

PROCEDURES FOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY AND WELCOME TO COUNTRY



If you require any assistance in regards to the preparation of the Welcome to Country or Acknowledgement of Country, please contact Reverend Gary van Heerden, Director of Service and Citizenship (Gary.vanHeerden@scotch.wa.edu.au)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

An Acknowledgement of Country is a way for all people to show awareness of and respect for Aboriginal cultures and heritage, and the ongoing relationship the traditional custodians have with their land or waters.

Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people can perform 'Acknowledgement of Country'. It is a demonstration of respect dedicated to the traditional custodians of the land (or sea) where the event, meeting, school function or conference takes place. It can be formal or informal.

Need to know

- No set protocols or wording - we encourage you to personalise it
- No elaborate ceremony, simply a few words
- Offered at the beginning of a meeting, speech or formal occasion
- Minimum standard protocol for any meeting or gathering

To do

- Find out the name of the Aboriginal group and nation (At Scotch, this is the Whadjuk people of the Noongar nation)
- Find out how to properly pronounce them.

Main criteria for an Acknowledgement of Country

Custodians, not owners	Use "traditional custodians" and not "traditional owners" as Aboriginal people don't own the land.
Include both groups	Always use "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders" to include both distinct indigenous groups.
Respect Elders	Use capitalised "Elders" as a sign of respect.
Include land	Always include a reference to Aboriginal land.
Be personal	Use "I" rather than Scotch College, or "we", to make the acknowledgement more personal. (It's a single person speaking, after all.)

Source: <https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/spirituality/welcome-to-country-acknowledgement-of-country#ixzz5XwZ6xLVT>

Acknowledgement of Country Examples *(please select one)*

1. I wish to acknowledge the custodians of this land, the Whadjuk people of the Noongar 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.
2. I acknowledge that we are meeting on the traditional country of the [insert Aboriginal nation] people of the [insert 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 [insert Aboriginal nation] people living today.
3. I would like to acknowledge that this meeting is being held on Aboriginal land and recognise the strength, resilience and capacity of [insert Aboriginal nation] people in this land.
4. I would like to acknowledge that this meeting is being held on Aboriginal land, the land of the the [insert Aboriginal group/clan] people of the [insert Aboriginal nation] nation. I like to pay respect to their Elders past and present. I would like to acknowledge the [insert 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 [insert Aboriginal nation] nation, and I extend that respect to other indigenous people who are present.
5. 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 [insert Aboriginal group/clan] people of the [insert Aboriginal nation] nation. I am honoured to be on the ancestral lands of the [insert 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.

Source: <https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/spirituality/welcome-to-country-acknowledgement-of-country#ixzz5XwVpPW00>

WELCOME TO COUNTRY

A Welcome to Country ceremony gives traditional owners, the Noongar people, the opportunity to formally welcome people to their land. This ceremony should be undertaken by Elders acknowledged as such by their family and community.

The Welcome to Country ceremony is an acknowledgment and recognition of the rights of Noongar people. The act of getting a representative who has traditional local links to a particular place, area or region, is an acknowledgement of respect for traditional owners. It is respect for people, respect for rights and a respect for country. The land, waterways and cultural significant sites are still very important to Noongar people. It is an acknowledgement of the past and provides a safe passage for visitors and a mark of respect. Protocols are the standards of behavior that people use to show respect to each other. Every culture has different ways of communicating, and in order to be able to work with someone from a different culture in a respectful way you need to understand how people from that culture communicate.

Noongar People

The Traditional Country of the Noongar people's covers the entire south-western portion of Western Australia. This extends from Leeman in the north-west to beyond Cape Arid in the south-east. Archaeological evidence establishes that the Noongar people (alternative spellings: Nyungar/Nyoongar/Nyoongah/Nyungah/Nyugah/Yunga) have lived in the area and had possession of tracts of land on their country for at least 45,000 years. The Noongar people (Noongar meaning 'person') are one of the largest Aboriginal cultural blocks in Australia. There is no evidence that there has been any other group than Noongar in the South

West. Noongar are made up of fourteen different language groups (which may be spelt in different ways): Amangu, Yued/Yuat, Whadjuk/Wajuk, Binjareb/Pinjarup, Wardandi, Balardong/Ballardong, Nyakinyaki, Wilman, Ganeang, Bibulmun/Piblemen, Mineng, Goreng and Wudjari and Njunga. Each of these language groups correlates with different geographic areas with ecological distinctions. Noongar people speak their own language and have their own laws and customs. Those laws and customs were characterised by a strong spiritual connection to 'country'; caring for the natural environment and for places of significance; performing ceremonies and rituals; collecting food by hunting, fishing and gathering; providing education and passing on law and custom through stories, art, song and dance. While the effect of European settlement has been profound, many significant aspects of Noongar Culture and society have been retained and are still practiced by the Noongar people.

At the conclusion of the Welcome the audience should feel that they have been reminded of the Noongar people as the original owners of the land.

EVENT ORGANISATION

It is important that event organisers allow enough time to discuss with Traditional Owners what form of Welcome to Country ceremony will be undertaken at an event and if any particular protocols or customs need to be observed by those in attendance.

When considering a Welcome to Country ceremony, it is important to consider the following factors:

- ⇒ Fee for service
- ⇒ Information about the Event where the ceremony is required
- ⇒ Appropriate equipment the Elder or community member is required to use if applicable, for example, a microphone and being on a stage

Fee for service

In providing cultural services such as Welcome to Country, artistic performances and ceremonies Aboriginal people are using their intellectual property. As such, providers of these services should be appropriately remunerated. A Welcome to Country is often requested for events, conferences, functions or meetings. This may consist of a single speech, in language or English or it may include a cultural performance (a song or dance), or it may be a combination of these. It is important to remember that the Noongar representative/s must be comfortable with all the arrangements.

It is normal practice that some form of payment is made either to individuals or to an organisation for providing such a service. The exact form and amount of payment is negotiated and agreed between the representatives/ custodians and the event organisers. The Fee is negotiated with the Elder and could range from \$500 - \$1,000 if a cultural performance is requested.

Information about the Event

Contact an organisation or Aboriginal Elder.

- ⇒ Provide the following :
 - Introduction – Who you are
 - What Scotch College and the event are about and what part they will be providing the service for (i.e.; Conference, Dinner or Special Occasion)
 - Date
 - Time
 - Place/where required
- ⇒ Check the phone contact is correct and if it is the one that you will be able to contact them on the day or follow up prior to the event

Providing contact details

If the Elder agrees to the job let them know the following:

- ⇒ Who will meet them
- ⇒ Who will be their escort/chaperone for the event (with our Elders they would like to be treated as one would any dignitary) and should be treated as such
- ⇒ Will they be bringing anyone else for company (this is good to offer as it makes the Elder feel more at ease)
- ⇒ If there is any particular dietary requirement (if food and drinks are provided tea and coffee especially)
- ⇒ What the arrangements will be for payment of their fee

Prior to the event

Contact the Elder three-five days before the event and check if they are still available and finalise arrangements (this allows enough time to source another if they are unavailable for any particular reason – e.g. illness, family reasons or sorry business).

At the event

- ⇒ Introduce and allocate a person to take care of the Elder on arrival
- ⇒ Let them know the order of proceedings – what time it starts who will bring them to the front etc
- ⇒ Who will introduce them – make sure that person is introduced to them prior to proceedings
- ⇒ Make sure their title and name is right in acknowledging them following their speech
- ⇒ All parties speaking after the Elder/Representative should acknowledge the Elder/Representative for the Welcome to Country
- ⇒ Include them in the celebration (ask them if they would like to stay for the evening or would they prefer to leave shortly after the Welcome)
- ⇒ Don't leave the Elders unaccompanied at any time (make them feel special, because they are our very important people)

After the Welcome Ceremony

The first speaker/MC should always acknowledge and thank the Elder for their contribution.

After the event

Send a letter of thanks for their participation.