

Acknowledgement of Country

WHAT?

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.

WHO?

It can be offered by any person and is given at the beginning of a meeting, speech or event. There is no specific wording for an Acknowledgement of Country, just be sincere and, if possible, do some research on the Country you are acknowledging.

HOW?

Suggested wording could include:

"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."

"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."

If you are hosting or attending a virtual meeting, you can acknowledge that and include the traditional owners of the land where the meeting is hosted / you are speaking from. It is also possible to use a more generic form to acknowledge the traditional owners of the countries where all attendees are based, and any First Nations people present in the meeting.

An Acknowledgement of Country can be expressed on behalf of an organization in different forms of communications, such as email signature blocks, websites, and on social media, for example:

"The Australian National University acknowledges, celebrates and pays our respects to the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people of the Canberra region and to all First Nations Australians on whose traditional lands we meet and work, and whose cultures are among the oldest continuing cultures in human history."

Acknowledgement of Country can be adapted and expanded to reflect different contexts. For example, a meeting of astronomers might acknowledge the contributions and sophistication of First Nations knowledges.

WHEN?

An Acknowledgement of Country should not be a mandated token gestures or empty rhetoric. It should be delivered at significant/large internal and community events. Albeit it is not necessary for informal meetings, or more regular and smaller administrative meetings, group meetings, committee meetings and alike, a person should always feel free to do an Acknowledgement of Country if they wish.

If multiple speakers are present, once an acknowledgment is performed, it is not necessary for every single speaker to continue to acknowledge.

List of events where Acknowledgement of Country is recommended:

-RSAA All-School meetings (done once at the start)

- Seminars and colloquia (done by the host. Host to check with speaker if they wish to do it instead)
- Public social and outreach events (done by host/MC)

NOTES

While an Acknowledgement of Country can be performed by any person as a way to show respect for Aboriginal peoples, cultures and heritage, a Welcome to Country is a ceremony where the ongoing custodians formally welcome people onto their land. Welcome to Country follows thousands of years of protocols around welcoming people to Country and offering safe passage and protection to visitors. It is a significant recognition and is made formally by local Aboriginal custodians/s (in most cases, Elders) of the Country.

Resources:

<https://www.reconciliation.org.au/reconciliation/acknowledgement-of-country-and-welcome-to-country>

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/strategies-and-reports/our-reconciliation-action-plan/acknowledgement-of-country>