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| Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners and Welcome to Country |

Performing an Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

An Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners is a set of words spoken at the beginning of an event by the first speaker which pays respect and gives recognition to traditional owners of land upon which the event is held. It is usually said as attendees, visitors and distinguished guests are welcomed to the event. An Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners can be performed by any individual, Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, participating in an occasion of any kind.

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| In performing an Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners, remember:* An Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners is a gesture of respect to Victoria’s first people and their cultural practices.
* While there is a general formula of words to be spoken, an Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners may be added to at the discretion of the speaker and the appropriateness of the event.
* Identify the appropriate traditional owners for the event using the table of DELWP Sites and Traditional Owners (see below). Where traditional owners are not identified for the location of the event, contact the region’s Indigenous Partnership Facilitator, in Strategy Innovation and Engagement Branch, for guidance.
* Seek advice from the traditional owner group on the correct pronunciation of the name of the group that is being acknowledged.
* There is uncertainty in some areas of Victoria about custodial ownership. In this situation, the generic version of the Acknowledgment of Traditional Owners should be undertaken instead.
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Words for an Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners…

… when the traditional owners are identified

"I would like to begin the meeting by acknowledging and paying my respects to the traditional owners, the [name of group] people, whose country we are on and I would also like to extend my respect to their Elders, both past and present."

*… (generic) when the traditional owners are not identified, traditional owner status is not agreed or there are variations on the name of the traditional owner group or clan*

"I would like to begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the country on which we meet and pay my respects to their Elders, both past and present."

Adding value to an Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

Some events may be good opportunities to highlight achievements in engagement with traditional owners and the particular relationship that traditional owners have with natural resources and primary industries.

*For example, for an event in Bairnsdale:*

“It is significant to note in acknowledging the Gunaikurnai as the traditional owners of the land that we are meeting on today that the Gunaikurnai people signed the first Traditional Owner Settlement Agreement in Victoria and were recognised by the Federal Court of Australia as native title holders over their traditional land.”

**Arranging a Welcome to Country**

A Welcome to Country is undertaken at the beginning of an event instead of an Acknowledgement of Tractional Owners. it may consist of a speech by the representative of the local traditional owners or it can include a performance of some description. Performances can include a traditional welcoming song, a traditional dance, smoking ceremony or combination of any of the above. Only traditional owners of the land upon which the event is being held can undertake a Welcome to Country.

A Welcome to Country is a contemporary expression of a traditional practice which was followed by many different groups. For example, when people travelled through or were invited onto Wurundjeri lands, the ceremony of [Tanderrum](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tanderrum)[[1]](#footnote-1) – freedom of the bush – would be performed. This allowed safe passage and temporary access and use of land and resources by foreign people. It was a diplomatic rite involving the landholder's hospitality and a ritual exchange of gifts.

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| In arranging a Welcome to Country, remember:* You are not just organising a service, but this process is also part of creating a relationship between DELWP and traditional owners, and is part of a wider commitment to engagement. Contact made in this process may also assist with further engagement with traditional owners on other matters.
* It is a good practice to discuss the nature of the event with the traditional owners which will allow them to cater the Welcome to Country along the event’s themes, if that is appropriate.
* It is important that arrangements are mutually negotiated and the traditional owner representative(s) is comfortable with them.
* When contacting traditional owners, it is preferred for first contact to be made by telephone, which is then followed up with an invitation in writing. This should include an invitation to attend the event for which the welcome is being conducted.
* It is important that local group protocols are observed, including allowing time for decision making and discussion. It should also be noted that traditional owners are often in high demand and it is recommended that traditional owners are approached early (in the order of three to four weeks prior to the event) to ensure time for appropriate arrangements to be made. Parking or a drop off point close to the event should also be arranged.
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Before contacting Traditional Owners for a Welcome to Country

1. Identify whether a Welcome to Country is appropriate using the DELWP Acknowledgment of and Welcome to Country Policy.
2. Identify the appropriate traditional owner group for the event using the table of DELWP Sites and Traditional Owners (below). Where traditional owners are not identified for the location of the event, contact the local Indigenous Partnership Facilitator.

Note that in some areas of Victoria there are currently disputes about custodial ownership. In this situation, the generic Acknowledgment of Traditional Owners should be undertaken instead.

1. Undertaking some research on the traditional owners and their relationship with DELWP will help you find connections between the event, the welcome and the traditional owners, and shows respect.
2. Plan out how much time can be afforded to a welcome in the event and the budget for paying performers (it is reasonable to allow for at least $300 - $400, depending on the size/type of the ceremony) - remember that this is a service that traditional owners are providing to the department. Please keep in mind that performers may need arrangements made to assist them at the venue, such as provision of a parking space.

Inviting traditional owners to perform a Welcome to Country

Contact the traditional owners by telephone to introduce yourself and invite them to perform a Welcome to Country.

Provide advice on the nature of the event, the audience, the event’s focus and the amount of time that they will have for the welcome. It may be helpful to provide suggestions as to what may be appropriate to the event, for example, a song or speech may be better than a smoking ceremony. You will also need to provide a date by when you will need to know if they are available to perform the ceremony.

You will also need to negotiate a price for the traditional owner’s time and expenses in performing the ceremony. It is good to get these negotiations underway early in the discussions.

Follow up the phone call with an invitation in writing, email is usually most convenient, which also outlines the aspects discussed with the traditional owners. Note that some organisations may require you to complete their Welcome to Country request form to confirm the booking.

Before the event

It is good practice to get back in touch with traditional owners a few days before the event, a phone call is usually best, to confirm the arrangements for the Welcome to Country and the availability of performers. This also allows for any last questions and to confirm final arrangements.

DELWP sites and traditional owners

The organisations listed in this table are recognised native holders, and /or Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) (under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006). In some parts of the state there are numerous organisations representing traditional owners. In these circumstances you should contact a DELWP Regional Indigenous Partnership Facilitator.

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| Barwon South West |
| DELWP Location | Traditional Country | Suggested Contacts  |
| AngleseaGeelongQueenscliff | Wathaurung | Wathaurung Aboriginal CorporationPO Box 734BALLARAT VIC 3353Email: [bryon@wathcorp.com.au](http://www.dpc.vic.gov.au/bryon%40wathcorp.com.au)Phone: (03) 4308 0420 |
| CastertonCavendishDartmoorHeywoodHamiltonPortland | Gunditjmara | Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation PO Box 216Heywood VIC 3304Phone: (03) 5527 1427Email: ceo@gunditjmirring.com |
| Apollo BayCamperdownColacForestGellibrandWarrnambool | Contact one of DELWP’s Indigenous Partnership Facilitator for advice . |
| Gippsland |
| DELWP Location | Traditional Country | Suggested Contacts  |
| Bairnsdale BriagolongDargoEricaHeyfieldLakes EntranceMaffraNowa NowaSwifts CreekTraralgonYarram | Gunaikurnai  | Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal CorporationPO Box 1699Bairnsdale VIC 3875Email: barryk@glawac.com.auPhone: (03) 5153 0133 |
| BendocCann RiverCowesEillinbankMallacoottaOrbost | Contact Gippsland’s Indigenous Partnership Facilitator for advice. |
| Grampians |
| DELWP Location | Traditional Country | Suggested Contacts  |
| EdenhopeHopetounHorsham | Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagulk family groups | Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation25 Darlot StreetHorsham VIC 3400Email: staff.bglc@bigpond.comPhone: (03) 5381 0977 |
| Ararat | Djabwurrung  | Martang Pty LtdPO Box 20Halls Gap VIC 3381Email: [djabwurrung@gmail.com](http://www.dpc.vic.gov.au/djabwurrung%40gmail.com) Phone: (03) 5356 6188 |
| BallaratBeaufortSebastopolWendouree | Wathaurung | Wathaurung Aboriginal CorporationPO Box 734BALLARAT VIC 3353Email: [bryon@wathcorp.com.au](http://www.dpc.vic.gov.au/bryon%40wathcorp.com.au)Phone: (03) 4308 0420 |
| AvocaCreswickDaylesfordSt Arnaud | Dja Dja Wurrung | Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal CorporationPO Box 1026Bendigo 3552Email: [ceo@djadjawurrung.com.au](http://www.dpc.vic.gov.au/ceo%40djadjawurrung.com.au)Phone: (03) 5444 2888Website: [www.djadjawurrung.com.au](http://www.dpc.vic.gov.au/www.djadjawurrung.com.au) |
| Bacchus Marsh | Wurundjeri | Wurundjeri Tribe Land and Compensation Cultural Heritage Council Inc.Level 1, Providence Building Abbotsford Convent1 St Heliers Street, Abbotsford 3067Email: wurundjericouncil@yahoo.com.auPhone: (03) 9416 2905 |
| For other locations in the region contact Grampians Region’s Indigenous Partnership Facilitator. |
| Hume Region |
| DELWP Location | Traditional Country | Suggested Contacts  |
| AlexandraBroadfordMansfieldSeymourSnobbs CreekToolangi | Taungurung  | Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation13 Bourke StreetKilmore Vic 3764Email: taungurung@gmail.comPhone: (03) 5781 1134 |
| BenallaRutherglenTaturaWangaratta | Yorta Yorta | Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation PO Box 27Nathalia VIC 3638Email: Reception@yynac.com.auPhone: (03) 5869 3353 |
| BeechworthBrightCorryongMitta MittaOvensTallangattaWodonga | Contact Hume Region’s Indigenous Partnership Facilitator for advice. |
| Loddon Mallee |
| DELWP Location | Traditional Country | Suggested Contacts  |
| BendigoCastlemaineMaryboroughSt Arnaud | Dja Dja Wurrung | Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal CorporationPO Box 1026Bendigo 3552Email: [ceo@djadjawurrung.com.au](http://www.dpc.vic.gov.au/ceo%40djadjawurrung.com.au)Phone: (03) 5444 2888Website: [www.djadjawurrung.com.au](http://www.dpc.vic.gov.au/www.djadjawurrung.com.au) |
| HeathcoteRushworth | Taungurung  | Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation13 Bourke StreetKilmore Vic 3764Email: taungurung@gmail.comPhone: (03) 5781 1134 |
| EchucaCohuna | Yorta Yorta | Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation PO Box 27Nathalia VIC 3638Email: Reception@yynac.com.auPhone: (03) 5869 3353 |
| Birchip | Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagulk family groups  | Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation25 Darlot StreetHorsham VIC 3400Email: staff.bglc@bigpond.comPhone: (03) 5381 0977 |
| KerangSwan hillMildura | Contact Loddon Mallee Region’s Indigenous Partnership Facilitator for advice.  |
| Port Phillip |
| DELWP Location | Traditional Country | Suggested Contacts  |
| AttwoodBundooraMacleodHeidelbergCarltonNicholson StreetParkvilleSpring StWoori Yallock | Wurundjeri | Wurundjeri Tribe Land and Compensation Cultural Heritage Council Inc.Level 1, Providence BuildingAbbotsford Convent1 St Heliers StreetAbbotsford 3067Email: wurundjericouncil@yahoo.com.auPhone: (03) 9416 2905 |
| Altona NorthLavertonWerribeeKnoxfieldFrankstonMornington | Contact Port Phillip Region’s Indigenous Partnership Facilitator for advice.Contact Port Phillip Region’s Indigenous Partnership Facilitator for advice. |

1. . [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wurundjeri](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wurundjeri%20)   [↑](#footnote-ref-1)