



Title:

Protocols for Acknowledgements and Welcome to Country

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Short description	Guidelines to assist staff in ensuring that correct protocols are used for Welcome to Country ceremonies.
Relevant to	Officers responsible for organising Acknowledgement and Welcome to Country ceremonies
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Related University documents	
Related legislation	
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1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The process of 'Welcome to Country' and 'Acknowledgement of Country' recognises the unique position of Aboriginal people in Australian culture and history. Aboriginal people are the original Custodians of the Land. It is important this unique position is recognised and incorporated as part of official protocol and events to enable the wider community to share in Aboriginal culture and heritage, facilitating better relationships between Indigenous people and other Australians.
- 1.2 The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure that the correct protocols are used for across all campuses of the University for 'Welcome to Country' ceremonies.

2. SCOPE

- 2.1 These Guidelines apply to all staff responsible for organising 'Acknowledgement' and 'Welcome to Country' ceremonies.

3. THE 'ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY'

- 3.1 An 'Acknowledgement of Country' is a means by which all people can show respect for Aboriginal culture and heritage and the ongoing relationship the Traditional Custodians have with their Land.
- 3.2 An 'Acknowledgement of Country' would be used at minor functions such as public lectures, in-house training, workshops, seminars and meetings. On such occasions, a Chair or Speaker may begin by Acknowledging that the meeting is taking place in the Country of the Traditional Custodians. For example:

'I would like to acknowledge the Wiradjuri people who are the Traditional Custodians of the Land. I would also like to pay respect to the Elders both past and present of the Wiradjuri Nation and extend that respect to other Indigenous Australians who are present'.

- 3.3 At major functions such as conferences, naming and/or opening ceremonies, graduation ceremonies, exhibitions and other functions where official guests and dignitaries are in attendance, it is important that an Elder be asked to conduct the 'Welcome'. In addition, other 'welcoming activities' such as music and dance may be used under the direction of the Elder.

4. THE 'WELCOME TO COUNTRY'

- 4.1 A 'Welcome to Country' is where the Traditional Aboriginal Custodians welcome people to their Land. Steps should be taken to ensure that the appropriate representative is invited to perform the 'Welcome', because it is a significant recognition and a formal process. A

'Welcome to Country' should always occur in the opening ceremony of the event in question, preferably as the first item.

- 4.2 The 'Welcome to Country' is conducted by a representative/s of the local Aboriginal Custodians who welcome the delegates and all in attendance. Protocols in relation to the performing of a 'Welcome to Country' Ceremony are well established in most Aboriginal communities of the University. If there is uncertainty as to whether an 'acknowledgement' or 'a welcome' is appropriate, advice may be sought from either the Manager, Indigenous Support Units, or the Indigenous Employment Coordinator, Human Resources.
- 4.3 A 'Welcome to Country' may consist of a single speech by the representative of the local Aboriginal community, or it may also include a performance of some description. Performances may include a Traditional Welcoming Song, a Traditional Dance, a Didjeridoo performance or a combination of any of the above. In most communities, there are performing artists who are regularly available for such occasions.

5. NEGOTIATING A 'WELCOME TO COUNTRY'

- 5.1 Initiation of negotiation to perform a 'Welcome to Country' ceremony is to occur through the Manager, Indigenous Support Units only.
- 5.2 It is important that the Aboriginal representative/s be contacted by telephone (to be asked personally) and then through a formal letter of invitation. All arrangements thereafter for the 'Welcome to Country' should be mutually negotiated. It is very important that the Aboriginal representative/s has been involved in, and is comfortable with, the arrangements. This may include the format of the ceremony, who should be invited, who should perform the 'Welcome to Country' and how that person will be recognised for their time and commitment.
- 5.3 The University representative should make provision for those performing the 'Welcome' to be paid. In the Riverina region of New South Wales, the amount for a 'Welcome to Country' speech is \$100. Performers are also required to be paid. These fees also need to be negotiated prior to the event.
- 5.4 Other considerations may include the arrangement of transport for the Elder/s and ensuring that refreshments are provided.

6. CULTURAL PROTOCOLS TO BE OBSERVED

- 6.1 There are certain Indigenous protocols that must be observed:
 - 6.1.1 The practice of not mentioning the name of a deceased Aboriginal person, or displaying photographic images of a deceased person unless agreed to by the relevant family;
 - 6.1.2 Sensitivity to knowledge that is specific to gender (commonly referred to as 'Women's Business' or 'Men's Business');

6.1.3 Appropriate acknowledgement of guest artists that are either from or supported by the local community.

6.2 In most cases, members of the Aboriginal community will advise staff of intrusive behaviour and/or if they are not permitted to discuss the protocol or ceremony with staff because of age, gender, status or because staff do not belong to their Clan or Tribal Group. If staff are in doubt, assistance should be sought in the first instance from the Manager, Indigenous Support Units or the Indigenous Employment Coordinator, Human Resources.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Wagga Elders Group
Indigenous Student Support Unit, Charles Sturt University
Council of Wiradjuri Elders
NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group

Table of amendments

Version number	Date	Short description of amendment
1.0	8 December 2006	Introduction of new protocols