

Acknowledgement of Country



Australian Catholic University Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country Protocols

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are the original peoples of this land. Welcome to Country and Acknowledgment of Country are ways to recognise their unique position as traditional custodians, and to acknowledge the continuing significance of Indigenous people in Australian culture and history.

We acknowledge the first peoples of this country Australia who have lived with Creator God through the whole of creation of land, sea, waterways and life.

Aunt Joan Hendricks, Elder.

In line with Australian Catholic University's commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, employment and research, ACU is committed to improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees. On-going developments against these outcomes have been achieved through:

- The Statement of Commitment to Reconciliation that was approved by Senate in March 1998,
- The establishment of Indigenous Education Units/ Indigenous Higher Education Units,
- The creation of ACU National Institute for Indigenous Education, now the Centre for Indigenous Education and Research,
- Indigenous Employment Strategy now the Indigenous Employment Strategic Framework.

To ensure that ACU embeds inclusive practices for students and staff, the University actively supports practical Reconciliation through:

- Acknowledging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the original custodians of the land,
- Ensuring both the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island flags are represented on all campuses,
- Encouraging Welcome to Country activities at significant events
- Acknowledgement of Country at meetings.

Importance of Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country

Ceremonies and protocols are a fundamental part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Valuing and respecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander protocols, practices, events and activities are important to increasing the understanding and mutual respect for cultural practices by both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and the wider community.

<http://generationone.org.au/uploads/assets/WelcomeToCountry.pdf>

Incorporating welcoming and acknowledgment protocols into official meetings and events 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. <https://indigenousportal.eq.edu.au/resources/protocols/Pages/protocols.aspx>

We encourage ACU staff and students to acknowledge our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities at the start of public events and events of significance

Welcome to Country

Welcome to Country generally occur at significant events and are given by a local Elder who is a Traditional Owner. A *Welcome to Country* is a ceremony that is delivered or in some instances performed by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples to welcome visitors to their traditional land. It can take many forms, depending on the particular culture of the traditional owners, and can include singing, dancing, smoking ceremonies or a speech in traditional language.

Protocol for Welcome to Country

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 or landmarks separating their Country from that of other groups. Crossing into another group's Country required a request for permission to enter and when that permission was granted the hosting group would welcome the visitors, offering them safe passage. Today these protocols have been adapted to contemporary circumstances but the importance of welcoming visitors and offering safe passage remains.

The *Welcome to Country* ceremony is delivered by Elders who are Traditional Owners and recognised as the Aboriginal community spokesperson or by an established local cultural service provider. The Coordinator of the Indigenous Higher Education Unit on your campus can assist in nominating the appropriate Elder or organisation.

When organising a *Welcome to Country*, it is important to consider the following factors:

- The Elder or community member is provided with information regarding the audience they are welcoming
- The equipment the Elder or community member is required to use if applicable, for example, a microphone and being on a stage
- Offering transport where necessary
- The Elder may require assistance of a support person
- Cultural services such as *Welcome to Country* are using Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultural knowledges and intellectual property. Providers of these services should be appropriately remunerated.
- Advanced notice is suggested to be able to accommodate the request.

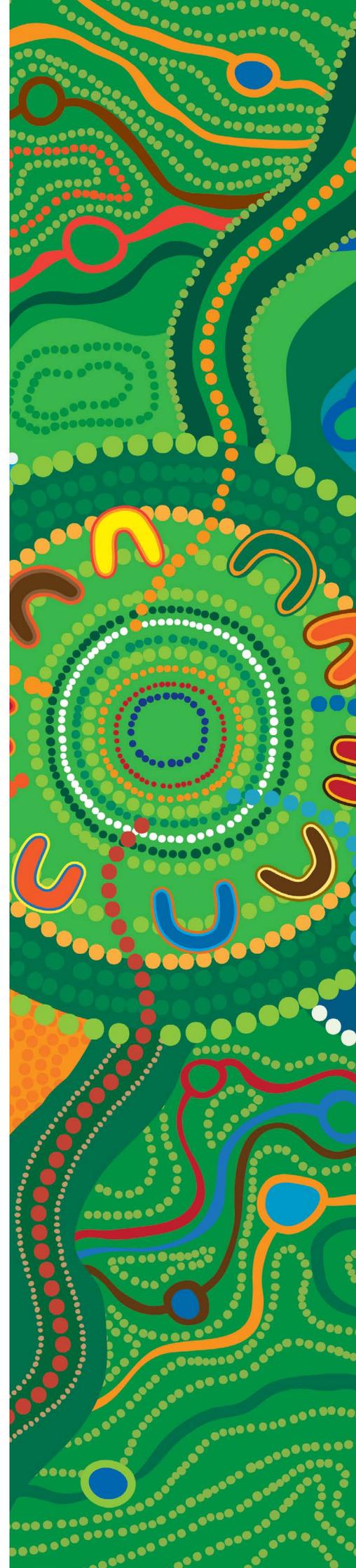
Acknowledgment of Country

An *Acknowledgment of Country* can be informal or formal and used at meetings or small events and where possible is delivered by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person. If this is not possible the speaker or meeting coordinator can commence the meeting by offering an *Acknowledgement of Country*. An *Acknowledgement of Country* demonstrates an 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 recognises the long and continuing connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to their Country.

Protocol for Acknowledgement of Country

At the beginning of a meeting or function, a Chair or Speaker begins by acknowledging that the meeting is taking place in the Country of the traditional custodians. Where the name of the traditional custodians is known, it is specifically used. Where it is not known, or not formalised, a general acknowledgement of Traditional Owner groups is given.

Within ACU the Indigenous Higher Education Units should be the first point of contact in exploring options for both *Acknowledgement of Country* and *Welcome to Country* as they are the University's connection to the local community.





There are four Indigenous Higher Education Units across the seven ACU campuses, and these are detailed below.

CAMPUS	UNIT	TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS
Signadou - Canberra	Dhara Daramoolen (Earth, Spirit)	Ngunnawal people
Aquinas - Ballarat	Jim-baa-yer (To Learn - To Teach)	Wathaurong people
St Patrick's - Melbourne	Jim-baa-yer (To Learn - To Teach)	Wurundjeri people
McAuley - Brisbane	Weemala (Distant View)	Turrabul and Jaggera people
MacKillop - North Sydney	Yalbalinga (Place of Learning)	Gurringai People
Strathfield - Mount Saint Mary	Yalbalinga (Place of Learning)	Dharug People

Below are two standardised 'Acknowledgments' that allow Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous staff options to correctly acknowledge the traditional custodians for the appropriate reasons.

Acknowledgement 1

Suggested use for face to face meetings in one campus

In continuing ACU's commitment to Reconciliation and in line with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tradition, it is customary to acknowledge country as we pass through. Today we acknowledge and pay our respects to the First Peoples, traditional custodians of the lands and waterways (see below for options) and thank them for their continued hospitality.

We acknowledge and celebrate the continuation of a living culture that has a unique role in this region. We also acknowledge Elders past and present as well as our emerging leaders of tomorrow and thank them for their wisdom and guidance as we walk in their footsteps.

Acknowledgement 2

Suggested use for teleconference and video conferences across campuses

It is our custom at ACU to give an Acknowledgement of Country. On behalf of all of you gathered here today I would like to commence the meeting by acknowledging the First Peoples, the traditional custodians of the countries where ACU campuses are located. We respectfully acknowledge:

- The Turrabul and Jaggera peoples in Brisbane
- The Wurundjeri people in Melbourne
- The Wathaurong people of Ballarat
- The Dharug/Dharruk people from Strathfield
- The Gurringai people in North Sydney
- The Ngunnawal people from Canberra
- The Kurna people from Adelaide

Each of these nations has faithfully cared for country for thousands of years.

I would also like to respectfully acknowledge our Elders both past and present and remember that they have passed on their wisdom to us in various ways. Let us hold this in trust as we work and serve our community.

We acknowledge that this artwork was created exclusively for ACU by Gilimbaa.