

Network of Community Activities, like OOSH services are committed to the process of Reconciliation and developing an awareness and respect for the inclusion of Indigenous culture within OOSH services in NSW and ACT.



One aspect of this commitment is to include a 'Welcome to Country' or an 'Acknowledgement of Country' at the beginning of functions, ceremonies, events and meetings organised by an OOSH service or organisation. The inclusion of this protocol:

- Identifies Indigenous people as the Original Custodians of the Land
- Generates opportunities for all people to show respect for Indigenous culture and their heritage
- Develops mutual respect
- Encourages the wider community to share in and build better relationships with Indigenous people.

### "Welcome to Country" Protocol

The "Welcome to Country" is commonly used at large formal events, such as conferences and openings. The Traditional Custodians of the land will need to agree to carry out the "Welcome to Country". There are several factors to consider which include the location where the meeting is taking place, the existing practices within the community and the strategies used to request the appropriate Indigenous representative/s. This representative/s will more commonly be the Elders. Elders are chosen and accepted by their own communities as custodians of knowledge and are highly respected.

The 'Welcome to Country' may be in the form of a speech and could also include a performance, depending on the locality, the representative/s protocol and the funds available.

When the representative/s have agreed it is important to organise a prior meeting with them for introductions and to discuss the arrangements for the event. When preparing for the day, offer invitations a friend and/or relative to attend, remind the representative prior to the date, be available for transport assistance to and from the event. During the event ensure they are addressed properly (i.e. Aunty or Uncle) and made to feel welcomed throughout their stay. Offer tea or coffee and ensure they are comfortable. It is also very important to be considerate of family priorities should they arise.

Please remember it is important to ensure protocols are used in conjunction with the local Indigenous community through consultation and with respect.

### "Acknowledgement of Country" Protocol

An "Acknowledgement of Country" can be given by any person prior to public speaking or within their introduction as a sign of respect. By carrying this out at the beginning of the event it acknowledges the meeting is taking place in the Country of the Traditional Custodians and showing respect for the ongoing relationship the Traditional Custodians have with the Land.

The person carrying out the "Acknowledgement of Country" will need to identify and use the correct name of the Traditional custodians. An example is as follows: "I would like to Acknowledge the ..... People who are the Traditional Custodians of this Land. I would also like to pay respect to the Elders both past and present of the ..... Nation and extend that respect to other Aboriginals present.

Where the name of the Traditional Custodians is not known, the person carrying out the "Acknowledgement of Country" may give a general Acknowledgement. An example is as follows: "I would like to show my respect and Acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the Land, of Elders past and present, on which this meeting takes place."



### Useful websites:

For more information visit:  
[www.aboriginaleducation.nsw.edu.au](http://www.aboriginaleducation.nsw.edu.au)

For information about Australian Aboriginal tribes visit:  
"http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian\_Aboriginal\_tribes"

For a detailed map of Australian Tribal Boundaries visit:  
[www.samuseum.sa.gov.au](http://www.samuseum.sa.gov.au)

### References:

*Working with Aboriginal Communities - A Guide to Community Consultation and Protocols.*  
NSW Board of Studies

*Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country - Guidelines and Protocols for NSW Public Schools and TAFE NSW Institutes.*  
NSW Department of Training and Education