknowledgement of Country and it can be carried out in a number of ways. Where possible, it is always best to deliver an Acknowledgement of Country that recognises, and specifically refers to, the local Traditional Owner Group/s where the event is taking place.

A specific Acknowledgement of Country may contain the following:

*'I would like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the lands we meet on today, the (Traditional Owner Group name) peoples and pay my respects to their Elders; past, present and future. I'd also like to pay my respects to all Aboriginal Elders and peoples present here today.'*

If you are unable to determine the local Traditional Owner Group/s, or you are on contested land, the following general Acknowledgement is acceptable:

*I would like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we are gathered today, and pay my respects to Elders past, present and future.*

Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) is the peak body for Aboriginal health and wellbeing in Victoria – the only one of its kind – with 32 Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) as Members. VACCHO Members support over 25,000 Aboriginal People in Victoria and combined are the largest employers of Aboriginal people in the state.

