

# Guiding Principles for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country

## 1. Purpose

UTS is located on Aboriginal Lands. It is important that staff and students understand the significance of observing protocols in recognising the Traditional Owners of the relevant Lands at university events and ceremonies.

Observing cultural protocols demonstrates the respect that UTS, its staff and students have for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country ceremonies are increasingly becoming features of Australian society and demonstrate our nation's evolution and unique identity.

## 2. Scope

These guiding principles:

- apply to all UTS facilities in Australia
- provide guidance for observing cultural protocols and arranging cultural ceremonies at university events
- give advice on acknowledging the relevant Aboriginal groups and Lands.

## 3. Acknowledging UTS Traditional Owners and Land

The following should be used to specifically acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Land of particular Aboriginal communities on UTS lands.

- City campus, Broadway and Moore Park facility: Gadigal people of the Eora Nation<sup>1</sup>.
- UTS Western Sydney research facility: Boorooberongal people of the Dharug Nation<sup>2</sup>.
- UTS Botany Facility: Bidiagal people and Gamaygal people<sup>3</sup>.

The following are examples<sup>4</sup> of acknowledgement that can be given at official UTS events and ceremonies.

- UTS City campus (and Moore Park facility): I would like to acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation upon whose ancestral lands our City campus now stands. I would also like to pay respect to the Elders both past and present, acknowledging them as the traditional custodians of knowledge for this land.
- UTS Western Sydney research facility: I would like to acknowledge the Boorooberongal people of the Dharug Nation upon whose ancestral lands this research facility now stands. I would also like to pay respect to the Elders both past

1 Map: [Metro Local Aboriginal Land Council, Our Land](#)

2 Map: [Aboriginal People and Place in the Sydney area](#)

3 Map: La Perouse Local Aboriginal Land Council Boundary

4 These examples can be personalised. Refer to section 7 in this document for support and contacts.

and present, acknowledging them as the traditional custodians of knowledge for this land.

- UTS publications: UTS acknowledges the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation, the Boorooberongal people of the Dharug Nation, the Bidiagal people and the Gamaygal people upon whose ancestral lands our university stands. We would also like to pay respect to the Elders both past and present, acknowledging them as the traditional custodians of knowledge for these lands.

#### **4. What is a Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country?**

A Welcome to Country is a formal welcome onto Aboriginal Land given by Traditional Owners (Aboriginal people who are the historical occupants of the area) or representatives given permission by the Traditional Owners to do so.

The Welcome to Country should be the first item on the order of proceedings for the event and may comprise a speech with or without a smoking ceremony and/or performance, involving traditional dance or music.

An Acknowledgement of People and Country is a statement of recognition of the Traditional Owners of the Land. An Acknowledgement of Country can be given by any person, Indigenous or non-Indigenous.

#### **Importance of observing Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country at UTS**

##### **Welcome to Country**

Protocols for welcoming visitors to Country have been a part of Aboriginal cultures for thousands of years.

Despite the absence of fences or visible borders, Aboriginal 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. When permission was granted the hosting group would welcome the visitors, offering them safe passage and protection of their spiritual being during the journey.

These protocols have been adapted to contemporary circumstances<sup>5</sup>.

In general, UTS events where there are invited members of the public and/or dignitaries may include a Welcome to Country.

Events where it would be desirable for a Welcome to Country to be given by a Traditional Owner from the local community include:

- opening of new buildings
- awards nights
- community and public engagement events.

When it is not possible to arrange a Welcome to Country at such events, an Acknowledgement of Country is the minimum requirement.

##### **Acknowledgement of Country**

It is important to acknowledge Country as it demonstrates respect for Aboriginal protocols. An Acknowledgement of Country may be given by anyone who is not a

5 [Welcome to and Acknowledgement of Country, Reconciliation Australia](#) (PDF)

Traditional Owner of the Lands on which the event is being held. It is a respectful public acknowledgement of the traditional custodians of the Lands you are on.

Some important points to consider are:

- Indigenous and non-Indigenous people can give an Acknowledgement of Country
- an Acknowledgement of Country can be given after a Welcome to Country or where there is no Welcome to Country taking place
- it is appropriate for the host of the ceremony to make the Acknowledgement unless a person has been specifically asked to give it
- try and personalise the words. Find out about the local group and consider the meaning of Acknowledging Country and the people.

Events where an Acknowledgement of Country should be provided include:

- all graduation ceremonies
- significant public lectures
- staff and student orientation
- student-focused events and whole-of-staff significant events
- launch of new initiatives
- the first meeting of the year for high-level official university committees
- special events as determined by staff managing events.

## **5. Arranging a Welcome to Country or Acknowledgement of Country**

UTS staff and students should feel comfortable giving an Acknowledgement of Country rather than relying on Indigenous people to give it.

If a Welcome to Country at the City campus or Moore Park facility is needed fill out the [Welcome to Country form](#) on the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council.

For a Welcome to Country elsewhere, or for any other advice on Welcomes or Acknowledgements, contact the [Office of the Pro Vice-Chancellor \(Indigenous Leadership and Engagement\)](#).

When officiating at a ceremony or event, it is respectful to ask the Welcome to Country representative how they prefer to be addressed. Do not assume that 'Uncle' or 'Aunty' is the preferred title.

## **6. Intellectual property and fees for service**

In providing cultural services such as Welcome to Country, artistic performances and ceremonies, Aboriginal people are using their intellectual property. Appropriate remuneration should be discussed and arranged prior to the event.

## **7. Support**

Regions and Aboriginal Country are not always clearly defined and acknowledging one people over another may unintentionally exclude some people. Contact the [Office of the Pro Vice-Chancellor \(Indigenous Leadership and Engagement\)](#) for any help or advice with these guiding principles.