

Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country

What is a Welcome to Country?

A Welcome to Country is given by Aboriginal people, welcoming visitors to their Land. Only Tasmanian Aboriginal people can give a Welcome to Country in Tasmania. It is highly disrespectful for anyone else to do so.

A Welcome to Country might involve:

- A speech from a Tasmanian Aboriginal Elder or community representative
- A speech in *palawa kani* (Tasmanian Aboriginal Language)
- Short history of the people and the area
- Story telling
- Singing and dancing
- Ceremony

This depends on who is giving the Welcome to Country, and to whom it will be given.

What is Country?

Tasmanian Aboriginal people have a distinctive and age-old connection with their ancestral lands and waters. They are custodians with particular responsibilities. When an Aboriginal person talks of 'Country'; this encompasses not only the land and water but also culture, knowledge, and the environment.

When should a Welcome to Country be given?

A Welcome to Country may be given at an event, conference, meeting or exhibition regardless of whether there is an Aboriginal focus or if there are Aboriginal people present.

How do I organise a Welcome to Country?

The Office of Aboriginal Affairs is able to assist with information and direction regarding a Welcome to Country or an Acknowledgement of Country.

What is an Acknowledgement of Country?

An Acknowledgement of Country is respect and recognition of Tasmanian Aboriginal peoples' survival and continual connection with the land spanning more than 60,000 years. An Acknowledgement of Country pays respect to the Aboriginal community, both past and present.

When should an Acknowledgement of Country be given?

An Acknowledgment of Country can be given at an official opening, meeting, concert, school assembly, or other event. Any person can give an Acknowledgement of Country.

In the absence of a Welcome to Country, an Acknowledgment of Country may be given. It should be the first item on the agenda. Speakers also often acknowledge Country as they speak for the first time (even though a Welcome to Country or Acknowledgement of Country may have already been given).

Types of Acknowledgement

- *I acknowledge and pay respect to the elders that are here today, I acknowledge those who have passed before us and acknowledge members of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community who are also attending this event.*

If no Aboriginal people are at the event, the following wording could be used:

- *I acknowledge and pay respect to the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community as the traditional and original owners, and continuing custodians of this land on which we gather today and acknowledge Elders – past and present.*

A combination of these acknowledgments may also be used.

- **(for Hobart)** *I pay respect to the traditional and original owners of this land the muwinina (mou wee nee nar) people, - to pay respect to those that have passed before us and to acknowledge today's Tasmanian Aboriginal community who are the custodians of this land.*

palawa kani (language)

As a direct result of invasion, Aboriginal people were not permitted to speak their language or practise their culture, resulting in a great loss of Tasmanian Aboriginal language. However, some Aboriginal people in Tasmania did continue to use their language, passing some language down to their children and grandchildren.

palawa kani is the reconstruction of languages used by Tasmanian Aboriginal people, researched and developed by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre. Today, *palawa kani* is spoken and practised within the Tasmanian Aboriginal community.

If a person cannot pronounce a traditional place name in *palawa kani* it is advisable not to attempt to do so.

For any additional information or assistance contact the Office of Aboriginal Affairs on (03) 6232 7082, or email oa@dpa.tas.gov.au