



Australia Awards

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Guide to acknowledging Country

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Welcome to Country

Protocols for welcoming visitors to Country have always been a part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and are an important way of showing respect. Traditionally, when individuals or groups of people crossed onto other people's land, they asked permission to enter. When permission was given, Traditional Owners would welcome the visitors to their Country, telling them about their lands and offering safe passage, with the understanding that visitors would respect the lands they were visiting. This cultural practice is still in use today and is known as a Welcome to Country.

A Welcome to Country, can only be delivered by and Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person who is a Traditional Owner from the Country they are welcoming someone to, and generally a Welcome is conducted by an Elder or leader in the community. A Welcome to Country usually occurs at the beginning of a significant or formal event, and may involve singing, dancing and storytelling.

Acknowledgement of Country

When living in Australia, you will hear people formally acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and pay their respects, recognising the Traditional Owners of the lands on which they are gathered. This is known as an Acknowledgement of Country.

An Acknowledgement of Country can be performed by anyone, regardless of if they are First Nations or not. Generally, an Acknowledgement of Country is delivered at the beginning of formal meetings or events. You may also see an Acknowledgement of Country in written form, on reports, websites, email signatures or entrances to buildings. Acknowledging the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander land that you are on is a great way to show respect to First nations people.

There are generally three main types of Acknowledgements of Country.

1. Generic

If you are not sure of the name of the Traditional Owners of the land you are on, or if it is disputed land, you can acknowledge Country without specifically naming a Nation or Traditional Owners. An example of this is:

"I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land we are gathered on today, and pay my respects to Elders past, present, and emerging."

2. Specific

When you know who the Traditional Owners of the land you are, it is good practice to specifically name the Traditional Owners/Nation as part of your acknowledgement. An example of this is:

"I would like to acknowledge the [Eg. Wurundjeri People] of the [Eg. Kulin Nation] as the Traditional Owners of the land we are gathered on today. I pay my respects to their Elders past, present, and emerging."



3. General (Region, state of Australia-wide)

In some cases, it may be appropriate to acknowledge Traditional Owners across a particular region, state or the whole country – this might be done by organisations or service providers, often in written form. An example of this could be:

“[Organisation name] would like to acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters across Australia. We pay our respects to communities and Elders past, present, and emerging and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People”.

The exact wording of an Acknowledgement of Country does not have to follow the above examples, but most Acknowledgements are generally similar. It is important to note that an Acknowledgement of Country should be delivered with respect and is a standalone item. It is considered disrespectful to acknowledge other groups or causes as part of an Acknowledgement.

Identifying whose land you are on

In some parts of Australia, it is quite well known who the Traditional Owners are, but in other parts it can sometimes be hard for non-Indigenous people to know.

If you are unsure whose land you are on, the name of the Nation and Traditional Owners, here are a few tips for researching:

- Have a look at the [AIATSIS Map of Indigenous Australia](#)
- Look up local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander groups or organisations. They will likely have information on their website.
- Talk to colleagues, friends, or community members – many people know the Traditional Owners of where they are living and working.
- Look up the website for the local government (council, shire or municipality) area you are living in. Council websites often include an Acknowledgement of Country on the homepage, or in the footer or somewhere within the website.

