

Guidance Note

Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country

Version 1.0

29 January 2025



Curtin University and The University of Western Australia, 2025.

The Resilient Landscapes Hub is funded by the Australian Government under the National Environmental Science Program. The Hub is hosted by The University of Western Australia.

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to and stewardship of land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures and to their Ancestors, Elders and future leaders. Our Indigenous research partnerships are a valued and respected component of National Environmental Science Program research.

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1 Introduction

This Guidance Note provides advice on the appropriate use of a *Welcome to Country* and *Acknowledgement of Country* for the NESP Resilient Landscapes Hub ('the Hub'). This Guidance Note was adapted from the Griffith University '*Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country Policy*'.

The Resilient Landscapes Hub acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians as the Traditional Custodians of Country and recognises their continuing connection to land, water, sea, culture and community. The Hub is committed to authentic, equitable and enduring partnerships that recognise the primacy of Indigenous Australians' obligations, rights and responsibilities to the stewardship of their traditional lands and waters.

It is important that staff, students, collaborators and visitors are recognise and value the significance of Indigenous Australians, their cultures and their contributions to the Hub.

2 Scope of Guidance Note

This Guidance Note has been developed to assist Hub staff with the appropriate use of *Welcome to Country* and *Acknowledgement of Country*.

Advice regarding a spoken *Welcome to Country* or *Acknowledgement of Country* applies to all events, meetings and functions arranged by members of the Hub.

Advice regarding a written *Acknowledgement of Country* applies to all written and visually presented works including presentations, publications, reports, posters and other written media produced by members of the Hub.

Note: The Hub is a collaboration between multiple research providers. Please be aware that the policies of a collaborating institution will override the Hub Guidance Notes where there is a difference. It is the responsibility of all Hub team members to be aware of their institution's policies and procedures.

3 *Welcome to Country*

A *Welcome to Country* is a ceremony where a Traditional Owner/Custodian formally welcomes people to their Country and provides acknowledgement of and consent to events taking place on their Country. *Welcome to Country* ceremonies can take many forms including spoken words, song, ceremony or a combination of these presentations.

3.1 When is a *Welcome to Country* appropriate?

In general, a *Welcome to Country* will be performed at:

- any inaugural meeting that includes attendees external to the project
- any event where there are more than 10 people in attendance and there are invited members of the public and/or dignitaries in attendance.

3.2 *Welcome to Country* at meetings, events and functions

Not all Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people can perform a *Welcome to Country*. A *Welcome to Country* ceremony may only be performed by Traditional Owners/Custodians who have the cultural authority to speak for the Country on which the *Welcome* is occurring, such as a recognised Elder within the local community.

It is the responsibility of the person or group organising an event to ensure that the Traditional Owners/Custodians have been invited to perform the *Welcome to Country*.

To arrange a *Welcome to Country*, the Traditional Owners/Custodians of the land on which the event will be held must first be identified and contacted. There are many different Indigenous groups, communities and Nations across Australia. Details on who the Traditional Owners/Custodians of a certain area are can usually be found by visiting the applicable local government website, consulting the AIATSIS Map of Indigenous Australia, or contacting the applicable Registered Native Title Body Corporate or representative body. Once the local Traditional Owners/Custodians have been identified, contact should be made with them through a local Indigenous organisation or the local representative body. Note that the Traditional Owners/Custodians of Country may be disputed in some locations.

When approaching a Traditional Owner/Custodian to perform a *Welcome to Country*, the event organiser should provide the Traditional Owner/Custodian with information on the theme and purpose of the event and must ensure the Traditional Owner/Custodian is given appropriate lead time.

A *Welcome to Country* always occurs at the opening of an event and is usually the first item on the program. It is the responsibility of the speaker who follows immediately after the *Welcome to Country* ceremony to provide an appropriate response. Part of the response should acknowledge the person who has delivered the *Welcome to Country*. The following can be used in response to the traditional *Welcome to Country*:

'I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we are meeting and pay my respect to Elders, past and present, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.'

It is not necessary for every speaker at an event or gathering to provide a response or an *Acknowledgement of Country*.

Delivery of a *Welcome to Country* is a service and representatives should be appropriately remunerated for their time and commitment. The fee should be agreed upon with the representative/s prior to the event.

It may not always be possible to organise a *Welcome to Country* (for example, in the instance that no Traditional Owners/Custodians are available to deliver a *Welcome*). In such situations, an *Acknowledgement of Country* should instead be delivered.

4 Acknowledgement of Country

An *Acknowledgement of Country* is a demonstration of respect dedicated to the Traditional Owners/Custodians of Country where an event or gathering is being conducted and recognises the continuing connection that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have to Country.

4.1 When is an *Acknowledgement of Country* appropriate?

An *Acknowledgement of Country* should ideally be performed at any large internal meeting, at meetings with external participants, and at gatherings of three or more people. It must be performed when people external to a project are in attendance (such as visitors to the university as well as visitors from other university departments). An *Acknowledgement of Country* may also be performed in instances where a *Welcome to Country* would be preferable but is not possible (for example, when no Traditional Owners/Custodians are available to deliver a *Welcome*).

An *Acknowledgement of Country* can be performed by any individual, Indigenous or non-Indigenous, participating in an occasion of any kind. It is appropriate for the host of the ceremony to make the *Acknowledgement*, unless another person has been asked to perform this. It is the responsibility of the chair of the meeting, host or master of ceremonies of an event to ensure that the *Acknowledgement of Country* takes place in an appropriate manner.

To prepare an *Acknowledgement of Country* the Traditional Owners/Custodians of the land on which the event will be held must first be identified. There are many different Indigenous groups, communities and Nations across Australia. Details on who the Traditional Owners/Custodians of a certain area are can usually be found by visiting the applicable local government website, consulting the AIATSIS Map of Indigenous Australia, or contacting the applicable Registered Native Title Body Corporate or representative body. Where lands are disputed, or there is no clear Owner/Custodian group, a general *Acknowledgement* can be made instead.

The *Acknowledgement of Country* comprises a short statement at the beginning of the opening speech. It should be included prior to other acknowledgements and formalities.

An example *Acknowledgement of Country* for Perth, Western Australia would be:

'We acknowledge the Whadjuk People of the Noongar Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the land we are meeting on today and thank them for their stewardship of Country. We respectfully acknowledge and pay respect to their culture and customary practices and to their Ancestors, Elders and future leaders.'

It is not necessary for every speaker at an event or gathering to provide a response or an *Acknowledgement of Country*.

It is not appropriate to use Indigenous words or phrases (apart from names of groups) as part of an acknowledgement unless permission has been granted by the local Indigenous community to do so.

Acknowledgements can be made in language by Indigenous people speaking the language of their Country.

4.2 Use of an *Acknowledgement of Country* for virtual meetings and events

The guidance provided above also applies to virtual meetings and events.

In addition, where attendees join from different locations the *Acknowledgement of Country* can be delivered with reference to the specific land on which the individual delivering it is located, followed by a general *Acknowledgement of Country* in reference to the lands others are joining from. Alternatively, all individuals present at the virtual gathering can deliver their own *Acknowledgement of Country* in reference to their specific location.

An example *Acknowledgement of Country* for delivery at a virtual gathering is:

'I acknowledge the Whadjuk People of the Noongar Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the land I am coming to you from today and thank them for their stewardship of Country. I respectfully acknowledge and honour all Indigenous people [or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people] across Australia on the lands we are coming from today and pay my respects to their culture and customary practices and to their Ancestors, Elders and future leaders.'

4.3 Use of an *Acknowledgement of Country* for written material, visual media and audio.

An *Acknowledgement of Country* should be included in written or visual publications, such as reports, journal articles, posters, audio and video recordings.

To prepare an *Acknowledgement of Country* the Traditional Owners/Custodians of the land on which the event will be held must first be identified. There are many different Indigenous groups, communities, and Nations across Australia. Details on who the Traditional Owners/Custodians of a certain area are can usually be found by visiting the applicable local government website, consulting the AIATSIS Map of Indigenous Australia, or contacting the applicable Registered Native Title Body Corporate or representative body. Where lands are disputed, or there is no clear Owner/Custodian group, a general *Acknowledgement* can be made instead.

An example *Acknowledgement of Country* for written material, visual media and audio where clear Traditional Owners/Custodians can be determined is:

'Curtin University is located on the lands of the Whadjuk people of the Noongar Nation. We acknowledge their custodianship of this Country, and we pay respect to their Ancestors, Elder and future leaders.'

Where lands are disputed, or there is no clear Traditional Owner/Custodian group, a general *Acknowledgement* can be made instead.

An example *Acknowledgement of Country* for written material, visual media and audio where no clear Traditional Owner/Custodian can be determined is:

'We respectfully acknowledge and honour Indigenous people across Australia and pay our respects to their culture and customary practices and to their Ancestors, Elders and future leaders.'

5 Definitions

The Hub

The NESP Resilient Landscapes Hub.

Welcome to Country

A *Welcome to Country* is a ceremony where a Traditional Owner/Custodian formally welcomes people to their land. *Welcome to Country* ceremonies can take many forms including singing, dancing, smoking rituals and/or a speech. *Welcomes* should only be delivered by Traditional Owners/Custodians – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders – who have the cultural authority to speak for the Country on which the *Welcome* is occurring.

Acknowledgement of Country

An *Acknowledgement of Country* is a demonstration of respect dedicated to the Traditional Owners/Custodians of the land or sea where an event or gathering is being conducted. It recognises the continuing connection Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have to Country. An *Acknowledgement of Country* can be offered by any person.

6 Related Documents/Links

AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

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

7 Revision History

Version	Date	Hub team member	Key changes and notes
0.1	27 June 2023	Haylee D'Agui Senior Research Officer	Drafted
0.2	28 October 2024	Haylee D'Agui Senior Research Officer	Revisions to text, to incorporate feedback from Stephen van Leeuwen.
0.2	01 November 2024	Oliver Tester Indigenous Research Facilitator	Minor revisions, addition of new information.
0.2	04 November 2024	Haylee D'Agui Senior Research Officer	Minor revisions.
0.2	11 December 2024	Stephen van Leeuwen Senior Indigenous Facilitator	Minor revisions.
1.0	29 January 2025	Research Executive Committee	Approved.

Appendix 1: Examples of wording for an Acknowledgement of Country

Example Acknowledgement of Country for in person events, meetings, functions, etc.

'I acknowledge the Whadjuk People of the Noongar Nation as the Traditional Owners of the land we are meeting on today and thank them for their stewardship of Country. We respectfully acknowledge and pay respect to their culture and customary practices and to their Ancestors, Elders and future leaders.'

Example Acknowledgement of Country for virtual events, meetings, functions, etc.

'I acknowledge the Whadjuk People of the Noongar Nation as the Traditional Owners of the land I am coming to you from today and thank them for their stewardship of Country. I respectfully acknowledge and honour all Indigenous people [or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people] across Australia on the lands we are coming from today and pay my respects to their culture and customary practices and to their Ancestors, Elders and future leaders.'

Example Acknowledgement of Country for written material or visual media (reports, publications, posters)

'The NESP Resilient Landscapes Hub Western Node is located at the University of Western Australia on the lands of the Whadjuk People of the Noongar Nation. We acknowledge their ownership of this Country, and we pay respect to their Ancestors, Elder and future leaders.'

'We respectfully acknowledge and honour Indigenous people across Australia and pay our respects to their culture and customary practices and to their Ancestors, Elders and future leaders.'