

Welcome to and Acknowledgement of Country



The practice of acknowledging Country or being welcomed to Country at official events has been the topic of debate in the Victorian Parliament and media recently. These practices are about showing respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and recognising their ongoing connection to the land. Wimmera PCP believes that these practices are integral to closing the gap as it enables the wider community to share in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage, facilitating better relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. WPCP will continue to acknowledge traditional owners at events and meetings and would encourage our partner agencies to join us in doing so. Below is an overview of both practices.

Acknowledgement of Country

An Acknowledgement of Country is a way of sharing awareness and respect for the traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owners of the land on which a meeting or event is being held. An Acknowledgement of Country can be informal or formal and is usually undertaken by speakers at the beginning of a meeting or event. Anyone can do an Acknowledgement. There are no set protocols or wording, though it may take the following form: “I would like to acknowledge that this meeting/event is being held on the traditional lands of the [insert appropriate group] people and I pay my respects to Elders both past and present”. The traditional owners of the Wimmera Mallee region are the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadwadjali, Wergaia and Jupagalk people.

Welcome to Country

A Welcome to Country is a ceremony performed by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people (usually senior representatives/Elder) to welcome visitors to their traditional land. Protocols for welcoming visitors to Country have been part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s cultures for thousands of years. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups had clear boundaries separating their Country from that of other groups. Crossing into another group’s Country required a request for permission to enter – like gaining a visa – and when that permission was granted the hosting group would welcome the visitors, offering them a safe passage. Obviously much has changed today and these protocols have been adapted to contemporary circumstances, however the essential ingredients of welcoming visitors and offering safe passage remain in place.

To arrange a Welcome to Country contact your local Aboriginal organisation.

For further information on Welcome to and Acknowledgement of Country visit:

<http://www.reconciliation.org.au/home/reconciliation-resources/facts---figures/q-a-factsheets/welcome-to-and-acknowledgement-of-country>