

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY GUIDE

DECEMBER 2024



Queensland
Government

What is an Acknowledgement of Country?

An Acknowledgement of Country is a respectful practice that recognises the Traditional Owners of the land, their enduring connection to Country and their culture. It acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' role as the First Nations of Australia and their continued presence as the world's oldest living cultures.

Unlike a Welcome to Country, which can only be conducted by an Elder or Traditional Owner, an Acknowledgement of Country can be delivered by any person, whether Indigenous or non-Indigenous.

Why is giving an Acknowledgement of Country so important?

Acknowledging Country is a meaningful way to show respect to the Traditional Owners on which we work and live. It is an act of deep respect, recognition and connection.

Acknowledgement of Country is about honouring the Traditional Owners of these lands, seas and skies. It is an expression of gratitude for their enduring care of this land, and it recognises the unbroken relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their Country for over 65,000 years.

Acknowledging Country is a meaningful commitment to learn, respect and listen. It is an opportunity to pause, and reflect on the profound cultural heritage, knowledge systems and wisdom that have thrived on this continent long before colonisation. In performing an Acknowledgement of Country, we contribute to a shared journey of reconciliation and healing. We acknowledge that Australia's history includes both the beauty of its ancient cultures and the pain of colonisation. To truly honour Country is to recognise the past and commit to a better, more inclusive future for all Australians.

The deeper significance of an Acknowledgement of Country

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Country is not just a place. It is a living entity, a source of life, identity and spirit. Country encompasses everything—the land, water, skies, flora, fauna and the spiritual connection that binds it all together. It's about ancestors and the stories that are sung into the landscape. It's about honouring Elders past and present, who have fought to protect their cultural heritage.



By acknowledging Country, we acknowledge that we are guests on this land, and we honour the strength, resilience and wisdom of its Traditional Owners.

Delivering an Acknowledgement of Country

Acknowledging Country is more than simply reciting words. It is an act of awareness and respect that invites reflection. When you deliver an Acknowledgement, it should be sincere and mindful of the deep, meaningful connection between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their lands.

Below are some guidelines to help make your Acknowledgement more meaningful:

- Know the Traditional Custodians: Take time to research and learn about the Traditional Custodians of the land on which you are standing. Use resources like the [AIATSIS Map](#) to identify the correct name. If you are unsure, acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Speak with intention: Let your words carry weight. Consider the meaning behind the Acknowledgement, rather than treating it as a checkbox. Reflect on why you are acknowledging Country and what it means to you personally.
- Personalise your message: Make the Acknowledgement relevant to your gathering. For instance, acknowledge the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems in the context of a learning event or highlight the significance of community in a team meeting.

Most importantly, you should avoid tokenism when you are delivering an Acknowledgement of Country. An Acknowledgment should never feel like a checkbox or a formality. When done appropriately it is an act of respect that acknowledges the profound connection between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their lands. However, if not approached with thoughtfulness, it can risk becoming tokenistic, which undermines its intended significance.

Examples of an Acknowledgement of Country

To inspire authenticity, here are some templates to adapt for various occasions:

Formal Gatherings or Public Events:

“Today, we gather on the lands of the [Insert Name] people, who have cared for this Country since time immemorial. I pay my deepest respects to their Elders past and present, whose



knowledge and stewardship continue to guide us. Let us reflect on the richness of their culture and commit ourselves to walking alongside them on this shared journey of reconciliation.”

General Meetings (such as Staff Meetings):

“I’d like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet today, the [Insert Name] people. I would also like to pay my respects to Elders past and present, and I extend that respect to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people joining us.”

Online Meetings:

“As we connect from many places today, I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians on the various lands we are meeting from. I am speaking to you from the land of the [Insert Name] people. I pay my respects to their Elders past and present. Let us take a moment to honour the wisdom, strength and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who continue to protect their Country and culture.”

Note: It is important to remember there is no one way to perform an Acknowledgement of Country, just be sincere and (where possible) do your research on the Country you are acknowledging.

Embedding an Acknowledgement of Country in everyday practice

Acknowledging Country should form part of your ongoing commitment to reconciliation, and as such below are some ways to integrate it into your work and personal life:

1. Include Acknowledgements in daily practices: Start meetings, webinars, and public events with an Acknowledgement.
2. Educate yourself and others: Take the time to understand the history, culture and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and share this history within your sphere of influence.
3. Go beyond words: Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities by engaging with local organisations, participating in cultural events, and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led initiatives.



Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How often should I include an Acknowledgement of Country?

A: It's recommended to deliver an Acknowledgement of Country at the beginning of meetings, events and gatherings, especially if they involve external guests or are significant in nature. Written Acknowledgements can also be included on websites, social media and email signatures.

Q: Is it appropriate for non-Indigenous people to deliver an Acknowledgement of Country?

A: Absolutely. Acknowledging Country is about recognising the Traditional Custodians and showing respect. It is encouraged that non-Indigenous people deliver Acknowledgements to promote awareness and allyship.

Q: What if I make a mistake with the Traditional Owner's names?

A: Making the effort to acknowledge and pronounce names correctly is what matters most. If you're unsure, it's respectful to acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and seek guidance to improve for next time.

Q: Can I change the wording of the Acknowledgement?

A: Yes, the most important thing is that your Acknowledgement is genuine and delivered with respect. Adapt it to fit the context and make it meaningful to you and your audience.

Q: Do I say, "Elders past, present and emerging" or just "past and present"?

A: You can choose either. The most important thing is that your Acknowledgement is sincere and respectful. Many organizations acknowledge Elders past, present and emerging to recognize the next generation of leaders. However, some, like the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA), recommend acknowledging only Elders past and present to honour those who have earned this status through years of experience and wisdom. Adapt the wording to fit the context and what feels most meaningful to you and your audience.

For further information

If you'd like more guidance on creating a meaningful Acknowledgement of Country or have questions about best practices, we encourage you to reach out to local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations or Elders for advice. Additionally, you can refer to resources from the [National Indigenous Australians Agency \(NIAA\)](#) and [Reconciliation Australia](#) for more detailed information.

