



ANU Indigenous
Department

How to Pay Your Respect to Your Local Mob:

Presented by the ANU Indigenous Department

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been living on and caring for these lands for tens of thousands of years. As a mark of respect for the Traditional Custodians of these lands we take steps to acknowledge country at the commencement of gatherings of groups of people. This promotes an awareness of the past of the local people, and of their ongoing connection and contribution to their country. It also increases understanding and mutual respect between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider community.

This document will provide ANU clubs, societies, colleges, ANUSA groups, and other organisations with a base understanding of the difference between a *Welcome to Country* and an *Acknowledgment of Country*, and when and how these are performed.

After you have read this document, please see the appendix for a guide on how to decide whether you need a Welcome to Country or an Acknowledgment of Country. ANU groups are also encouraged to do their own research and learn more about the local mobs.

Welcome to Country

A Welcome to Country was and still is a ceremony carried out by Traditional Owners to welcome visitors to their lands. A Welcome to Country is performed by an Elder of the local group, who is known in the local community.

Welcome to Country practices have been part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures for thousands of years. Before colonisation, Aboriginal groups had boundaries separating their country from other groups' country, despite no physical borders. For those crossing into another group's country, they would request permission to enter. This was given from the Traditional Custodians through a Welcome to Country. A safe passage through the land was then granted to the visitors.

Following the Welcome to Country ceremony at an event, it is respectful for the following speaker to acknowledge the Welcome and pay their respects to the attending Elder, the community, and the lands on which they are meeting.

Acknowledgement of Country

Acknowledgements of Country demonstrate respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander protocols, cultures, and land or water. They publicly acknowledge the continuing culture and contribution the Traditional Owners have to these lands. If an event is small or informal it is then custom to deliver an Acknowledgement.

An Acknowledgement can be spoken by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as custodians of a different place, or by non-Indigenous people. They should be delivered at the commencement of an event, and delivered by either the host of the event, or another person who has been invited to speak it.

These are the guidelines provided by the Ngunnawal Elders Council. You would first acknowledge the local mob, for example:

I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal and Ngambri peoples. I wish to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region. I would like to pay my respect to Elders, past and present. I would also like to acknowledge and welcome other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be attending today's event.

Following this, you are then encouraged to share what it means to reside on such beautiful country, from the heart. For example, why you are currently on Ngunnawal and Ngambri country, or where your favourite place is.

Contact Details:

To contact a local Ngunnawal Elder for a Welcome to Country, please contact:

ACT Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs: Ngunnawal Elders Council

P. (02) 6207 9784

E. oatsia@act.gov.au

For further contact details of other Ngunnawal Elders in the area, please contact:

Tjabal Indigenous Higher Education Centre

P. (02) 6125 3520

E. tjabal.centre@anu.edu.au

To contact an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander student to invite them to speak the Acknowledgment of Country at your event, please contact:

ANUSA Indigenous Officer:

E. sa.indigenous@anu.edu.au

References:

<https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/spirituality/welcome-to-country-acknowledgement-of-country>

<https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/dethome/yr2005/welcomecountry.pdf>

<https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/people/respect-for-elders-and-culture>

Document produced by the ANUSA Indigenous Department.
Authorised by Makayla-May Brinckley
2017 ANUSA Indigenous Officer

This document was produced by the ANUSA Indigenous Department, with reference to the Ngunnawal Elders Council and the Tjabal Indigenous Higher Education Centre. It is intended to be used as a reference point for ANU groups holding events at ANU, and is not intended to speak over the Traditional Custodians of this land, the Ngunnawal and Ngambri peoples. It is recommended to reach out to local Ngunnawal and Ngambri Elders for any events you are planning for further information and guidance.

Appendix: Your event or meeting guide

At the commencement of an event, it is appropriate to have either a Welcome to Country or an Acknowledgement of Country, depending on its size, the guests, and its level of formality. It is crucial when planning an event to consult with the local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people of the community to ensure the appropriate recognition is given and the appropriate people are there.

Please use your best judgement when using the following chart with each gathering must be individually assessed to determine what is most appropriate. For example, if you are inviting people to a gathering from interstate, or if you have any distinguished or "high profile" guests, it is best practice to perform a Welcome to Country.

