

# CULTURAL PROTOCOLS INTERNAL FACT SHEET



## WHAT IS A WELCOME TO COUNTRY?

Welcome to Country is delivered by Traditional Owners, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have been given permission from Traditional Owners to welcome visitors to their Country. A Welcome to Country occurs at the beginning of a formal event and can take many forms including singing, dancing, smoking ceremonies, and/or a speech.

Protocols for welcoming visitors to Country have always been a part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Boundaries were clear, and crossing into another group's Country required a request for permission to enter. When permission was granted the hosting group would welcome the visitors, offering them safe passage and protection of their spiritual being during the journey. Visitors had to respect the protocols and rules of the landowner group while on their Country.

Today, while these protocols have been adapted to contemporary circumstances, the essential elements remain: welcoming visitors and respect for Country.

## WHAT IS AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY?

An Acknowledgement of Country is an opportunity for anyone to show respect for Traditional Owners and the continuing connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Country. An Acknowledgement of Country can be offered by any person and like a Welcome to Country, is given at the beginning of a meeting, speech or event.

There is no specific wording for an Acknowledgement of Country, just be sincere and, if possible, do some research on the Country you are acknowledging.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples may also wish to acknowledge their own mob/s and other First Nations peoples present. An Acknowledgement of Country can be expressed on behalf of an organisation in different forms of communications, such as email signature blocks, websites, and on social media.



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## WHY IS A WELCOME TO, OR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY IMPORTANT?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have experienced a long history of exclusion from Australian history books, the Australian flag, the Australian anthem and for many years, Australian democracy. This history of dispossession and colonisation lies at the heart of the disparity between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other Australians today.

Including recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in events, meetings and national symbols contributes to ending the exclusion that has been so damaging. Incorporating Welcoming and Acknowledgement protocols into official meetings and events recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners of land and shows respect.

## WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A WELCOME TO COUNTRY & AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY?

A Welcome to Country can only be given by an Elder or recognised spokesperson. An Acknowledgement of Country serves the same purpose (to introduce & recognise the land and traditions) but can be done by any person.

## WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT TO COUNTRY THAT SCH USES?

1. Southern Cross Housing acknowledges the traditional custodians of this land. In particular, we pay our respects to the Yuin People (Shoalhaven & Eurobodalla), the Ngarigo People (Snowy Monaro), the Dharawal People (Illawarra) and the Gundungurra People (Southern Highlands) on whose lands our Southern Cross communities are located. We pay our respects to the Elders past and present and emerging, for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the nation. Southern Cross Housing recognises that this always was and always will be Aboriginal land.
2. Southern Cross Housing acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands in which we operate including the Yuin, Dharawal & Ngarigo Country and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters, and community. We pay our respect to them, their culture and to Elders past, present, and emerging in the spirit of reconciliation.
3. I'd like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we gather today, and pay my respects to the Elders, past, present and future who for thousands of years have preserved the culture and practices of Aboriginal & Torres Strait nations across their countries.

