

Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country

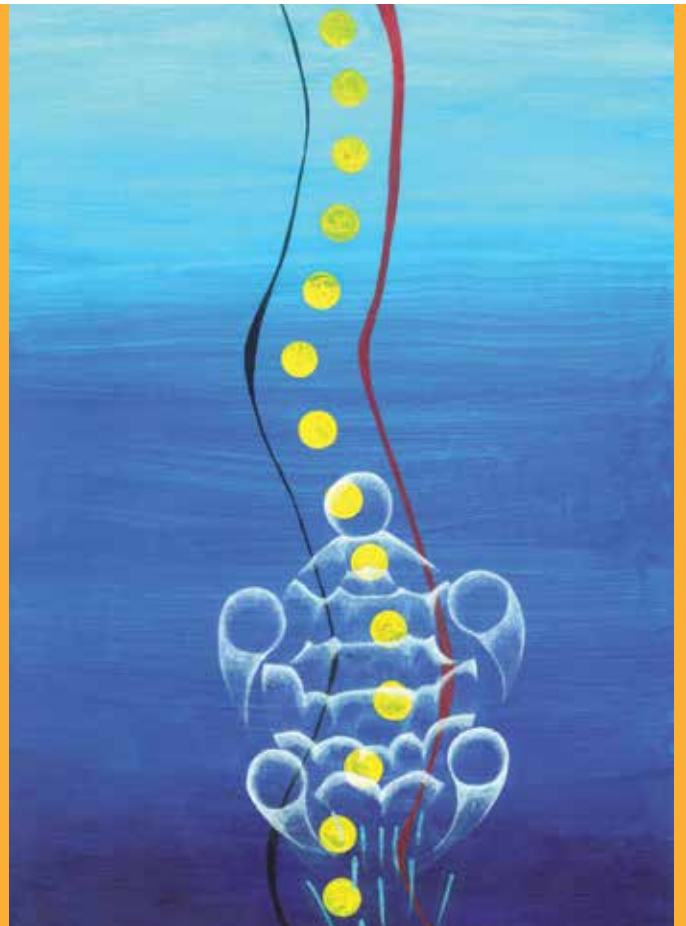
What is a Welcome to Country?

A Welcome to Country is a ceremony performed by an Aboriginal Elder (or a person whose been given authority) to welcome visitors to their traditional land. Protocols for welcoming visitors to Country have been a part of Aboriginal cultures for thousands of years.

A Welcome to Country always occurs at the opening of an event and is usually the first item on the program. The ceremony is conducted by a recognised Aboriginal Elder (or a person whose been given authority) for that region and may include singing, dancing, a smoking ceremony or a speech in traditional language or English. The speaker who follows the Welcome to Country should provide a response which includes an Acknowledgement of Country and of the person who carried out the Welcome.

It is important that organisers seek advice from local Aboriginal people on who the traditional owners of the land are, who would be appropriate to perform the Welcome to Country and when it is required.

In providing cultural services such as a Welcome to Country, artistic performances and ceremonies Aboriginal people are using their intellectual property. As such, providers of these services should be appropriately remunerated. It is normal practice that some form of payment be made either to individuals or to an organisation for providing such as service. This fee may range from \$500 to \$1,000 if a cultural performance is requested.



As a guide, a Welcome to Country should be incorporated into the opening of major or significant events, especially if people are travelling from areas outside of the location of the event. This may include annual events or forums, events of cultural significance, carnivals, state or regional championships, and launches of programs or resources.

Please note that in some areas of Western Australia there may be two or more language groups which have traditional ownership of the land where the event or meeting is being held.

What is an Acknowledgement of Country?

An Acknowledgement of Country is a way of showing awareness of and respect for the traditional Aboriginal owners of the land on which the meeting or event is being held, and of recognising the continuing connection of Aboriginal people to their Country. Unlike a Welcome to Country, a non-Aboriginal person can perform an Acknowledgement of Country.

There are no set protocols or wording for an Acknowledgement of Country. A statement may be along the lines of:

“I would like to acknowledge that this meeting/event/workshop is being held on the traditional lands of the (appropriate group) people, and pay my respect to the Elders both past and present”.

Think about how you could personalise or localise an acknowledgement to make it as meaningful as possible. [This map](#) provides detailed information about specific language, social or nation groups of Aboriginal Australia.

Consider incorporating an Acknowledgement of Country into the opening of all of staff meetings, forums and training sessions as a way of demonstrating respect for Aboriginal cultures and heritage

Why are Welcomes to Country and Acknowledgements of Country important?

Incorporating a Welcome to Country or Acknowledgement of Country into meetings and events recognises Aboriginal people as the first people of the country, promotes awareness of the history and culture of Aboriginal people and acknowledges past and ongoing connection to the land.

Information sourced from:

1. <http://www.det.wa.edu.au/policies/detcms/policy-planning-and-accountability/policies-framework/guidelines/welcome-to-country-and-acknowledgement-of-country-protocols.en>
2. <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/QA-welcome-to-country.pdf>
3. West Australian Football Commission
4. South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council



Who to contact

The department maintains a list of organisations and individuals that are able to provide advice on who would be appropriate to perform a Welcome in various areas throughout the State. If you wish to access this list, or would like to suggest a contact to be included, please get in touch with the Inclusion Team at 9492 9700 or inclusion@dsr.wa.gov.au.