GUIDELINES FOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country are two different ways in which we pay respect and recognition to the traditional custodians of the land the University is built upon.

Welcome to Country is a formal welcome onto Aboriginal land. Welcomes are conducted by recognised Aboriginal Elders of the traditional custodians/tribe at formal University functions such as graduation ceremonies, community engagement events and any event where dignitaries are in attendance.

To arrange a Welcome to Country, contact the Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) for your campus. There may be a fee associated with having an Elder perform a Welcome to Country. Your LALC can advise what the fee may be.

Acknowledgement of Country can be conducted by any person at the University and doesn’t require an Elder or Wollotuka staff to be present. Acknowledgements are conducted at less formal events and meetings.

HOW TO ACKNOWLEDGE COUNTRY

- When a meeting or informal event commences, a Chair or Speaker begins by acknowledging that the meeting or function is taking place in the country of the traditional custodians.

- Where the name of the traditional custodians is known, it is specifically used. Where it is not known a general acknowledgement is given.

- There are two versions that can be used for Acknowledgement of Country on the Callaghan, Ourimbah and Port Macquarie campuses.

For the Callaghan Campus:

“We acknowledge and respect the Pambalong clan of the Awabakal people, traditional custodians of the land on which this campus of the University of Newcastle is situated.”

OR

“The University of Newcastle respectfully acknowledges the traditional custodians: the Pambalong clan of the Awabakal people on whose traditional land this Callaghan campus of the University of Newcastle is located.”

For the Ourimbah Campus:

“We acknowledge and respect the Darkinjung people, traditional custodians of the land on which this campus of the University of Newcastle is situated.”

OR
"The University of Newcastle respectfully acknowledges the traditional custodians: the Darkinjung people on whose traditional land this Ourimbah campus of the University of Newcastle is located."

For the Port Macquarie Campus:

"We acknowledge and respect the Birapai people, traditional custodians of the land on which this campus of the University of Newcastle is situated."

OR

"The University of Newcastle respectfully acknowledges the traditional custodians: the Birapai people on whose traditional land this Port Macquarie campus of the University of Newcastle is located."

REMEMBER: Anyone can perform an Acknowledgement of Country. You don’t require an Elder or staff from Wollotuka to do this.

FAQ’s

- When should the Welcome/Acknowledgement of Country be performed at an event? 
  If planning an event, consider including the Welcome to Country/Acknowledgement at the opening of the event.

- How do I contact the Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) to request an Elder to perform a Welcome to Country?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LALC</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Phone</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AWABAKAL</td>
<td>127 Maitland Rd ISLINGTON NSW 2296</td>
<td>02 4965 4532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIRAPAI</td>
<td>Birapai Community Centre Ashton St PORT MACQUARIE NSW 2444</td>
<td>02 6584 9066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DARKINJUNG</td>
<td>168 Pacific Hwy WATANOBBI NSW 2259</td>
<td>02 4351 2930</td>
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- What considerations should I make when an Elder is coming to campus?
  Ensure that you give at least 10 days’ notice to the Elder to perform a Welcome to Country and allow enough time in your program for the Elder to do Welcome to Country. You may need to assist with arranging their transport and need to ensure they can easily access your event.

- What is the fee for having an Elder conduct a Welcome to Country?
  Contact the relevant LALC to discuss the fees associated with Welcome to Country.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

See documents below:
- Reconciliation Australia: 'Welcome to and Acknowledgement of Country'
- The City of Newcastle: 'Guidelines for Acknowledgement of Aboriginal Custodians and Welcome to Country'
Welcome to and Acknowledgement of Country

1. What is 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. Despite the absence of fences or visible borders, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups had clear boundaries separating their Country from that of other groups. Crossing into another group’s Country required a request for permission to enter. When permission was granted the hosting group would welcome the visitors, offering them safe passage and protection of their spiritual being during the journey. While visitors were provided with a safe passage, they also had to respect the protocols and rules of the land owner group while on their Country.

Today, obviously much has changed, and these protocols have been adapted to contemporary circumstances. However, the essential elements of welcoming visitors and offering safe passage remain in place. A Welcome to Country occurs at the beginning of a formal event and can take many forms including singing, dancing, smoking ceremonies or a speech in traditional language or English. A Welcome to Country is delivered by Traditional Owners, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have been given permission from Traditional Owners, to welcome visitors to their Country.

2. What is an Acknowledgment 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 given by both non-Indigenous people and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

There are no set protocols or wording for an Acknowledgement of Country, though often a statement may take the following forms.

General: I’d 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.

Specific: 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.

Similar to a Welcome to Country, an Acknowledgement of Country is generally offered at the beginning of a meeting, speech or formal occasion.
3. Why are Welcomes to Country and Acknowledgements of Country important?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have experienced a long history of exclusion from Australian history books, the Australian flag, the Australian anthem and for many years, Australian democracy. This history of dispossession and colonisation lies at the heart of the disparity between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians today. Including recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in events, meetings and national symbols is one part of ending the exclusion that has been so damaging. Incorporating welcoming and acknowledgement protocols into official meetings and events recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Australians and Traditional Custodians of land. It promotes an ongoing connection to place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and shows respect for Traditional Owners.

In Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, the meaning of Country is more than just ownership or connection to land, as Professor Mick Dodson explains:

“When we talk about traditional ‘Country’...we mean something beyond the dictionary definition of the word. For Aboriginal Australians...we might mean homeland, or tribal or clan area and we might mean more than just a place on the map. For us, Country is a word for all the values, places, resources, stories and cultural obligations associated with that area and its features. It describes the entirety of our ancestral domains. While they may all no longer necessarily be the title-holders to land, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are still connected to the Country of their ancestors and most consider themselves the custodians or caretakers of their land.”
Guidelines for Acknowledgment of Aboriginal Custodians and Welcome to Country

Observing Aboriginal cultural protocols demonstrates respect for local cultural traditions, history, and diversity; and acknowledges Aboriginal peoples' connection to and respect for Country.

A key commitment in Council's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) is to build understanding of protocols and guidelines for Acknowledgement of Traditional Custodians and Welcome to Country ceremonies to ensure there is shared meaning behind our actions. One deliverable under this RAP is to develop a toolkit for community use.

This toolkit provides the Newcastle community with practical advice on when and how to perform an Acknowledgement or arrange a Welcome to Country. These protocols have been developed in consultation with Council’s Gurakai Aboriginal Advisory Committee and Reconciliation Working Group.

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**The City of Newcastle’s Statement of Acknowledgement (in-part)**

*To be used as an example*

“The City of Newcastle acknowledges that we are meeting on the traditional country of the Awabakal and Worimi peoples.

We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and continuing relationship with the land, and that they are the proud survivors of more than two hundred years of dispossession....”

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<th>Description</th>
<th>When to use</th>
<th>Considerations</th>
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| On 29th October 2003 Council unanimously endorsed a formal Statement of Acknowledgement that recognises Awabakal and Worimi as First Peoples and their local sovereignty. This statement was developed from a commitment by Newcastle City Council to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of the City of Newcastle in 1998. Organisations can use this statement as inspiration to create their own full and formal Statement of Acknowledgement if they wish. | • Board meetings  
• Official functions  
• Significant one-off functions or high profile receptions  
• Award ceremonies e.g.: staff service awards  
• NAIDOC Week/National Reconciliation Week events  
• Sponsored community events  
• Official openings  
• When no Elder is available to perform a Welcome to Country. | This Statement is read aloud as the first item of business:  
• In Council meetings the Statement is read aloud by the Lord Mayor. The CEO, Chair or emcee shall read it in corporate situations.  
• At major events the Statement is read by the first speaker or host  
This statement may be changed to reflect the location of where it is being made, i.e.: Worimi, Awabakal or Minyara Country. If you are unsure about this, contact the nearest Local Aboriginal Land Council to confirm (contact details on next page). |

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**Short Acknowledgement**

“[Organisation’s name] acknowledges that we are meeting on the traditional country of the Awabakal and Worimi peoples. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present.”

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<tr>
<th>Description</th>
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<th>Considerations</th>
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</table>
| A short Acknowledgement can be used on occasions where it is not considered to warrant a longer statement but there is still a requirement of a level of formality. | • Small formal meetings where Aboriginal people are in attendance or Aboriginal matters are being discussed  
• Forums or workshops  
• Small events or receptions  
• NAIDOC Week/National Reconciliation Week events | This Statement is read aloud as the first item of business by the Chair or first speaker.  
This statement may be changed to reflect the location of where it is being made, i.e.: Worimi, Awabakal or Minyara Country. If you are unsure about this, contact the nearest Local Aboriginal Land Council to confirm (contact details on next page). |
Acknowledging Aboriginal Elders and custodians who are present at an event

"I would like to begin by acknowledging that this meeting is being held on the traditional lands of the (Awabakal or Worimi or Mindaibba) peoples and pay my respects to them and their Elders past and present, including those in attendance today: (name/s if known)".

Or a shorter version:

"I acknowledge that this meeting is being held on Aboriginal land and pay my respects to Elders past and present, including those in attendance today".

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>When to use</th>
<th>Considerations</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When a smaller or less formal gathering is taking place the first speaker</td>
<td>General meetings both internal and external.</td>
<td>Elders can be acknowledged by name. Any other term should only be used with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>may acknowledge Traditional Custodians or Aboriginal Elders if they are</td>
<td></td>
<td>prior approval from the Elder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>present.</td>
<td></td>
<td>A general acknowledgement can also be stated in situations where staff are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>unsure of the name of the local Traditional Custodians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;I'd like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of the land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>on which we are meeting today. I would also like to pay my respects to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Elders past and present.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Response to Welcome to Country

"[Organisation's name] recognises Aboriginal people as the first peoples of this nation and respectfully acknowledges the (Awabakal or Worimi or Mindaibba) peoples of the land on which we meet today. We pay tribute to Elders past and present and it is a privilege to be standing on Country.

Or

"I acknowledge Aboriginal people as the first peoples of this nation and respectfully acknowledge the (Awabakal or Worimi or Mindaibba) peoples of the land on which we meet today. I pay tribute to Elders past and present and it is a great privilege to be standing on Country."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>When to use</th>
<th>Considerations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Welcome to Country should be organised as the first item of business for</td>
<td>• At the conclusion of the ceremony the speaker who follows immediately after</td>
<td>In the first instance staff should contact the relevant Local Aboriginal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>large significant events where large participant numbers are expected. Only</td>
<td>the Welcome to Country provides a response. The text in the box above can be</td>
<td>Land Council (LALC). In the Newcastle LGA there are three LALCs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>an Indigenous Elder may perform a Welcome to Country. Although a Welcome to</td>
<td>used in response to a Welcome to Country • Major conferences • Opening of</td>
<td>• Awabakal LALC 4965 4532 127 Maitland Rd, Islington, 2296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country is a formal occasion there is no specific format or outline or</td>
<td>new major facilities • Major internal or public event</td>
<td>• Worimi LALC 4033 8800 2163 Nelson Bay Rd, Williamtown, 2318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exact wording for the speech. Organisational staff will need to explain</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Mindaibba LALC 4965 1500 1a Cheirisford Dr, Metford, 2323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the type of public event that is being organised and provide a brief</td>
<td></td>
<td>• The LALC can assist with identifying local Traditional Custodians who can</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>containing important aspects associated with the event or program,</td>
<td></td>
<td>perform a Welcome to Country • Commence planning well in advance to allow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>including any VIPs in attendance. Traditional Custodians or Elders should</td>
<td></td>
<td>time for decision making and discussion with LALC’s and Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>also be asked how they would like to be introduced and referred to i.e.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Custodians • It should also be noted that a service fee will often be charged</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aunty, Uncle, etc., and must be seated alongside other dignitaries and</td>
<td></td>
<td>for providing a Welcome to Country ceremony. Aboriginal peoples are the owners</td>
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<tr>
<td>speakers at the event. These ceremonies often include speeches, rituals</td>
<td></td>
<td>of their cultural knowledge and expertise, and when engaged must be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and dance. Acknowledgements also may be accompanied by speeches, rituals</td>
<td></td>
<td>remunerated for their skill and time.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| and dance.                                                                 |                                                                             |"