

Acknowledgment of Country vs Welcome to Country

Organising a Welcome to Country or an Acknowledgment of Country at the beginning of your workday, meeting, or event is an important symbolic action. It is about paying your respects and recognising the resilience and survival of the oldest living culture in the world. The knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have allowed for their prosperity in harmony with the land for tens of thousands of years. When adopting a cultural tradition such as welcoming visitors and acknowledging country, that prosperity is recognised and respected.

What is the difference between an acknowledgment and a welcome?

An **acknowledgement of Country** can be performed by anyone. It is about recognising the Country you are on and paying respects to the Elders and Traditional Custodians of that Country.

A **welcome to Country** is a special ceremony that can only be conducted by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders or First Nations Peoples who have been given permission to welcome people to that Country.

Welcome to Country	Acknowledgement of Country
WHAT IS IT?	
A formal welcome onto an Aboriginal Country.	Paying respects to the Traditional Custodians of the land you are on.
WHO CAN GIVE IT?	
A Traditional Custodian Elder of the land you are meeting on or an Aboriginal person with approval by the Traditional Custodians.	Can be performed by anyone (Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal).
WHEN IS IT APPROPRIATE?	
Major public events, forums and functions.	If a Traditional Custodian is unavailable to perform a Welcome to Country or for smaller events and internally.
WHEN SHOULD IT OCCUR?	
At the opening of the event as the first item on the program.	At the beginning of an event, or in response to a Welcome to Country.
WHAT FORM CAN IT TAKE?	
Varies from speeches, in language or English, to dance, song and ceremonies or a combination.	Speech or written as part of email signatures, featured on websites and signs at the entrances of businesses and homes.
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Acknowledgments as standard workplace practice

Implementing an **acknowledgment of Country** into your workplace practice is an important foundational step toward becoming a more culturally safe workplace. Acknowledgments can occur at the beginning of every team meeting as well as at larger events.

TIP: If you incorporate an acknowledgment at the beginning of every meeting, try to share the responsibility around. It should not only be up to First Nations staff; non-Indigenous employees will build cultural competency through practicing recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures.

When to organise a welcome to Country

Protocols for **welcoming visitors to Country** have been a part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures for thousands of years. The intention is to pay respect to Country and welcome visitors. The Elders performing the welcome are giving a blessing for that meeting or event to take place on the land.

TIP: Your local Aboriginal Land Council or Native Title representative body can advise on organising a Welcome to Country by a Traditional Owner in your area.

TIP: When deciding to include a welcome to Country at your formal event you must plan well in advance and ensure the Elders or Traditional Custodians are remunerated.