

# WELCOME TO COUNTRY VS ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

## Why are cultural recognition protocols important?

Cultural recognition protocols, including Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country, play an important role in recognising and respecting the traditional custodians of the land.

Although the practice of acknowledging the traditional custodians of land and seeking their permission to enter their territory has only recently begun to re-emerge in modern Australia, it is an ancient custom of great significance to many First Nations people.

These practices are rooted in ancient traditions of deep cultural importance to First Nations peoples.

Incorporating these protocols into official events:

- Recognises First Nations peoples as the First Australians
- Promotes awareness and understanding of their history and cultures
- Acknowledges their ongoing and enduring connection to land

## Protocol Principles

All cultural recognition practices should be undertaken with care and respect:

- Deliver acknowledgements sincerely and respectfully
- Use correct pronunciation of Nation and community names
- Avoid abbreviating or rushing acknowledgements at formal events
- Tailor wording to the local Country wherever possible

## Welcome to Country vs Acknowledgement of Country

### Welcome to Country

Delivered by a First Nations Elder or authorised representative. Used for significant events to formally welcome people to Country.

### Acknowledgement of Country

Can be delivered by anyone. Used more broadly to recognise Traditional Custodians at meetings, events, and activities.

## What is a Welcome to Country?

A Welcome to Country is a formal ceremony delivered by a First Nations Elder or authorised representative to welcome visitors to their traditional land. The ceremony may take various forms, including a speech, song, dance, or smoking ceremony, depending on the customs of the local community.

## When is a Welcome to Country performed at a sporting event?

A Welcome to Country should be included at significant events, such as:

- Big screen message prior to the match
- Grand Final (on ground and in function rooms)
- Season launch events
- Awards nights
- State-level games
- Significant First Nations events

## How to arrange a Welcome to Country

1. Identify the appropriate Traditional Owner group for the event location.
2. Engage an Elder or authorised representative early in the planning process.
3. Confirm availability, format, and any cultural preferences.
4. Arrange appropriate remuneration in line with cultural expectations.
5. Ensure the event run sheet allows adequate time and prominence.

## Timing and Placement

- An **Acknowledgement of Country** should be delivered at the beginning of meetings and events
- A **Welcome to Country** should be positioned as a prominent opening element in formal proceedings

## Roles and Responsibilities

- **Event organiser:** Ensure appropriate inclusion of cultural recognition protocols
- **MC or host:** Deliver the Acknowledgement of Country where required
- **Events or operations team:** Coordinate arrangements for Welcome to Country

## What is an Acknowledgement of Country?

An Acknowledgement of Country is a statement delivered by event organisers, volunteers, staff, or players to recognise the Traditional Custodians of the land and their continuing connection to Country. It is a meaningful way to show respect for First Nations peoples, cultures, and heritage.

Your club may choose to develop an Acknowledgement of Country that reflects its own community and values. Consider involving First Nations members in the drafting process or seek guidance from the SportWest Cultural Navigation Advisory Group.

For guidance and inspiration, refer to the [Acknowledgement of Country examples](#).

Unlike a Welcome to Country, an Acknowledgement of Country can be delivered by a non-Indigenous person and may be presented in either a formal or informal setting.

## When is an Acknowledgement of Country performed at a sporting event?

An Acknowledgement of Country should be included in:

- All MC scripts for function rooms
- MC scripts for large formal meetings or official events involving external delegates
- Regional school programs and clinics
- Significant First Nations events
- Club committee meetings.

## SportWest Cultural Navigation Advisory Group

If you are uncertain whether a Welcome to Country or Acknowledgement of Country is appropriate for an event, please consult the SportWest [Cultural Navigation Advisory Group](#).