



Gulanga
Program

Gulanga Good Practice Guides

These guides provide information on topics that aim to assist organisations implement and embed good practice when working and engaging with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, particularly within the ACT and region. Each guide provides a general overview, which we hope will generate change and discussion within a workplace. Links are provided at the end of each guide for further information and research. Feedback on the guides can be directed to gulanga@actcoss.org.au or by phone to 02 6202 7200.

‘Welcome to Country’ and ‘Acknowledgement of Country’

Last updated December 2016

By including a ‘Welcome to Country’ and/or ‘Acknowledgement of Country’ in your organisation’s activities, you are acknowledging and paying respect to the Aboriginal people on whose ‘country’ or ancestral land you are on. You and your organisation will also be promoting a mutual respect and understanding of Aboriginal peoples and their culture to the wider community.

Many government and non-government agencies develop guidelines and protocols for staff in relation to a Welcome to Country and/or an Acknowledgement of Country. We encourage you to research those. We have provided some links for further information and research at the end of this guide.

‘**Country**’ is a term widely used by Aboriginal peoples to refer to their ancestral land. For further information you may refer to the Aboriginal Australia Map which attempts to represent all the language, tribal or nation groups of the Aboriginal people of Australia. At the end of this guide you will find a link to access the map.

A **Welcome to Country** is performed by the Aboriginal traditional owners and custodians to welcome visitors to their country. This can also be a way of informing their ancestors of who they are and the event taking place.

A Welcome to Country is usually a speech by the traditional owners (usually an Elder) and can include dance, didgeridoo playing or a smoke ceremony. Your organisation can include a

Welcome to Country in activities such as a seminar or forum, a publication launch, at your AGM or your NAIDOC event. An appropriate fee should be negotiated for sharing their cultural and intellectual property, preparation, travel and time.

To organise a Welcome to Country, please talk to the local government, land council or local Aboriginal organisation to obtain information about the traditional custodians of the land you are meeting on.

Please consider including a Welcome to Country in your activities. It is not always possible or practical, so an Acknowledgement of Country at the beginning would be appropriate.

An **Acknowledgement of Country** is a statement made by a speaker, usually at the beginning of an activity or speech, to acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of the land or 'country' of the event they are meeting on. At an event such as a conference, you may experience each speaker has prepared an Acknowledgement of Country as part of their presentation.

You do not have to be an Aboriginal person to do an Acknowledgement of Country. If an Aboriginal person is present, please do not expect them to do the Acknowledgement of Country, unless they have volunteered to do so.

When seeking good practice around an appropriate Acknowledgement of Country, we suggest you discuss with staff, clients, stakeholders, the Aboriginal community and their agencies. You can also research other agencies that have provided guidelines around this. Below is an example:

I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we meet on – the Wiradjuri people, and pay my respect to their Elders, both past and present.

An Acknowledgement of Country is not limited to a statement made by a speaker at your organisation's event. Many organisations will include and embed an acknowledgement into their workplace practices, such as:

- At the beginning of every staff meeting or committee meeting
- On their website homepage
- At the beginning of their publications such as annual reports and newsletters
- As part of their email signature
- A statement or sign in their foyer.

ACT and surrounding region

There is evidence that Aboriginal people have lived in the Canberra region for at least 25,000 years. There are three Aboriginal groups who have asserted their traditional custodianship and ancestral connections to this region. It is important that we respect their assertions, recognise the issues are matters for those groups, and understand these issues may or may not be resolved.

Ngunnawal

Ngunnawal people have stated they are the traditional custodians of the ACT and surrounding areas. The ACT Government acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the Canberra region. They state the region was also a significant meeting place to neighbouring clans, including the Ngarigo, Wolgalu, Gundungurra, Yuin and Wiradjuri people

For more information:

www.communityservices.act.gov.au/atsia/committees/ngunnawal_issues

Ngambri

Descendants of the Ngambri and Ngurmali have stated their ancestors are the traditional custodians of the country south-west of Weereewaa (Lake George), which includes the modern ACT.

For more information: www.ngambri.org

Ngarigu

Descendants of the Ngarigu have stated they are the traditional owners of the Manaroo, the Limestone Plains and the Southern Alps regions of NSW/ACT.

For more information: www.vaclang.org.au/languages/ngarigu.html

Further information and research

Article by Noel Towell, 'Canberra's first people still a matter for debate', The Canberra Times, 9 April 2013

www.canberratimes.com.au/act-news/canberras-first-people-still-a-matter-for-debate-20130408-2hhq4.html#ixzz3h3n1Q7XJ

ACT Government: Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs: Welcome to Country

www.communityservices.act.gov.au/atsia/welcome_to_country

NSW Aboriginal Land Council: LALC Regions and Boundaries

www.alc.org.au/land-councils/lalc-regions--boundaries.aspx

Ngunawal Past, Present and Future

www.ngunawal.com.au

iTunes app: Welcome to Country: Australian Indigenous Language Groups and Cultural Protocols

<https://itunes.apple.com/au/app/welcome-to-country-australian/id1005047597?mt=8>