

Acknowledging Traditional Owners

Introduction

Life Saving Victoria respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land and waterways in which we swim, meet, work, play and explore.

Acknowledging the rich cultural heritage of Traditional Owners is just one step in our journey towards reconciliation with First Nations people. Strengthening relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples benefits all Victorians and is closely aligned with LSV's organisational values which aim to celebrate diversity and inclusion.

It is therefore important that all LSV employees, members, volunteers and representatives show respect to Traditional Owners by either an Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners or a Welcome to Country. LSV encourages you to confirm your organisations guidelines on acknowledgment and any pre-existing relationships with your local Traditional Owners.

This guideline provides information and advice on when and how you may use an Acknowledgement or a Welcome for your lifesaving education programs, as well as some specific speaking notes and links that you may like to use. All information has come from the First Peoples-State Relations website. For more information, please visit: <https://www.firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au/welcome-country-and-acknowledgement-traditional-owners>

Acknowledgement or a Welcome

What's the difference and which one should I use?

- An **Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners** can be done by anyone regardless of formal recognition of Traditional Owners and is a way of showing awareness of, and respect for, the Aboriginal Traditional Owners of the land on which a meeting or event is being held.
 - An Acknowledgment should be done by your team leader at the beginning of each day/session.
 - Instructors may also give an Acknowledgement at the beginning of their activities each day/session.
- A **Welcome to Country** ceremony is performed by Aboriginal Traditional Owners for people visiting their Country. These ceremonies vary from speeches to traditional dance and/or smoking ceremonies.

- A Welcome to Country can only be done by the **formally recognised** Traditional Owners.
- Best practice for major public events and programs. We encourage you to identify the formally recognised Traditional Owners and enquire with them directly for opportunities. More information on organising a Welcome to Country can be found below.

How to do an Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

The Acknowledgment used will depend on whether formal recognition of Traditional Owners exists. If formal recognition exists, the Traditional Owners name must be referred to in the Acknowledgement. If not, a more general Acknowledgement is required.

Step 1

Check if there are formally recognised Traditional Owners to ensure that we are culturally sensitive in our Acknowledgments.

- Aboriginal Victoria has a fantastic map resource with an address search function to assist with this. Visit: <https://achris.vic.gov.au/weave/wca.html>

Step 2

Use the below scripts to help guide your Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners.

Option 1

- *[Organisation name]* respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land and waterways in which we swim, explore, play and meet - the *[Name of Traditional Owners – as per Aboriginal Victoria website]*. We pay our respect to their Elders past, present and emerging, and any Aboriginal Elders of other communities who may be here today.

Option 2

- Our program is being held on the lands of the *[Name of Traditional Owners – as per Aboriginal Victoria website]* and I wish to acknowledge them as Traditional Owners of the land and waterways in which we swim, play, explore and work. I would also like to pay my respects to their Elders, past and present, and Aboriginal Elders of other communities who may be here today.

When there are no formally recognised Traditional Owners

An Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners is still recommended. See the below script you may use as a guide:

- I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we are meeting. I pay my respects to their Elders, past and present, and the Aboriginal Elders of other communities who may be here today.

Welcome to Country

A Welcome to Country can only be done by the formally recognised group of traditional owners.

- A Welcome to Country ceremony is performed by Aboriginal Traditional Owners for people visiting their Country. These ceremonies vary from speeches of welcome to traditional dance and smoking ceremonies
- Your organisation may have processes by which to organise a Welcome to Country, please confirm this and follow any guidelines as required.
- If your organisation does not have a process and your event is in a part of Victoria where the Traditional Owners have been formally recognised, you should contact the relevant Formally Recognised Traditional Owner corporation to arrange the Welcome to Country. Contact details can be found on the Aboriginal Victoria website.
- Please note that there is a fee associated with a Welcome to Country so please ensure you have some budget to cover the costs.
- Where there is no formally recognised Traditional Owners, you should give an Acknowledgement of Country only.

Engaging Traditional Owners

See the 'Engaging Traditional Owners' section on the First Peoples Relations website for detailed advice on engaging local Traditional Owners.

You may choose to engage Traditional Owners for any/all of the purposes below, bearing in mind that Traditional Owner groups are best placed to discuss with and advise on their preferences and policies, as well as costs, regarding engagement with the project.

- Legal obligations required for use of the venue, as advised by the permit authority.
- Organising a Welcome to Country.
- Organising a Guest Speaker as part of the 'My Community' activity.
- Incorporating Traditional knowledge specific to your location.
 - E.g., use of Traditional location names and language, identifying local areas of importance, cultural information particularly that which relates to the land and waterways your program is being delivered.

Resources for more information

Resource	Link
First Peoples Relations website <ul style="list-style-type: none">Victoria State Government guideline	https://www.firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au/welcome-country-and-acknowledgement-traditional-owners
Official map to check for formal recognition of any address	https://achris.vic.gov.au/weave/wca.html