



## WELCOME TO AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Incorporating welcoming and acknowledgement protocols 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.

### WELCOME TO COUNTRY

A Welcome to Country is a ceremony performed by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people to welcome visitors to their traditional land. It can take many forms, depending on the particular culture of the traditional owners. It can include singing, dancing, smoking ceremonies or a speech in traditional language or English.

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—like gaining a visa—and when that permission was granted the hosting group would welcome the visitors, offering them safe passage. For example, in some areas visitors would sit outside the boundary of another group's land and light a fire to signal their request to enter. A fire lit in response would indicate approval and welcome from the land owning group and often, on meeting, gifts would be exchanged. 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 but the essential ingredients of welcoming visitors and offering safe passage remain in place.

To arrange a Welcome to Country for your event you should speak to the following Ngunnawal elders:

**Mr Carl Brown**  
H: 02 6299 0437 | M: 0434 638 613

**Mrs Agnes Shea**  
H: 02 6292 2239 | M: 0404 725 222

**Mrs Ruth Bell**  
H: 02 6259 8852 | M: 0427 227 805

If you cannot arrange for a Ngunnawal Elder to attend your event, or if your event is considered too small to warrant a formal Welcome to Country you can make an Acknowledgment of Country

### ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

An Acknowledgement of Country is a way of showing awareness of and respect for the traditional Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander owners of the land on which a meeting or

event is being held, and of recognising the continuing connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to their Country.

An Acknowledgment of Country can be informal or formal and involves visitors acknowledging the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander owners of the land as well as the long and continuing relationship between Indigenous peoples and their Country. At a meeting, speech or formal occasion the speaker can begin their proceedings by offering an Acknowledgement of Country. Unlike a Welcome to Country, it can be performed by a non-Indigenous person. There are no set protocols or wording for an Acknowledgement of Country, though often a statement may take the following form:

*"I would like to acknowledge that this meeting is being held on the traditional lands of the Ngunnawal people, and pay my respect to elders both past and present."*

Or

*"I am honoured to be on the ancestral lands of the Ngunnawal people. I acknowledge the First Australians as the traditional custodians of this continent, whose cultures are among the oldest living cultures in human history. I pay respect to the elders of the community and extend my recognition to their descendants who are present."*

Information provided from the Reconciliation Australia fact sheet "Welcome to and Acknowledgement of Country" for more information go to <http://www.det.wa.edu.au/aboriginaleducation/detcms/portal/>