



POLICY & PROTOCOL

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS OF COUNTRY AND WELCOMES TO COUNTRY

Background

By the Bar's Reconciliation Action Plan (February 2017 – February 2020) (**RAP**), the Victorian Bar is committed to reconciliation and, through its leadership, fosters respect by embracing and recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural diversity, history, identity and the aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

By its RAP, the Victorian Bar acknowledges that respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people encompasses non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people having an appreciation of the unique culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the resulting barriers to equitable participation in Australian society.

What are Welcomes to Country and Acknowledgments of Country?

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

In contemporary times, a Welcome to Country is when an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Traditional Owner or Custodian of the land (usually an Elder) welcomes people to their land. It occurs at the beginning of a formal event and can take many forms including singing, dancing, smoking ceremonies or a speech in traditional language or English.

An Acknowledgement of Country¹ is an opportunity for anyone to show respect for Traditional Owners and the continuing connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Country. It can be given by both non-Indigenous people and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Similar to a Welcome to Country, an Acknowledgement of Country is generally offered at the beginning of a meeting, speech or formal occasion.

Objectives of the policy/protocol

Welcomes to Country and Acknowledgments of Country demonstrate respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities by embedding cultural protocols in the Victorian Bar's processes and functions. This in turn plays an important role in the progression of reconciliation in the legal profession and in the wider community.

Incorporating welcoming and acknowledgement protocols into official meetings and events recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Australians and Traditional Custodians of the land. It promotes an ongoing connection to place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and shows respect for Traditional Owners.

Application of the policy

¹ We here use the expression "Acknowledgment of Country", though the expressions "Acknowledgment of Traditional Owners" and "Acknowledgment of Traditional Owners of Country" are sometimes used to refer to the same thing.



This policy is formulated as a guide for the Victorian Bar Council and all members of the Victorian Bar who represent the Bar at internal or external events.

Acknowledgment of Country Policy

- Members of the Victorian Bar Council and those representing the Victorian Bar should include an Acknowledgement of Country at the commencement of all important public events including, but not limited to:
 - judicial welcomes and farewells;
 - speeches given on behalf of the Bar;
 - Continuing Professional Development seminars, particularly those that are available to the wider legal profession, and
 - functions hosted by the Bar.
- Members of the Victorian Bar Council and those representing the Victorian Bar through its committees or internally or externally are encouraged to include an Acknowledgement of Country at the commencement of meetings, as appropriate.
- Suggested wording for Acknowledgements of Country can be found in the Acknowledgement of Country Protocol (below).

Welcome to Country Policy

- Members of the Victorian Bar Council or of a Victorian Bar Committee should invite a local Traditional Owner to provide a Welcome to Country at one or more significant Bar events each year. Alternatively, the Bar should organise and fund a Welcome to Country at an external event such as one of the events to mark the Opening of the Legal Year or an event in Law Week.
- The Indigenous Justice Committee (IJC) should monitor that the Bar has met the above policy target.
- In organising for a Welcome to Country, the relevant member (or Bar Office staff member on their behalf) should consult the Welcome to Country key contact list for further information.

Acknowledgment of Country Protocol

General:

“I’d like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we meet today. I also pay my respects to their Elders past and present.”

Specific:

“I’d like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we meet today, the (people) of the (nation), and to pay my respects to their Elders past and present.”

If you would like to find out who the Traditional Owners and Custodians are in your area, you can find out more here: <https://www.vic.gov.au/aboriginalvictoria/heritage/welcome-to-country-and-acknowledgement-of-traditional-owners.html>

Example for Melbourne CBD:

“I’d like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we meet today, the Peoples of the Kulin Nation. I also pay my respects to their Elders past and present.”

Example for Geelong and Ballarat:

“I’d like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we meet today, the Wadawurrung people of the Kulin Nation. I also pay my respects to their Elders past and present.”



Example for Hamilton and Portland:

“I’d like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we meet today, the Gunditjmara people. I also pay my respects to their Elders past and present.”

Example for Horsham:

“I’d like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we meet today, the Wotjobaluk, Wergaia, Jupagalk, Jaadwa and Jadawadjali people. I also pay my respects to their Elders past and present.”

Example for Mildura:

“I’d like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we meet today, the Latji Latji people. I also pay my respects to their Elders past and present.”

Example for Bendigo:

“I’d like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we meet today, the Dja Dja Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation. I also pay my respects to their Elders past and present.”

Example for Shepparton, Wangaratta and Benalla:

“I’d like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we meet today, the eight clans of the Yorta Yorta Nation. I also pay my respects to their Elders past and present.”

Example for Bairnsdale, Traralgon and Morwell:

“I’d like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we meet today, the Gunaikurnai people. I also pay my respects to their Elders past and present.”

Example for Wonthaggi:

“I’d like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we meet today, the Bunurong/Boon Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation. I also pay my respects to their Elders past and present.”

Welcome to Country key contact list

Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation

<https://www.bglc.com.au/>

Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation

<https://www.bunuronglc.org/>

Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation

<http://www.djadjawurrung.com.au/>

Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation

<http://easternmaar.com.au/>

Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation

<https://gunaikurnai.org/>

Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation

<https://www.gunditjmirring.com/>

Martang Pty Ltd



<https://www.vic.gov.au/aboriginalvictoria/heritage/registered-aboriginal-parties/matang-pty-ltd.html>

Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation

<http://taungurung.com.au/>

Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation

<https://wadawurrung.org.au/>

Wurundjeri Tribe Land & Compensation Cultural Heritage Council Incorporated

<https://www.wurundjeri.com.au>

Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation

<http://www.yynac.com.au/>