

Supporting reconciliation

## Welcome to Country and Acknowledgment of Country protocols

Practices such as Welcome to Country and Acknowledgment of Country enable the wider community to share in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and lead to better community relationships and understanding. Observing these practices connects participants with the Country and provides a welcoming atmosphere and spiritual presence to the place upon which people are meeting.

In the context of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture 'Country' refers to a specific place within Australia and not Australia itself. More than 260 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander countries and language groups are represented across Australia. Country refers to 'this' place, the language group of the area where the event is held. The welcome follows a protocol for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians where people entering another's Country (language and ancestral area) would seek permission from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Owners of that country and they would be welcomed to the area through ceremony.

Today, non-Indigenous populations who are not originally from Australia are also welcomed to Country for the purpose of the events and as a part of a continuing protocol, which is maintained and observed throughout Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia.



## Welcome to Country

A Welcome to Country is a ceremony performed by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people to welcome visitors to their 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.

## Acknowledgment of Country

An Acknowledgment of Country can be informal or formal and is a way for visitors to show 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. It also recognises the continuing relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their Country.

At a meeting, speech or formal occasion the speaker can begin their proceedings by offering an Acknowledgment of Country. Unlike a Welcome to Country, it can be performed by a non-Indigenous person.

For further information and advice on the protocols for Welcome to Country or Acknowledgment of Country relevant to your local area, please contact the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships regional office nearest to you.

[www.datsip.qld.gov.au/people-communities/regional-centres](http://www.datsip.qld.gov.au/people-communities/regional-centres)

For more resources on Welcome to Country and Acknowledgment of Country protocols, go to:

[www.indigenousportal.eq.edu.au/resources/protocols/Pages/protocols.aspx](http://www.indigenousportal.eq.edu.au/resources/protocols/Pages/protocols.aspx)

