

# Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country policy

This is a mandated policy under the operational policy framework. Any edits to this policy must follow the process outlined on the [creating, updating and deleting operational policies](#) page.

## Overview

This policy provides Department for Education (department) requirements for:

- Welcome to Country
- Acknowledgment of Country
- Statement of Acknowledgment.

## Scope

This policy applies to all department staff in the conduct of meetings or events. The department is committed to recognising and respecting Aboriginal cultural practices and beliefs in every aspect of its work.

The policy reflects the vision and the goals outlined in the department's [Reconciliation Action Plan 2018 to 2021 \(PDF 1.1MB\)](#) and [Aboriginal Education Strategy 2019 to 2029 \(PDF 6.7MB\)](#).



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# Detail

Welcome to Country and Acknowledgment of Country are important cultural practices that recognise and respect the original custodians of the land. Protocols for welcoming visitors to Country are an ancient practice and have been part of Aboriginal cultures for thousands of years.

South Australia has a diverse Aboriginal population. Aboriginal groups have clear boundaries separating their Country from that of other groups. Traditionally, crossing into another groups' Country would require a request for permission to enter. When permission was granted, the hosting group would welcome the visitors, offering them safe passage and protection of their spiritual being during the journey.

To recognise the traditional custodians of the land on which an event or meeting is being held is a commitment of the department towards building a strong, culturally responsive organisation as specified in the Aboriginal Education Strategy.

Observing these practices connects the participants with the country and provides a welcoming atmosphere to the place where people are meeting. It also reinforces the place of Aboriginal perspectives and decision making in the governance, design and delivery of our services to optimise Aboriginal educational outcomes at all levels.

## Welcome to Country

A Welcome to Country shall be delivered at the commencement of all major internal and public events organised by the department. These include:

- significant events where dignitaries such as the Governor, Premier, ministers, Members of Parliament or representatives of other governments are present
- whole of department events such as launches and the announcement of new initiatives or significant regional or events and forums
- community engagement events where members of the public or community representatives are present, including observances and commemorations and ceremonies and the opening of new schools or buildings
- at conferences and major seminars hosted by the department.

At these major events:

- it is the responsibility of the event organiser to arrange a Welcome to Country. A Welcome can be undertaken by an Aboriginal elder, traditional owner or custodian of the land on which the event takes place
- associated costs are to be negotiated between the event organiser and the elder or traditional owner prior to the event occurring
- the Welcome should be the first item of business
- the format is to be negotiated with the elder or traditional owner and may include a short spoken statement, a more traditional welcome with singing, dancing or a smoking ceremony.

It is recommended that a Welcome to Country should be undertaken by an Aboriginal elder, traditional owner or custodian of the land on which the ceremony takes place. However, there will be occasions where despite every effort being made, it is not possible to organise a Welcome to Country by an Aboriginal elder or traditional owner. In these circumstances, an Acknowledgment of Country is the minimum requirement at the commencement of events.

## Acknowledgement of Country

An Acknowledgement of Country is a statement of recognition of the traditional owners of the Country and lands where a meeting or event is being conducted.

It is when the host of a meeting or event acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which the meeting or event is being held and pays respect to past and present elders, and other Aboriginal people attending the event.

Unlike the Welcome to Country, it can be undertaken by a non-Aboriginal person, or an Aboriginal person from another Country or community.

A chair or master of ceremonies will begin an event or meeting by acknowledging that it is taking place on the Country of the traditional owners.

An Acknowledgment of Country can be given at the commencement of a meeting or occasion of any kind, but should be given:

- as the formal response of the speaker who follows immediately after a Welcome to Country
- at whole of agency events such as launches and announcements or significant regional or local staff events and forums
- community engagement events where members of the public or community representatives are present
- at conferences, forums, seminars and ceremonies.

An Acknowledgement of Country is optional at other events, meetings and forums, including school assemblies.

A single Acknowledgment of Country at the commencement of an event or meeting is sufficient. If subsequent speakers or presenters wish to add a personal Acknowledgment of Country at the beginning of their presentation this should be negotiated beforehand with the chair, master of ceremonies or meeting organiser.

# Statements of Acknowledgement

Through consultation with the Aboriginal community, the South Australian government, through the Attorney-General's Department has developed formal Statements of Acknowledgment in consultation with Aboriginal people and representative bodies.

## Statements of Acknowledgement – in the Kurna Region

### Kurna Region Acknowledgement in English

We acknowledge this land that we meet on today is the traditional lands for Kurna [*pronounced 'garna'*] people and that we respect their spiritual relationship with their country.

We also acknowledge the Kurna people, as the custodians of the Adelaide region and that their cultural and heritage beliefs are still as important to the living Kurna people today.

We also pay respects to the cultural authority of Aboriginal people visiting/attending from other areas of South Australia/Australia present here.

### Acknowledgement in Kurna Language

Ngadlu tampintheta yalaka ngadlu Kurna yartangka inparrintheta. Ngadludlu tampintheta, parnaku tuwila yartangka.

Kurna Miyurna yaiya yarta-mathanya Wama Tarntanyaku, parnaku yailtya, parnaku tapa puru purruna. Kurna Miyurna ithu yailtya purruna, yarta kuma puru martintheta, puru warri-apintheta, puru tangka martulayintheta.

Kuma kumartarna Yaiya Miyurna ngadludlu tampintheta iyangka yalaka. Parnaku yarta kumartarna yarta Kantheta Partu-arra kuma Warrunangku.

(Refer to the [Kurna Warra Pintyantheta video](#) for a guide to Kurna pronunciations).

## Statements of Acknowledgement – outside the Kurna (Adelaide) region

In areas outside the Kurna (Adelaide) region, additional resources are available on Statements of Acknowledgement appropriate for traditional owners in their respective lands across South Australia. The Attorney-General's Department website provides links to [preferred wording for Statements of Acknowledgement \(PDF 86KB\)](#) from traditional owners on their Country. Departmental staff and event organisers are encouraged to engage with local Elders from all First Nations groups to incorporate local Aboriginal languages in Statements of Acknowledgement.

There will be some instances where native title claims overlap or have not been settled. In these instances, the Attorney-General's Department has recommended that the following General Statement of Acknowledgment is used:

I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today and pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging and extend that respect to other Aboriginal people who are present today.

Aboriginal Education staff working within the local community may be able to provide further guidance and assistance on protocols for Statements of Acknowledgement in the local context.

## Roles and responsibilities

### Department staff

Be aware of and follow the Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country protocols as outlined in the policy.

### Aboriginal Education Directorate

Provide advice as appropriate.

Monitor and review this policy at least every three years.

## Definitions

### Aboriginal

The department uses the term 'Aboriginal' to refer to people who identify as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

### formal event

All major internal and public events organised by the department including conferences, forums and launches, as set out in this policy.

### meetings

Official departmental openings, forums (where there is an agenda and minutes) including school assemblies.

## Supporting information

If advice or support is required please contact the Communications Directorate, who will be able to provide guidance around cultural protocols or direct people to the appropriate person or organisation for advice. Additional information on Aboriginal languages is available from the Program Manager, English as an Additional Language/Dialect, Curriculum and Learning Division.

The Attorney-General's Department has provided information through its website on the recommended forms Acknowledgement of Country should take, in the Kurna (Adelaide) region, across other parts of South Australia, and in areas where native title claims have not been settled.

## Related policies

[Reconciliation Action Plan 2018 to 2021 \(PDF 1.1MB\)](#)

[Aboriginal Education Strategy 2019 to 2029 \(PDF 6.7MB\)](#)

[Statement of Acknowledgement and Welcome to Country \(Attorney-General's Department\)](#)

## Record history

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## Keywords

Welcome to Country, Acknowledgement of Country, Aboriginal, Kurna, meeting, traditional, custodian, recognition, land

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