

Acknowledgement of Country

One of the ways to acknowledge our strong Aboriginal heritage is to acknowledge the land we live, work, and play on as land Traditional Owners have taken care of for millennia. Acknowledgement of Country provides an opportunity for anyone to show respect for Traditional Owners and the continuing connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Country.

You can write your own or choose one from the many that have been written by Indigenous or Non- Indigenous people. You could also use the local Indigenous language.

An Acknowledgement of Country is usually delivered as part of Welcome and Housekeeping at meetings and events. It should be delivered at significant/large internal meetings or meetings with external participants

There are three different types of Acknowledgement of Country:

A Generic Acknowledgement is used if you don't know the name of the people on whose land you are gathered, or if there are disputes about the land (multiple Aboriginal peoples identify as Traditional Custodians for that area). The words should be: 'I would like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we gather/meet today and pay my respects to their Elders past and present. I extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples here today.'

A Specific acknowledgement is used where there are no disputes and you know the name of the people on whose land you are gathered. All early childhood services should research and know the name of the people on whose land their site sits. The words used in an acknowledgement would then include the name of the Traditional Custodians of the land. 'I would like to begin by acknowledging the (insert name of people here (e.g. Kurna) people, Traditional Custodians of the land on which we gather/meet today, and pay my respects to their Elders past and present. I extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples here today.'

A General Acknowledgement is for events Australia wide – webinar / printed material

The words then are:

'In the spirit of reconciliation, the [organisation] acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.'

Welcome to Country

Only Traditional Owners/Custodians of the land on which the event takes place can deliver a Welcome to Country.

To arrange a Welcome to Country in your area, contact the Indigenous Regional Network <https://www.indigenous.gov.au/regional-network> office nearest you. They can provide contact details for a Traditional Owner/Custodian.

Ref: https://www.indigenous.gov.au/contact-us/welcome_acknowledgement-country

Some more examples of Acknowledgement of Country

'Acknowledgement of Country' by Jonathan Hill (a poet living in NSW)

"Today we stand in footsteps millennia old.

May we acknowledge the Traditional Owners whose cultures and customs have nurtured, and continue to nurture, this land, since men and women awoke from the great dream. We honor the presence of these ancestors who reside in the imagination of this land and whose irrepressible spirituality flows through all creation"

'We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.'

'We respect and honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past, present and future. We acknowledge the stories, traditions and living cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on this land and commit to building a brighter future together.'

'We acknowledge and pay our respects to the (Kurna) people, the traditional custodians whose ancestral lands we gather on. We acknowledge the deep feelings of attachment and relationship of the Kurna people to country and we respect and value their past, present and ongoing connection to the land and cultural beliefs.'

'We would like to acknowledge this land that we meet on today which is the traditional land for Kurna people, and that we respect their spiritual relationships with their country.'

'We acknowledge Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the Traditional Custodians of lands, waterways and skies across Australia.

We thank you for sharing and caring for the land we learn and play on.

We pay our respects to Elders, and we share our friendship and kindness.'

'I would like to acknowledge that this meeting is being held on Aboriginal land, the land of the [Aboriginal group/clan] people of the [Aboriginal nation] nation. I pay respect to their Elders past and present.'

References:

<https://reconciliationsa.org.au/welcome-and-acknowledgement-of-country/>

<https://australianstogether.org.au/resources/welcome-to-and-acknowledgement-of-country/>

<https://nunku.org.au/about-us/acknowledgement-of-country/>

<https://www.commonground.org.au/learn/acknowledgement-of-country>

<https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/spirituality/welcome-to-country-acknowledgement-of-country/>