

Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country and Cultural Safety

This factsheet is intended to be read before all other [Working with Aboriginal Children, Young People and Families](#) factsheets and resources. In addition to explaining the difference between a Welcome to Country and an Acknowledgement of Country, it also reaffirms the importance of cultural safety whilst navigating the Permanency Support Program (PSP) Learning Hub.

Welcome to Country

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have had protocols for welcoming people on to their Country for tens of thousands of years. Entering another groups Country required permission and when granted, the visitors were welcomed and offered safe passage. Today, a Welcome to Country can only be performed by a Traditional Owner/Custodian or an Aboriginal person who has been given permission by Traditional Owners/Custodians to perform a Welcome to Country. A Welcome to Country often happens at the start of an event and can incorporate dancing, speeches, storytelling, and smoking ceremonies. For an example, watch the [Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony from UNSW 2023 O-Week](#).

To organise a Welcome to Country, local protocols will need to be followed. You should contact your local Aboriginal organisations and/or [local Aboriginal Lands Councils](#).

Acknowledgement of Country

An Acknowledgement of Country is a way for all people to show respect for the Aboriginal cultures, heritage, and the ongoing relationship that Aboriginal people have with land, country, community, and culture. Acknowledgement of Country does not erase the ongoing impacts of colonisation for Aboriginal people in this country or address the adversity that they face today, it is a sign of respect and responsibility. Some examples of Acknowledgements of Country can be seen [here](#).

Tips for Acknowledgment of Country

- Include both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

- Research and identify the Country/ies and language groups you are on
- Learn the name and pronunciation of the Country/ies that you're acknowledging
- Always include a reference to the Aboriginal land and/or waterways relevant to that Country/ies
- Make it your own. Share your connection to the relevant land. There is no set wording so try to make it specific, authentic, and personalised.

There are several resources available when researching the Country you wish to acknowledge. You should ensure that the resource material is authentic. To do this, connect and engage with local Aboriginal people and communities. Remember resources such as language apps and [Know Your Country](#) can be a great resources for information about finding out who's Country you live and work on, but may not be developed by local Aboriginal people and may not always be correct. Visit [Welcome to Country & Acknowledgement of Country](#) for a deeper understanding.

The PSP Learning Hub would like to pay respect to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of this nation. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the many and varied lands that we work and learn on every day. We would like to pay our respects to Elders past and present. We would like to acknowledge the cultures and contributions that Aboriginal people make to this country and thank those who have shared their knowledge, expertise, and experiences with us. We would like to acknowledge those affected by the Stolen Generations and acknowledge the children, who are at the centre of our work, as this is where culture lives and grows.

For more information about delivering a meaningful Acknowledgement of Country, watch: [Deliver an Acknowledgement of Country that really means something](#).

Cultural Safety

Cultural safety is not the same as cultural awareness. Whilst cultural awareness is about recognising someone else's cultural background, cultural safety requires us to do more. Cultural safety requires us to have strong knowledge of our own cultural values, beliefs, and biases and to understand how they affect our world views and decision making.

Cultural safety is about creating an environment where people feel safe to be themselves, “where there is no assault, challenge, or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge, and experience, of learning, living, and working together with dignity and truly listening” (Williams, 2008).

In the workplace this means that we are required to come together to create a culturally safe space where everyone can bring their whole self. Cultural safety highlights that it is the individual's perception and experience that determines whether a situation is safe or not, emphasising the importance of respecting and validating each person's unique feelings and cultural perspectives, across all roles as staff, client, or peer.

It is of paramount importance to the PSP Learning Hub that everyone who visits and engages with us, either through attending training or learning from our resources, feels welcomed and safe. However, the PSP Learning Hub believes in the value of truth-telling, which can be confronting and uncomfortable at times, particularly for Aboriginal peoples. We encourage everyone who interacts with PSP Learning Hub to practice reflection and self-care and seek support if you need it.

If you would like support, please consider:

- talking with a leader who you feel comfortable with about connecting to cultural support or other options you think would support you
- contact your organisation's employee assistance program, should one be available
- reach out to 13YARN on 13 92 76.

References

Korff, J. (2023). Welcome to Country & Acknowledgement of Country. <https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/spirituality/welcome-to-country-acknowledgement-of-country#fnref13>. Retrieved 11 January 2024.

Reconciliation Australia. (2010). It's simply about respect. *Reconciliation News*. (18). <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Reconciliation-News-September-2010.pdf>

Reconciliation Australia. (2024). Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country. <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/acknowledgement-of-country-and-welcome-to-country/>. Accessed 11 January 2024.

Williams, R. (2008). Cultural safety: what does it mean for our work practice? *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*. 23(2): 213-214.