

# Acknowledgements of Country

The Australian National University Students Association acknowledges the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which our organisation is located and where we conduct our business. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past and present. ANUSA is committed to honouring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to society.

## Why Are Welcomes And Acknowledgements Important?

Incorporating a Welcome or Acknowledgement protocol into official meetings and events recognises Aboriginal people as the First Australians and custodians of their land. It promotes an awareness of the past and ongoing connection to place and land of Aboriginal Australians. Unlike New Zealand, Canada and the United States, Australia has no treaty with its Aboriginal people. A Welcome to or Acknowledgement of Country doesn't replace a treaty, native title or land rights, but they're a small gesture of recognition of the association with land and place of the First Australians, and their history.



# Welcome To Country vs Acknowledgement Of Country

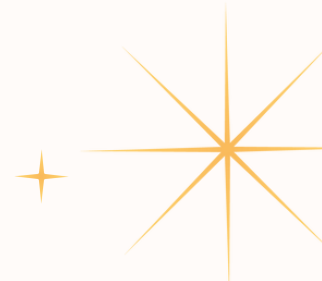
'Welcome to Country' is an important ceremony by Aboriginal people and inviting them to perform it helps non-Indigenous people recognise Aboriginal culture and history. An 'Acknowledgement of Country' can be done by everyone, Indigenous or non-Indigenous, to pay respect to the fact that one is on Aboriginal land.

## Tips for an Acknowledgement of Country

- "Custodians' vs 'owners'? Both terms are in use.

Custodians	Owners
'Custodians' reminds of the ongoing obligation to look after country, and that Aboriginal people don't own the land, but it owns them.	'Owner' reminds that their land was never formally ceded to anyone and of Australia's history of denying ownership and Aboriginal people's sovereignty over their lands.

- Include both groups. Always use "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders" to include both distinct First Nations groups.
- Respect Elders. I've capitalised "Elders" as a sign of respect. Always include a reference to Aboriginal land.
- Be personal. I've used "I" rather than the organisation's name, or "we", to make the acknowledgement more personal. (It's a single person speaking, after all.)



### 3 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS OF COUNTRY

- Avoid using "emerging leaders" as there is significant discomfort within the Aboriginal community with that term (e.g. who defines the "emerging" leader? Who is a leader?)
- FOR ONLINE MEETINGS: Your attendees are likely to be spread across different Aboriginal nations' lands. Ensure to be inclusive, e.g. with "Traditional Owners of the lands we meet on today" and acknowledge "any Aboriginal people joining us today"

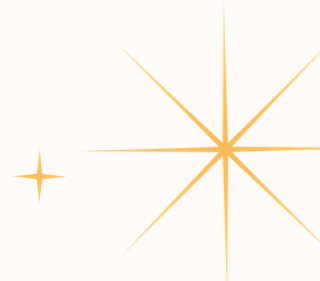
## Sample Acknowledgements of Country

Remember, the best way to do an Acknowledgement of Country is one that doesn't fit a pre-designed template but rather is truly one that is meant. However, if you're unsure of what a proper acknowledgement may look like, here are some sample ones.

#### **Spoken, when the Aboriginal nation is known**

Replace [Aboriginal group/clan] with the name of the Aboriginal group (e.g. "Gadigal people") and [Aboriginal nation] with the nation's name (e.g. "Eora").

*"I wish to acknowledge the custodians of this land, the [Aboriginal group/clan] people of the [Aboriginal nation] nation and their Elders past and present. I acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region."*



## 4 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS OF COUNTRY

*“I acknowledge that we are meeting on the traditional country of the [Aboriginal nation] people of the [Aboriginal region] and pay respect to Elders past and present. I recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and relationship with the land, which continue to be important to the [Aboriginal nation] people living today.”*

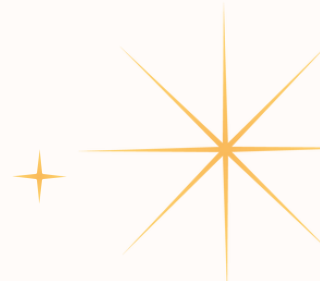
*“I would like to acknowledge that this meeting is being held on Aboriginal land and recognise the strength, resilience and capacity of [Aboriginal nation] people in this land.”*

*“I would like to acknowledge that this meeting is being held on Aboriginal land, the land of the [Aboriginal group/clan] people of the [Aboriginal nation] nation. I like to pay respect to their Elders past and present”*

*“I would like to acknowledge the [Aboriginal group/clan] people who are the traditional custodians of this land. I would also like to pay my respects to Elders past and present of the [Aboriginal nation] nation, and I extend that respect to other indigenous people who are present.”*

*“Before we begin the proceedings, I would like to acknowledge and pay respect to the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet; the [Aboriginal group/clan] people of the [Aboriginal nation] nation.”*

*“I am honoured to be on the ancestral lands of the [Aboriginal group/clan] people. I acknowledge the First Australians as the traditional custodians of the 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.”*



### **Spoken, when the Aboriginal nation not is known**

*"I acknowledge the traditional custodians of country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and community. I pay my respects to them and their cultures; and to Elders both past and present."*

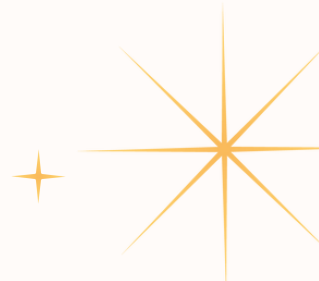
*"I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today and pay my respects to the Elders past and present. I extend my respect to the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander [people/colleagues/staff/students] who are present today."*

*"I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we have gathered on today. I pay my respects to the Elders past and present, for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the nation."*

### **Printed publications**

To include an Acknowledgement on a printed document, ideally it should be placed on the inside front cover, standing alone, in a place of significance.

*[Organisation] acknowledges the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which our company is located and where we conduct our business. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past and present. [Organisation] is committed to honouring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to society.*



## Websites and Emails

*[Organisation] acknowledges the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first inhabitants of the nation and the traditional custodians of the lands where we live, learn and work.*

## Signs

An increasing number of businesses affix signs to entry areas of their premises. You can reflect this at your events and in clubs' common spaces. Here's a sample wording:

[Organisation] operates on [Aboriginal nation] country. We acknowledge the [Aboriginal nation] people as the traditional custodians of the [Organisation location] region and pay our respects to [Aboriginal nation] elders past and present. We are committed to a positive future for the Aboriginal community.

## Sources

Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country – Reconciliation Australia, retrieved from

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

Welcome to Country & Acknowledgement of Country – Creative Spirits, retrieved from

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

