



# Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country Protocols

# Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country Protocols

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are the original peoples of this land. Welcome to Country and Acknowledgment of Country are ways to recognise their unique position as traditional custodians, and to acknowledge the continuing significance of Indigenous people in Australian culture and history.

We acknowledge the first peoples of this country Australia who have lived with Creator God through the whole of creation of land, sea, waterways and life.

**Aunt Joan Hendriks, Elder.  
Doctor of the University, Honoris Causa**



In line with Australian Catholic University's commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, employment and research, ACU is committed to improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees. On-going developments against these outcomes have been achieved through:

- The development and implementation of a RAP
- Increasing representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on key University decision-making committees
- Implemented the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy 2018 - 2020
- Maintained the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff network
- Developed the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy
- Continued the commitment to providing welcoming and culturally safe space for students to study in an environment that promotes positive Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity
- Developing the Cultural Capabilities of all University staff.

## **IMPORTANCE OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY AND WELCOME TO COUNTRY**

Ceremonies and protocols are a fundamental part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Valuing and respecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander protocols, practices, events and activities are important to increasing the understanding and mutual respect for cultural practices by both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and the wider community.

Incorporating welcoming and acknowledgment protocols into official meetings and events recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Australians and custodians of their land. It promotes an awareness of the past and ongoing connection to place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

We encourage ACU staff and students to acknowledge our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities at the start of public events and events of significance.

# Welcome to Country

*Welcome to Country* generally occur at significant events and are given by a local Elder who is a Traditional Owner. A *Welcome to Country* is a ceremony that is delivered or in some instances performed by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples to welcome visitors to their traditional land. It can take many forms, depending on the particular culture of the traditional owners, and can include singing, dancing, smoking ceremonies or a speech in traditional language.

## PROTOCOL FOR WELCOME TO COUNTRY

Protocols for welcoming visitors to Country have been a part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures for thousands of years. Despite the absence of fences or visible borders, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups had clear boundaries or landmarks separating their Country from that of other groups. Crossing into another group's Country required a request for permission to enter and when that permission was granted the hosting group would welcome the visitors, offering them safe passage. Today these protocols have been adapted to contemporary circumstances but the importance of welcoming visitors and offering safe passage remains.

The *Welcome to Country* ceremony is delivered by Elders who are Traditional Owners and recognised as the Aboriginal community spokesperson or by an established local cultural service provider. The Coordinator of the Indigenous Higher Education Unit on your campus can assist in nominating the appropriate Elder or organisation.

When organising a *Welcome to Country*, it is important to consider the following factors:

- The Elder or community member is provided with information regarding the audience they are welcoming
- The equipment the Elder or community member is required to use if applicable, for example, a microphone and being on a stage
- Offering transport where necessary
- The Elder may require assistance of a support person
- Cultural services such as *Welcome to Country* are using Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultural knowledges and intellectual property. Providers of these services should be appropriately remunerated.
- Advanced notice is suggested to be able to accommodate the request.

# Acknowledgement of Country

An Acknowledgement of Country is an opportunity for anyone to show respect for Traditional Owners and the continuing connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Country. It can be informal or formal and used at meetings or small events. If possible the speaker or meeting coordinator can commence the meeting by Acknowledging Country. An Acknowledgement of Country values and respects the Traditional Owners of the land on which the meeting or event is being held, and recognises the long and continuing connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to their Country.

## PROTOCOL FOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Where the name of the Traditional Owner group is known, it is specifically used. Where it is not known, or Native Title is not resolved, a general acknowledgement of Country is given.

Within ACU the Indigenous Higher Education Units should be the first point of contact in exploring options for Acknowledgement of Country.

Below are two standardised 'Acknowledgments' that correctly acknowledge the traditional custodians for the appropriate reasons.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT 1

### Face to face Acknowledgment

In recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples spiritual and cultural connection to Country and in continuing ACU's commitment to Reconciliation, it is customary to acknowledge Country as we pass through. Today we acknowledge and pay our respects to the First Peoples, the Traditional Owners and custodians of the lands and waterways. We thank them for their continued custodianship.

We acknowledge and celebrate the continuation of a living culture that has a unique role in this region. We acknowledge Elders past and present and thank them for their wisdom and guidance as we walk in their footsteps.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT 2

### Multiple campus teleconference and video conference Acknowledgment

In recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' spiritual and cultural connection to Country and in continuing ACU's commitment to Reconciliation, I would like to commence the meeting by acknowledging the First Peoples and the Traditional Owners and custodians of the Country where ACU campuses are located.

We respectfully acknowledge our Elders past and present and remember that they have passed on their wisdom to us in various ways. Let us hold this in trust as we work and serve our communities.





There are four Indigenous Higher Education Units across seven ACU campuses, and these are detailed below.

CAMPUS	UNIT	TRADITIONAL CUSTODIAN	PRONUNCIATION
Signadou Canberra	Dhara Daramoolen (Earth, Spirit)	Ngunnawal Peoples	Nun-a-wal
Aquinas Ballarat	Jim-baa-yer (To Learn - To Teach)	Wadawurrung Peoples from the Kulin Nation	Wuther-rong
St Patrick's Melbourne	Jim-baa-yer (To Learn - To Teach)	Wurundjeri Peoples from the Kulin Nation	Were-un-jeree
St Francis of Assisi Adelaide	Jim-baa-yer (To Learn - To Teach)	Kaurna Peoples	Gar-na
McAuley Brisbane	Weemala (Distant View)	Turrabul and Jaggera Peoples	Tour-able Yug-ger-uh
MacKillop North Sydney	Yalbalinga (Place of Learning)	Cammeraygal Clan	Cam-mer-ray-gal
Mount Saint Mary Strathfield	Yalbalinga (Place of Learning)	Wangal Clan	Won-gal

We acknowledge that this artwork was created exclusively for First Peoples and Equity Pathways by Gilimbaa.