Welcome to Country
Acknowledgement of Country

NADC National Australia Day Council

Australia Day
Reflect. Respect. Celebrate.

Engagement on Australia Day

On Australia Day we **reflect** on our nation's past that began more than 65,000 years ago, **respect** the histories and stories of everyday Australians and **celebrate** our nation's place in the world, our individual contributions and our shared future.

Australia Day is a day to learn more about the history, traditions and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, whose way of life remains a vital part of our nation's identity.

Beginning your Australia Day event with a Welcome to Country or Acknowledgement of Country provides your local community with the chance to learn about, and celebrate, the rich cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We encourage you to use this time to highlight the unique position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australian culture and the history of your area.

Smoking Ceremony with Corroboree for Life dancers,
Victoria Gardens, Perth
Photo courtesy of Auspire - Australia Day Council WA

Welcome to Country

- Only Traditional Owners/Custodians of the land on which the event takes place can deliver a Welcome to Country.
- The essential element of a Welcome to Country is to welcome visitors and offer safe passage.
- A Welcome to Country occurs at the beginning of an event and can take many forms including singing, dancing, smoking ceremonies or a speech in traditional language or English.
- A Welcome to Country is delivered by Traditional Owners, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have been given permission from Traditional Owners, to welcome visitors to their Country.
- To arrange a Welcome to Country in your area, contact your local Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait Islander organisation or the National Indigenous Australians Agency (www.niaa.gov.au/) who can provide contact details for a Traditional Owner/Custodian.

Acknowledgement of Country

- An Acknowledgement of Country can be delivered by anyone when a Traditional Owner is not available.
- It is an opportunity to acknowledge, and pay respect, to the Traditional Owners and ongoing custodians of the land – the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Customarily, Acknowledgements are made at the commencement of an event, meeting or formal occasion.
- Speakers can also Acknowledge Country as they speak for the first time, even if a Welcome to Country or Acknowledgement of Country has already been given.

There are no set protocols or wording, however, when conducting an Acknowledgement, it is important that it be delivered with respectful intent and sentiment.

A general Acknowledgement can be used if you do not know the name of the people on whose land you are gathered. For example, *'I'd like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet today. I would also like to pay my respects to Elders past and present.'*

A specific Acknowledgement should be used where you know the name of the people on whose land you are gathered. For example, *'I'd like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet today, the (people) of the (nation) and pay my respects to Elders past and present.'*

Also you may wish to use this opportunity to reflect on a story or reference to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander history in your area. This recognises the integral place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first custodians of this land and, importantly, promotes awareness of the history and culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Concluding with a personalised comment, for example, *'May we walk gently on this land'*, will add further meaning to the intent of the Acknowledgment.

Throughout your event, **reflect** on the important part played by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the history of your area, **respect** their contributions to past and present as well as the contributions of everyday Australians, and **celebrate** coming together and connecting with family, friends, and community.

References

For more information, visit:

indigenous.gov.au - www.indigenous.gov.au/culture-and-capability
Reconciliation Australia - www.reconciliation.org.au/
National Indigenous Australians Agency - www.niaa.gov.au/

Mourning in the Morning event,
Elder Park/Tarntanya Wama, Adelaide
Photo courtesy of Australia Day Council of South Australia

Front and back cover: We-Akon Dilinja – Morning Reflection
Photo courtesy of City of Port Phillip and Boonwurrung Land & Sea Council, Victoria

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