

# Connecting through culture and community



Acknowledgment of Country is a special and important way to show respect and value the sharing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Integrating it in your service leads to better understanding and community relationships.

Early childhood services and educators understand the importance of belonging, which helps create a connection to place, family, community and culture. An Acknowledgement of Country shows that we value belonging and the people, places, resources, traditions, stories and cultural obligations of the people who have connection to the places where we meet, learn, work and play.

Integrating an Acknowledgement of Country into your service can help connect your children, families, educators and staff. It also provides a welcoming atmosphere and spiritual presence to the place on which you are living, working and learning.

Jaime Ahwang, Manager of the C&K Mackay Children and Family Centre, shared how having children participate in an Acknowledgement of Country every day can make a difference to learning and growing connection to land, sea and culture.

'We celebrate culture every day throughout the year. We don't just focus only doing it on key dates,' Jaime said.

In our centre, we start each morning with an Acknowledgement of Country with our children.

'One of our educators is also passionate about sharing Australian Sign Language (Auslan), so the children in our pre-Kindy room sign their Acknowledgement too.

'There's something really special about seeing the all the children doing their Acknowledgment and signing together.'

Jaime said integrating Acknowledgement of Country into daily routines helps build connection to country, culture and community for children and families.

'After feeling isolated and COVID-19 challenges of last year, we've been working with our families to re-connect,' Jaime said.

'Having children come together for an Acknowledgement helps them to feel connected and gives them a sense of togetherness'.

Jaime shared a story of one of the children who attended her service last year, who asked his teachers in Prep to lead the Acknowledgement of Country at school.

'He went straight up to his Prep teachers and said "I know how to do this - can I do it?";' Jaime said.

'We're really proud of him and that we've helped build this confidence and pride'.

## Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country – what's the difference?

We've all heard a Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country at an event before. So, why do we have these? What are the differences, and who can deliver one? We've detailed some of the differences below.

### Welcome to Country

A Welcome to Country must only be delivered by a local Elder or other authorised Traditional Custodian who has the authority to extend the welcome to their country. It should be the first item on a significant program, such as to open an event and may also be delivered at less formal gatherings.

A Welcome to Country may take many forms including:

- a speech
- performances such as traditional welcoming songs or dance
- a smoking ceremony.

It's important that the appropriate protocols are followed in organising a Welcome to Country as (which are established by each community).

When organising a Welcome to Country, check that you have:

- consulted with and invited the appropriate people to deliver the Welcome to Country
- invited the person delivering the Welcome to Country to stay for the event should they wish
- offered Elders travel support such as taxi vouchers, in addition to appropriate remuneration.

### Acknowledgement of Country

An [Acknowledgement of Country External link](#) is a demonstration of respect for the traditional custodians of the land on which a meeting or event is being held.

An Acknowledgement of Country may be given by anyone – both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous people. There is no right or wrong way to give an

Acknowledgement of Country. The most important thing is that you have a go and speak genuinely.

Acknowledgements of Country are generally offered at the beginning of a meeting, workshop, speech or formal occasion. Other places to respectfully share an Acknowledgement of Country include in publications, on signage, websites, and in recordings.

Resources

- Read further about what is a [Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country? \(PDF, 358KB\) External link](#)
- Watch an [Acknowledgement of Country External link](#), download the Acknowledgement of Country poster template and other resources from Foundations for Success website.
- 2021 National Reconciliation theme is [More than a word. Reconciliation takes action External link](#)
- 2021 NAIDOC Week (4-11 July) theme is [Heal Country External link](#).
- Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority [Connectedness: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Acknowledgment of Country External link](#)
- Narragunnawali [Early learning curriculum resources External link](#) (available with free sign up), including:
  - [Caring for country External link](#)
  - [Come on in!: An invitation to a VIP visitor External link](#)
  - [Connection to county incursion or excursion External link](#)
  - [Collaborative art project External link](#)
  - [Building belonging External link](#).

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