

# The history and meaning of Welcome to Country and how it differs to an Acknowledgement of Country

## History

A Welcome to Country is a cultural ritual and formal ceremony performed to honour the land upon which an event or gathering is being held on in Australia. This practice dates back 65,000 years. It is intended to highlight the cultural significance of the surrounding area where descendants of the respective Aboriginal clan or language group are recognised as the original inhabitants of the area. A Welcome to Country can only be performed and recognised as culturally appropriate, if it is performed by a recognised First Nations Elder or Leader of the relevant clan. Welcomes to Country are sometimes accompanied by traditional smoking ceremonies, music, or dance. This practice is different to an Acknowledgement of Country.

## How to deliver an Acknowledgement of Country

An Acknowledgement of Country is an opportunity for Non-First Nation's people to show respect towards First Nations Traditional Owners and the continuing connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to country. An Acknowledgement of Country, just

like a Welcome to Country, is delivered at the beginning of a gathering, meeting, speech, or event. There is no precise wording or phrase for an Acknowledgement of Country. The key to delivery is being sincere when speaking the chosen wording and, where possible, do some research on the Country (or land) and the Traditional Owner you are acknowledging.

## A guide on suggested wording you could use is provided below

"I'd like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet today, the (people) of the (nation) and pay my respects to Elders past and present."

"I would like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet today. I would also like to pay my respects to Elders past and present."

## SSI's Acknowledgement of Country

SSI acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Australians and Traditional Custodians of the lands where we live, learn and work. We pay respect to Elders past and present and recognise their continuous connection to Country.