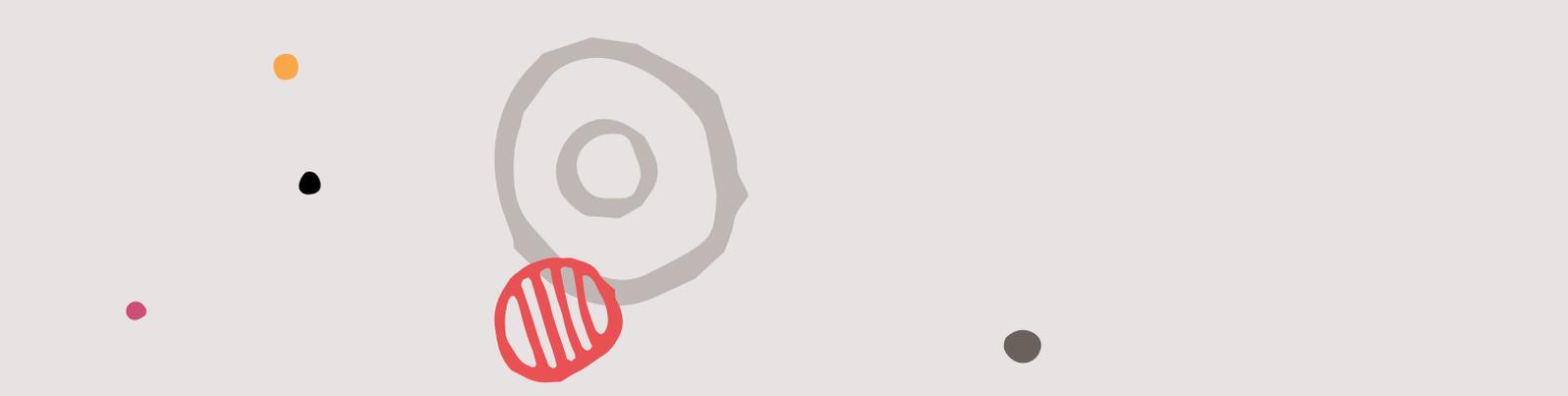


The Tasmanian State Service  
**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF ABORIGINAL  
PEOPLE AND COUNTRY AND  
WELCOME TO COUNTRY  
GUIDE**



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We acknowledge the Tasmanian State Service (TSS) Aboriginal Employee Network members and Tasmanian Aboriginal organisations and individuals who provided input on the content of the Tasmanian State Service *Acknowledgement of Aboriginal People and Welcome to Country* Guide (the Guide).

Additional acknowledgement goes to TSS agencies who also contributed to the Guide to ensure a quality and useful resource for all TSS employees. Thank you.

We also acknowledge and pay our respects to Tasmanian Aboriginal Elders, past and present.



## DEFINITIONS

### ***Aboriginal***

'Aboriginal' refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

### ***Welcome to Country***

A 'Welcome to Country' is a formal welcome onto Aboriginal Land given by a local Aboriginal Elder or Aboriginal person of that Land.

### ***Acknowledgment of Aboriginal People and Country***

An *Acknowledgement of Aboriginal People and Country* is a statement of recognition of, and respect for, the traditional owners of the Land and all Aboriginal people.

### ***Traditional owner***

Traditional owners acknowledges Aboriginal people as the original inhabitants of the Land and their long and continuing connection with Country. Aboriginal people have a responsibility to the Land, and the Land in turn, nurtures and provides for them.

### ***Elder***

Aboriginal Elders are the holders and keepers of Aboriginal knowledge and culture and are held in high esteem because of their lived experiences, their role in sharing and passing on cultural knowledge and practices, and their contributions to their Communities.



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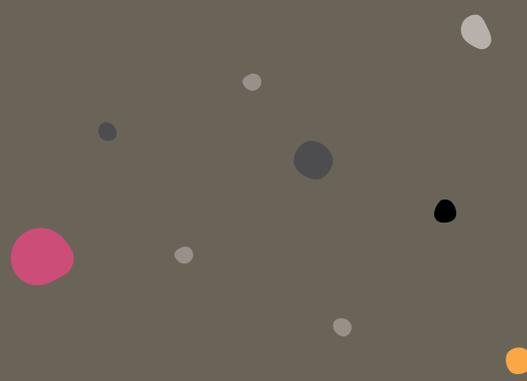
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## MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF THE STATE SERVICE

**I am very pleased to release the Guide for the Tasmanian State Service on *Acknowledgement of Aboriginal People and Country* and *Welcome to Country* (the Guide).**

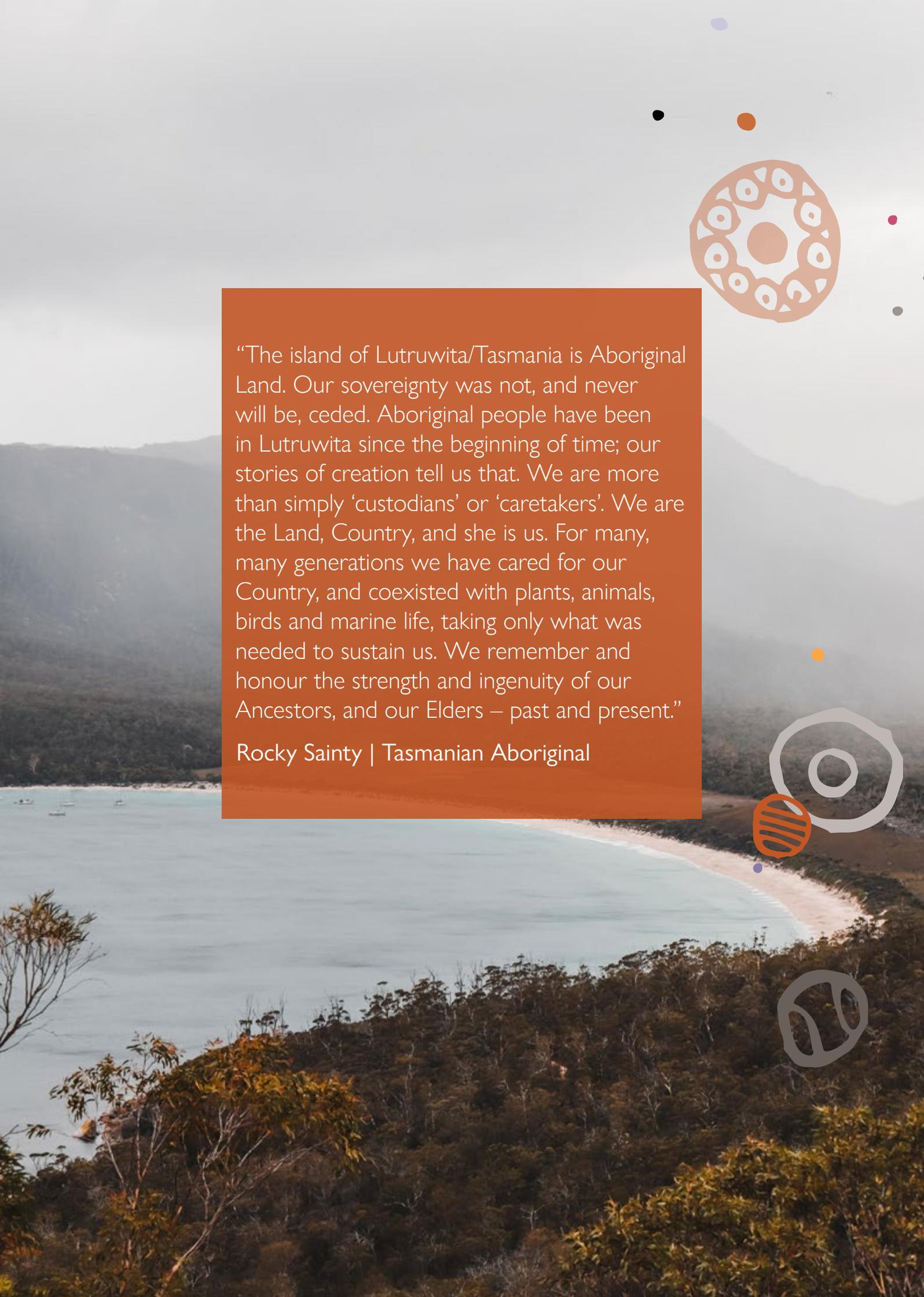
The Guide has been designed as a tool for State Service agencies to develop consistent whole of Government practices that support all employees to know when, how and why they should consider an *Acknowledgement of Aboriginal People and Country* or a *Welcome to Country* ceremony.

Setting up common expectations encouraging consistent practices and a deeper cultural understanding through cultural sharing contributes to building culturally safe, respectful and inclusive Tasmanian State Service workplaces that recognise, value and celebrate Aboriginal people and culture.

The Guide is a resource for improving working relationships with Aboriginal people and organisations. It will assist Tasmanian State Service agencies and employees improve understanding, respect and recognition of Aboriginal world views and unique ways of working including the importance of cultural protocols and ceremonies, encouraging culturally inclusive work practices and valuing the cultural diversity that enriches and motivates the work we do.

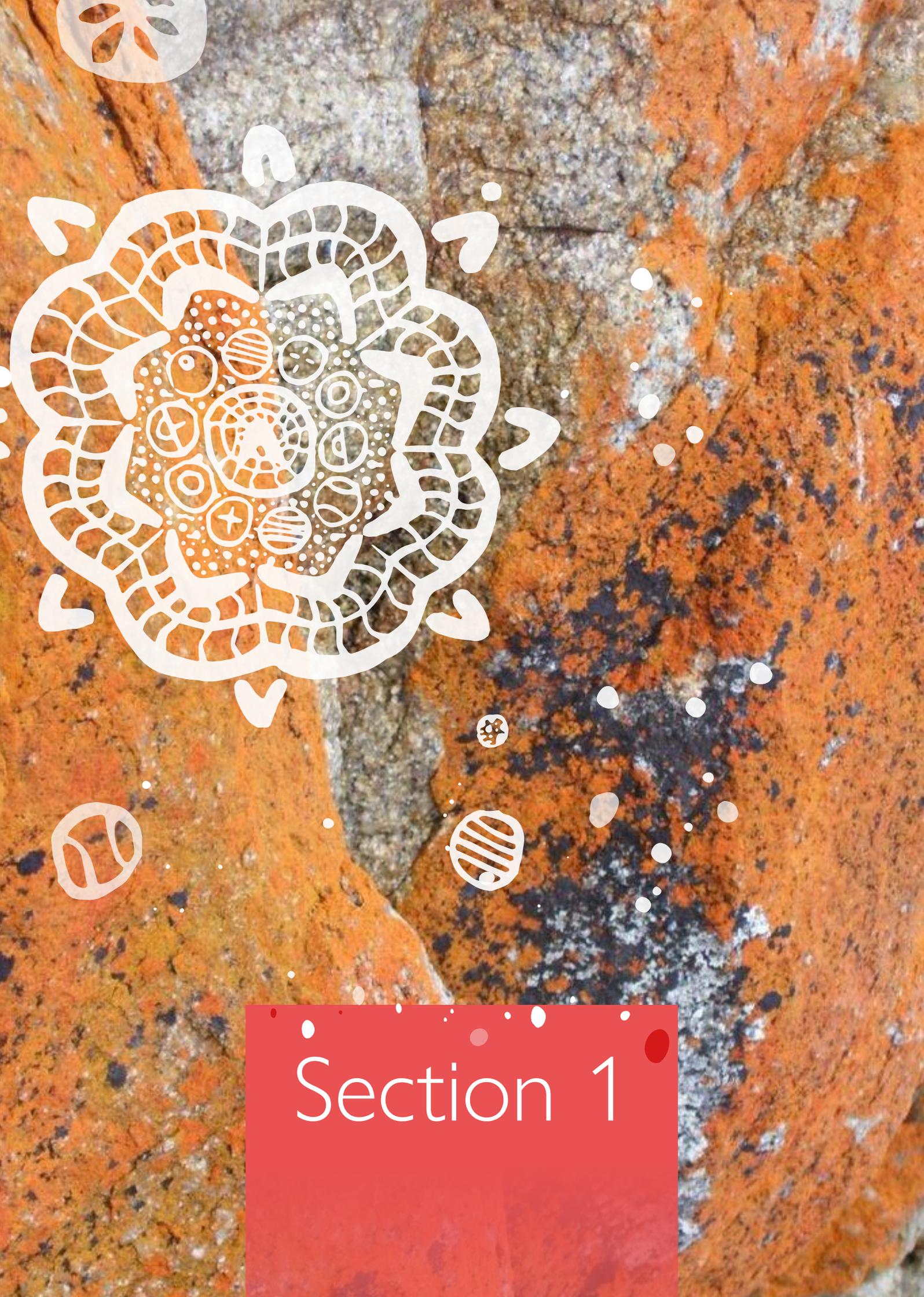
**Jenny Gale**  
Head of the State Service





“The island of Lutruwita/Tasmania is Aboriginal Land. Our sovereignty was not, and never will be, ceded. Aboriginal people have been in Lutruwita since the beginning of time; our stories of creation tell us that. We are more than simply ‘custodians’ or ‘caretakers’. We are the Land, Country, and she is us. For many, many generations we have cared for our Country, and coexisted with plants, animals, birds and marine life, taking only what was needed to sustain us. We remember and honour the strength and ingenuity of our Ancestors, and our Elders – past and present.”

Rocky Sainty | Tasmanian Aboriginal



# Section 1

# SETTING THE CONTEXT

## Why we need a Guide

This Guide has been designed as a tool for State Service agencies to develop consistent, Whole of Government practices that support all employees to know when, how and why they should consider an *Acknowledgement of Aboriginal People and Country* or a *Welcome to Country* ceremony. Setting up common expectations encourages consistent practices and a deeper cultural understanding through cultural sharing. It contributes to building culturally safe, respectful and inclusive workplaces that recognise, value and celebrate Aboriginal people and culture.

This Guide is a resource for improving working relationships with Aboriginal people and organisations; for setting workplace expectations and consistent behaviours and processes that support employees and contributes to inclusive work practices and outcomes.

The introduction of this Guide represents an important step towards Tasmanian State Service agencies and employees improved understanding, respect and recognition of Aboriginal world views and unique ways of working including the importance of cultural protocols and ceremonies, encouraging culturally inclusive work practices and valuing the cultural diversity that enriches and motivates the work we do.

## Using the Guide

The Guide is for use by Tasmanian State Service agencies and is intended to provide information and advice to State Service employees who are organising and delivering activities, meetings, projects, programs and/or events relating to Aboriginal people, culture, cultural practices and/or history.

It is important to be aware that Aboriginal people and communities have definite expectations of Government agencies. These expectations include that Government agencies have adequate levels of cultural understanding to be able to ensure that any activities that includes, involves or impacts on Aboriginal people are culturally respectful, authentic and sensitive.

## Introduction to the Guide

Aboriginal people have experienced a history of exclusion from Australian history books, the Australian flag, the Australian National Anthem, and for many years, Australian democracy and way of life. This history of dispossession and colonisation lies at the heart of the disparity between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians today.

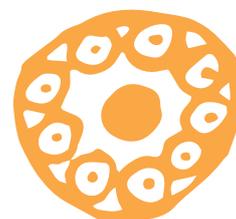
Including recognition of Aboriginal people as traditional owners of the Land in events, meetings and national symbols is one small way we can demonstrate a commitment to ending the exclusion that has been so damaging to Aboriginal people. Incorporating *Acknowledgement of Aboriginal People and Country* and *Welcome to Country* ceremonies into official meetings and events recognises Aboriginal people as the First Australians and the traditional owners of the Land and promotes an ongoing connection to place.

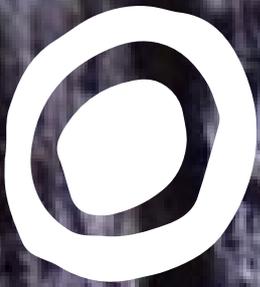
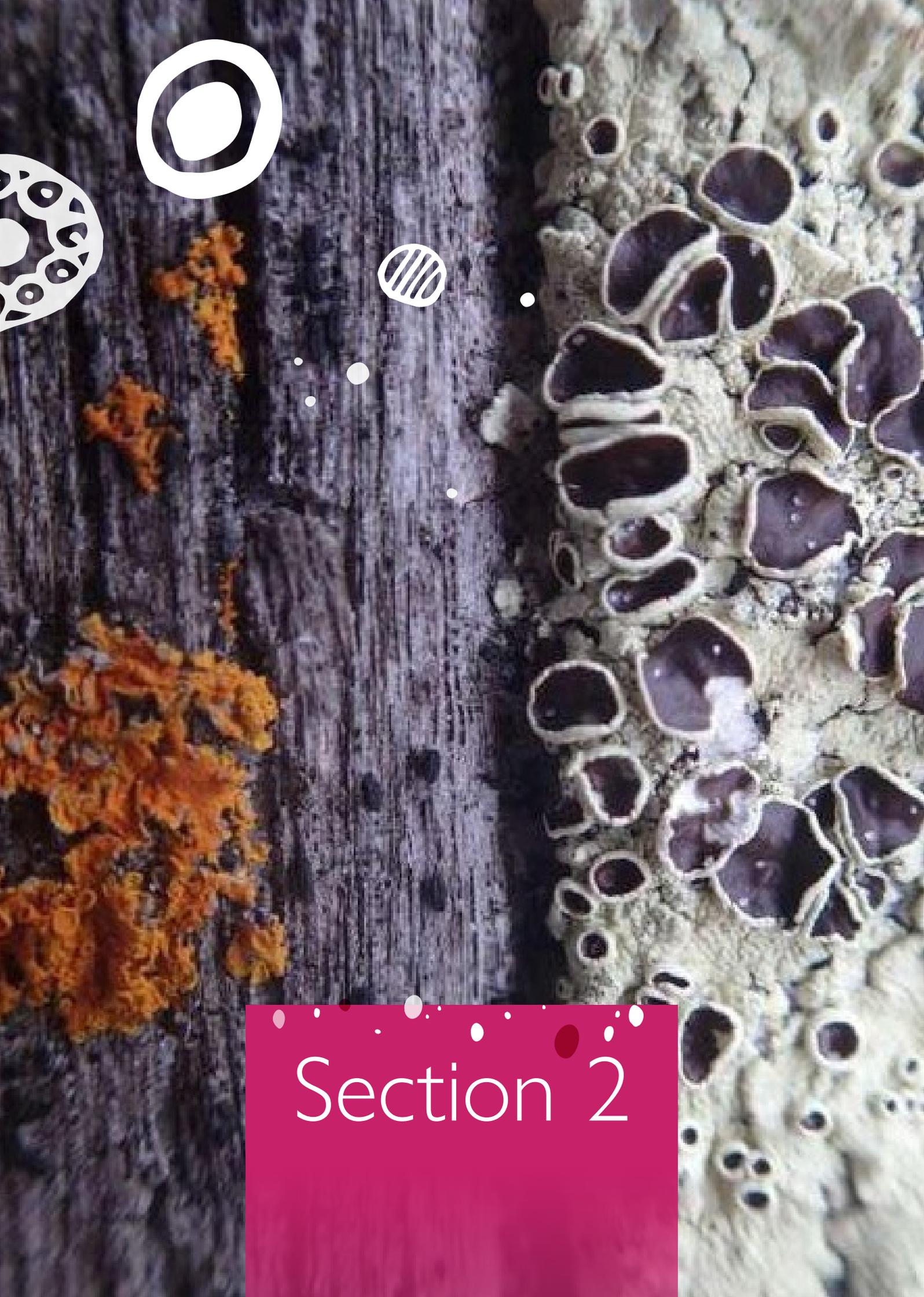
## The meaning of 'Country'

***“My Country. My Land, the air and the smell of the bush. My lakes, rivers and creeks that flow to the sea. The sky above my head, and the coloured paintings in the clouds; the dawn and dusk. Country together with my family, Brothers, Sisters, Uncles and Aunties; these make us complete. My Country.”***

**Bruce Tiffin**

The interdependence between Aboriginal people and Land is based on respect. The Land sustains and provides for people and people manage and sustain the Land through culture and ceremony. The Land is a link between all aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's existence - spirituality, culture, language, family, lore and identity. The notion of landscape as a 'second skin' is central to many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.





Section 2

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLE AND COUNTRY

*Acknowledgement of Aboriginal People and Country* demonstrates respect for Aboriginal people and cultures and can be performed by any individual participating in an occasion of any kind. It is a demonstration of respect dedicated to the traditional owners of the Land, Sea, Waterways and Sky where the event is being held. Increasingly, Tasmanian State Service agencies and community organisations are adopting the practice of acknowledging Aboriginal people as traditional owners of Country at events, ceremonies, meetings and functions.

This Guide combines an *Acknowledgement of Aboriginal People* and an *Acknowledgement of Country* as in order to be able to acknowledge traditional ownership and continuing relationships with the Land, Seas, Waterways and Sky, Aboriginal people and Country must be acknowledged.

## When and how to use the Guide

An *Acknowledgement of Aboriginal People and Country* may be given when events or circumstances make it impossible or inappropriate for Aboriginal people to provide a *Welcome to Country*. For example:

- unforeseen circumstances making it impossible or inappropriate for a *Welcome to Country* ceremony (e.g. an Aboriginal death, funeral or illness);
- organisers not being able to make suitable or timely arrangements with appropriate local Aboriginal Elders/ Aboriginal community members; or
- the nature of the event does not warrant a *Welcome to Country* ceremony (for example it does not have a specific focus or reference to Aboriginal people and culture).

In these circumstances it is important that traditional owners of the Land are acknowledged in the appropriate way. As a suggested measure, where the event calls for the gathering of the whole agency, or all staff in a work area within agencies or teams, an *Acknowledgement of Aboriginal People* as the traditional owners of the Land should be given.

These events, due to their regularity do not require a *Welcome to Country* ceremony but you can acknowledge Aboriginal people and their continuing connections to Country. Any meetings that relate to Aboriginal people, culture, practices or business, should also begin with an *Acknowledgement of Aboriginal People and Country*.

It may not always be necessary to perform an *Acknowledgement* for all internal meetings and events and discretion should be applied. However, as a general guide, an *Acknowledgement* should be considered in meetings for which an agenda is provided.

Over time, you will develop your own preferred style and approach to *Acknowledgements* and this will change depending on the context and place of the event or meeting. Please note that where possible, *Acknowledgements* should also refer to the focus of the event.

*Acknowledgements* are made at the commencement of an event, such as a meeting, speech or formal occasion. An *Acknowledgement* is usually made by a non-Aboriginal person, and although some Aboriginal people may perform *Acknowledgements*, others prefer not to be in the position of acknowledging themselves. Some Aboriginal people who are not traditional owners of the Land of Tasmania may choose to perform a variation of an *Acknowledgement* as it is not appropriate that they perform a *Welcome*. *Acknowledgements* highlight the unique position of Aboriginal people in Tasmanian culture and history.

There are many variations of what can be said by a person performing the *Acknowledgement* and there are no set protocols or wording for an *Acknowledgement*.

*Acknowledgements* should ideally also acknowledge any Aboriginal visitors, speakers or employees/colleagues who may be present. Always assume that there are Aboriginal visitors, Aboriginal colleagues and/or attendees present.

## Examples of Acknowledgements

Any of the following Acknowledgement wording is appropriate to use. Some people develop slight variations to create a more personal and individual Acknowledgement.

*'In recognition of the deep history and culture of this Island, we would like to acknowledge and pay our respects to all Tasmanian Aboriginal people; the traditional owners of the Land upon which we meet/gather.'*

*'I/we acknowledge the traditional owners of this Country and recognise Aboriginal people's continuing connection to Land, Sea, Waterways, Sky and Culture. We pay our respects to Elders, past and present, and also acknowledge our Aboriginal colleagues who are present today.'*

*'I'd like to begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of this Land and acknowledge my respect for their culture and identity which has been bound up with the Land, Waterway and Sky for generations. I would also like to pay my respects to Elders, past and present.'*

*'As we share our knowledge, experiences and work practices within (name TSS/agency), we also acknowledge and pay respect to the knowledge and cultural practices embedded for all time within Tasmanian Aboriginal ownership of Country.'*

*'Before I commence, I wish to acknowledge Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the traditional owners of this Land and pay my respects to Elders past and present for they hold the memories, the knowledge, and the culture and hopes of Aboriginal Tasmania.'*

If you know the Aboriginal name of the traditional owners of the Land on which you are meeting or hosting an event, you can acknowledge them directly.

Take care with correct pronunciation of Aboriginal places and peoples' names.

### Hobart specific

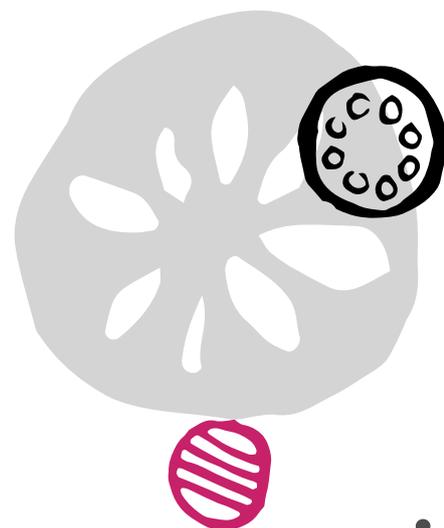
*'In recognition of the deep history and culture of this Island, we would like to acknowledge the – Muwinina (pronounced Moo-we-nin-ah) people, the traditional owners of the Land upon which we gather. We acknowledge and pay our respects to all Tasmanian Aboriginal Communities; all of whom have survived invasion and dispossession, and continue to maintain their identity and culture.'*

### Launceston specific

*'In recognition of the deep history and culture of this Island, we would like to acknowledge and pay our respects to the traditional owners of the Land upon which we gather. We acknowledge and pay our respects to all Tasmanian Aboriginal Communities; all of whom have survived invasion and dispossession, and continue to maintain their identity and culture.'*

You can refer to the Acknowledgement card for guidance or, use as a prompt for providing an Acknowledgement.

Acknowledgement cards can be ordered/purchased by agencies from SSMO via the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC) website under the Aboriginal Employment section at [https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/ssmo/aboriginal\\_employment\\_strategy/Acknowledgement\\_Welcome\\_Guide](https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/ssmo/aboriginal_employment_strategy/Acknowledgement_Welcome_Guide)



## Inclusion of Acknowledgements in:

### Agency templates

Meeting and event templates may be provided by agencies and available to download on your agency's intranet site. When developing meeting and event templates consideration may be given to the inclusion of any of the previous examples of *Acknowledgement* as the first item on the agenda.

### Video-conferencing and teleconferencing

Increasingly, agencies and employees meet and communicate via video-conferencing and teleconferencing. Consideration should be given to the inclusion of an *Acknowledgement* at the commencement of video-conferences and teleconferences. Again, this may not always be necessary or appropriate, depending on the purpose, numbers involved and duration, and discretion needs to be applied in each instance. The *Acknowledgement* examples provided previously are acceptable to use as the first item for either video-conferencing or teleconferencing. If available, you can also use the *Acknowledgement* card as a prompt.

### Intranet sites

As an ongoing action within the *Tasmanian State Service Aboriginal Employment Strategy to 2022* agencies are encouraged to promote the use of this Guide on their intranet sites.

If agencies want to have permanent Aboriginal content on their intranet site and acknowledge Aboriginal people and Country, they may consider using one of the signature blocks provided here or any of the *Acknowledgement* examples provided previously.

### Email signature blocks

Some State Service agencies have an accepted and specific signature block that either promotes a value or their core business that employees are encouraged to use. Others do not require all employees to use one agreed signature block and employees can choose their own.

Consideration may be given to using a signature block that acknowledges and celebrates Aboriginal people and Country and the examples provided previously or the following examples may be appropriate.

*'I acknowledge Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the traditional owners of this Land, and pay respects to Elders past and present for they hold the knowledge, memories and culture of Aboriginal people in Tasmania. I also acknowledge the people who, on a daily basis, contribute to the development and delivery of programs and services for Aboriginal people.'*

*'I acknowledge Aboriginal people as the traditional owners of this Land and respect their culture and identity which has been bound up with the Land, Sea, Waterways and Sky for generations.'*

*'I acknowledge and pay my respects to all Aboriginal people in Tasmania; their identity and culture.'*

A signature block is available to download and use from the DPAC website in the Tasmanian State Service Aboriginal Employment section at [https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/ssmo/aboriginal\\_employment\\_strategy/Acknowledgement\\_Welcome\\_Guide](https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/ssmo/aboriginal_employment_strategy/Acknowledgement_Welcome_Guide)

Temporarily changing signature blocks in recognition of significant local and national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander events is another demonstration of respect for Aboriginal people and cultures and their ongoing contributions to our society.

### Reception plaques

Agencies are now giving thought to entrance or reception plaques that provide an *Acknowledgement*. Entrance and reception *Acknowledgement* plaques are a visual and permanent demonstration of an agency's respect for Aboriginal employees, Aboriginal visitors and all Aboriginal people and culture.

#### Examples include:

##### *Hobart specific*

*'We acknowledge the Muwinina (only if in Hobart) people, the traditional owners of the Land upon which we work, and we pay our respect to Aboriginal Elders; past and present. We respect all Tasmanian Aboriginal people, their culture and their rights as the first peoples of lutruwita. We recognise and value Aboriginal histories, knowledge and lived experiences and commit to being culturally inclusive and respectful in our working relationships with all Aboriginal people.'*

### Launceston specific

*'We acknowledge the people of the kanamaluka ('Tamar River' - only if in Launceston region) the traditional owners of the Land upon which we work, and we pay our respect to Aboriginal Elders; past and present. We respect all Tasmanian Aboriginal people, their culture and their rights as the first peoples of this Land. We recognise and value Aboriginal histories, knowledge and lived experiences and commit to being culturally inclusive and respectful in our working relationships with all Aboriginal people.'*

### General

*'We recognise and value Aboriginal histories, knowledge and lived experiences and commit to being culturally inclusive and respectful in our working relationships with all Aboriginal people.'*

*'We (name of agency/department) acknowledge all Aboriginal people; the traditional owners of the Land upon which we work, and pay our respect to Elders past and present.'*

*We (name of agency/department) acknowledge Tasmanian Aboriginal Communities, their culture and their rights as the first peoples of this Land.*

## Use of Aboriginal language and Aboriginal words

### Aboriginal language diversity

Tasmania originally had at least between eight and eleven different languages, each with a number of dialects. Many factors, including the process of invasion and colonisation, resulted in the near loss of the original Tasmanian Aboriginal languages. Today, some Aboriginal people and groups in Tasmania choose to use palawa kani, a reconstructed Aboriginal language program developed and delivered by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, and other Aboriginal people and groups prefer to use Aboriginal words/language from one of the nine original Tasmanian Aboriginal Nations. For more information visit [www.tacinc.com.au](http://www.tacinc.com.au) under the cultural awareness section on their resources page.

## Using Aboriginal language and words in an Acknowledgement of Aboriginal People and Country or Welcome to Country

When giving an Acknowledgement or when organising a Welcome to Country ceremony, it is important to be aware of and accommodate language and other differences between Aboriginal people in Tasmania and recognise that these differences reflect a range of values, opinions, beliefs and cultural practices.

The use of Aboriginal language in an Acknowledgement does not necessarily make the ceremony more meaningful and/or words significant.

### Service fees

A service fee does not apply for Acknowledgements.

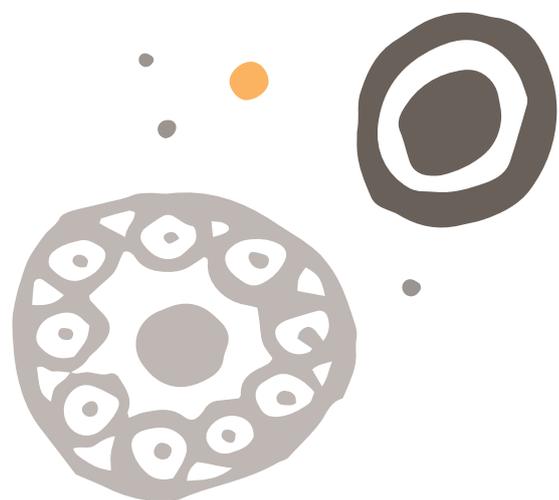
## Acknowledgement cards

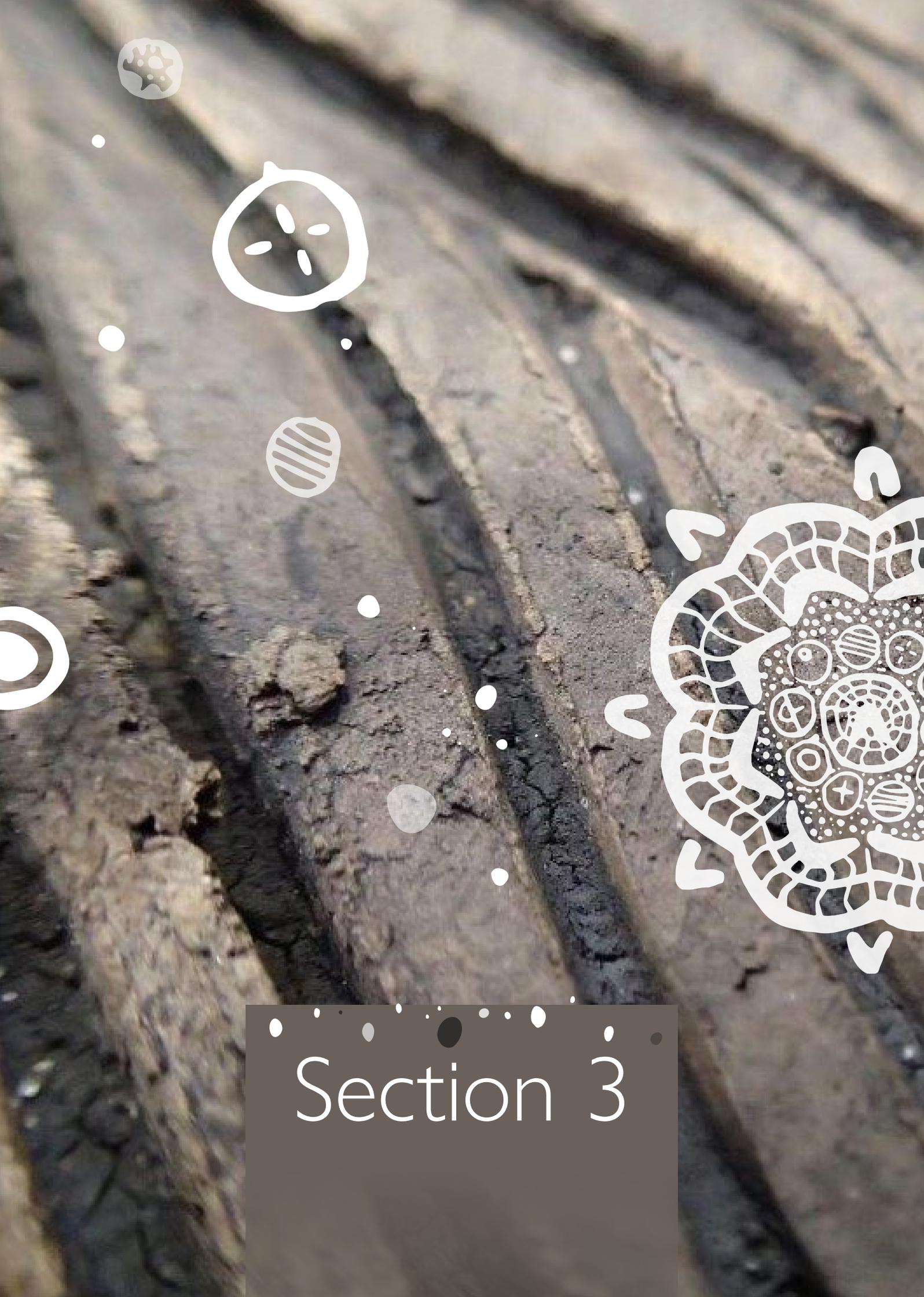
SSMO have produced Acknowledgement cards that are the size of a business card and fit into a wallet or at the back of security ID cards. These cards are to support State Service employees to feel confident to deliver an appropriate Acknowledgement and make it easier to become familiar with the process and protocols. Over time, employees may vary the Acknowledgement, so that it becomes something that is personal to them or relevant to the particular circumstances.

An example of the Acknowledgment Card and purchasing information can be located in the [Aboriginal Employment Strategy under the State Service Management Office on the DPAC website at www.dpac.tas.gov.au](http://www.dpac.tas.gov.au).

## Checklist for Acknowledgement of Aboriginal People and Country

Aspects to check	Tick
Do you have a standard and endorsed <i>Acknowledgement</i> that you are familiar with?	
Have you reflected on how you may want to personally demonstrate respect for Aboriginal people and cultures in an <i>Acknowledgement</i> ?	
Do you have a good understanding of the nature of the event/meeting/activity and is this referenced in your <i>Acknowledgement</i> ?	
If using Aboriginal language, have you checked with local Aboriginal people in relation to the appropriate use of language and Aboriginal words, including place names, clan/tribe/nation names and their pronunciation? Have you practiced language names?	
Does your <i>Acknowledgement</i> include a statement paying respect to Aboriginal visitors, speakers and Aboriginal employees (whether you know they are present/attending or not)?	
Have you practiced your <i>Acknowledgement</i> ?	





Section 3

# WELCOME TO COUNTRY

## Significance of ceremonies

All of our ancestors used the bonds of ceremony to create ties of kinship necessary for survival in a dangerous and unpredictable world. Ceremonies are a common thread linking all of humanity and perform important functions in all societies. Whether ceremonies are used to connect and unite and/or to motivate and move us, significantly, they create and sustain identity. Ceremonies, and the rituals that underpin them, reflect the diversity of human experience.

It is important that the communities and environments in which the Tasmanian State Service operates, and delivers services in, duly recognises and values the significance of Tasmania's Aboriginal culture and people, including their ceremonies.

Showing respect and appreciation for Aboriginal cultural diversity through *Welcome to Country* embraces the spirit of reconciliation between Aboriginal people and other Australians and the formal process of a *Welcome to Country* supports the State Service's commitment to delivering the best services to all Tasmanian communities and having workplaces that are representative of the communities it serves.

## History of *Welcome to Country*

A *Welcome to Country* is a significant ceremony for many Aboriginal people and, as with many ancient cultures of the world, has been a ceremony that has been practised for many thousands of years. Arranging a *Welcome to Country* ceremony that recognises and celebrates Aboriginal ownership of the Land shows respect for Aboriginal people as Tasmania's First People.

A *Welcome to Country* enables the wider community to share in Aboriginal culture and can lead to a deeper understanding and respect for Aboriginal people and provide a platform from which to build authentic and meaningful relationships.

*Welcome to Country* ceremonies connect participants with the Soil, the Sand, the Sea and Sky, and all other life-forms that make up Country. For some Aboriginal people, a *Welcome to Country* ceremony promotes a respectful atmosphere and draws on the power, knowledge and presence of Ancestors to watch over, support, guide and inform proceedings.

Reconciliation Australia provides an insight into the history of [Welcome to Country protocols on their website at www.reconciliation.org.au](http://www.reconciliation.org.au):

*"Despite the absence of fences or visible borders, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups had clear boundaries separating their Country from that of other groups. Crossing into another group's Country required a request for permission to enter – like gaining a visa – and when that permission was granted the hosting group would welcome the visitors, offering them safe passage.*

*For example, in some areas visitors would sit outside the boundary of another group's land and light a fire to signal their request to enter. A fire lit in response would indicate approval and welcome from the land-owning group and often, on meeting, gifts would be exchanged. While visitors were provided with a safe passage, they also had to respect the protocols and rules of the land-owner group while on their Country. Today, obviously much has changed and these protocols have been adapted to contemporary circumstances but the essential ingredients of welcoming visitors and offering safe passage remain in place."*

## The *Welcome to Country* Ceremony

A *Welcome to Country* ceremony is a local Aboriginal Elder or locally recognised Aboriginal person welcoming people to Country. Only Tasmanian Aboriginal people can perform a *Welcome to Country* in Tasmania. A *Welcome to Country* always occurs at the opening of an event and is always the first item on the program. One or more local Aboriginal people conduct the ceremony and this may be done through a speech, activity, song, dance, ceremony or a combination of these.

It is important for Aboriginal people to be comfortable with the *Welcome to Country* arrangements and organisers need to spend time talking with local Aboriginal people to identify Elders/appropriate Aboriginal people, seeking advice and to outline the type of event that is being organised. Note that a *Welcome to Country* usually involves a fee for service.

A *Welcome to Country* may be presented in an Aboriginal language or include Aboriginal words; however due to historical and other factors, including individual, organisational and group preferences, many *Welcome to Country* ceremonies are presented in English. *Welcome to Country* ceremonies are about more than demonstrating a proficiency in Aboriginal language and words and the use of Aboriginal language is not essential to the key concepts behind the ceremony. If a *Welcome to Country* is conducted in an Aboriginal language or includes Aboriginal words it is usually translated into English so that the audience understands the welcoming message.

## Who to ask about a *Welcome to Country*

Tasmanian Aboriginal communities are dynamic, diverse and are constantly evolving. They are made up of Aboriginal people with a wide range of views, opinions, values, cultural knowledge and experience, beliefs and geographical and familial connections. Views on *Welcome to Country* ceremonies can and do reflect this diversity.

It is advisable to seek advice from more than one source when establishing who may be appropriate local Aboriginal people to perform a *Welcome to Country*. The *Welcome to Country* is a right and privilege of local Aboriginal Elders and recognised Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people employed within State Service agencies may be able to advise event organisers about who to approach to perform the *Welcome to Country* ceremony. Please note that some Aboriginal employees may feel uncomfortable providing advice on Aboriginal matters.

It is essential that local Aboriginal representatives are included in any planned discussions well in advance of an event or function to ensure their involvement in decision-making processes around when and where a *Welcome to Country* should take place, the format of the ceremony, who could and should be involved, and an appropriate and agreed level of remuneration.

Making initial contact with local Aboriginal Elders and/or recognised Aboriginal people who belong to the Country on which the meeting, event or function is to take place may not be a simple process. Observing Aboriginal protocols includes allowing time for building relationships and involvement in decision making. This may require meeting with Aboriginal presenters, taking time to hear their stories, developing an understanding of their requirements and being clear on their expectations. Would they like a support person with them when they perform the *Welcome to Country*? Do they prefer to sit in the front row or in a specific location? How do they want to be introduced and by whom? Will there be other Aboriginal people present? Do they have any accessibility requirements? How do they want to be addressed?

When organising a *Welcome to Country* for an event, organisers need to provide Aboriginal presenters with information on the theme and purpose of the event as they may choose to reference this in the *Welcome to Country*.

Not all Aboriginal people can perform a *Welcome to Country*. A *Welcome to Country* is usually undertaken by an Aboriginal Elder or recognised Aboriginal person

from within the local Community, remembering that there may be differing views about who the appropriate Aboriginal presenters are. Non-Aboriginal people and Aboriginal people from other Country do not perform *Welcome to Country* ceremonies in Tasmania.

Protocol requires that Aboriginal people are not approached on the day prior to, or of the event to perform a *Welcome to Country* as this is disrespectful and is a clear indication that the ceremony and what it represents has not been given the consideration it and Aboriginal people deserve. No-one likes to feel that they are an afterthought.

## Elders and *Welcome to Country*

Tasmanian Aboriginal Elders are often the preferred presenters of a *Welcome to Country* ceremony. Aboriginal Elders are the holders and keepers of Aboriginal knowledge and culture and are held in high esteem because of their lived experiences, their role in sharing and passing on cultural knowledge and practices, their contributions to their family, extended family and Aboriginal communities, and for the work they have done over many years to address Aboriginal disadvantage and promote and secure Aboriginal rights. Contact your regional Aboriginal organisation for support to engage with Aboriginal Elders in your local area.

In addition to Tasmanian Aboriginal Elders there are other appropriate local Aboriginal people who also perform *Welcome to Country* ceremonies and may or may not, include Aboriginal employees. Careful consideration needs to be given to Aboriginal employees providing a *Welcome to Country*.

## Response to *Welcome to Country*

It is appropriate for the speaker who immediately follows the *Welcome to Country* ceremony to provide a response. The response should firstly acknowledge the person who delivered the *Welcome to Country*. It is not necessary for every consequent speaker to provide a response. The following text can be used in responding to the *Welcome to Country*:

***'I would like to extend my thanks to \_\_\_\_\_ for your Welcome to Country.***

***I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the deep history and culture of this Island; to acknowledge and pay my respects to the traditional owners of the Land upon which we gather. I acknowledge and pay my respects to all Tasmanian Aboriginal Communities, all of whom have survived invasion and dispossession, and continue to maintain their identity, culture and Aboriginal rights.'***

## Using Aboriginal language or words in a response to a *Welcome to Country*

It is considered disrespectful to mispronounce an Aboriginal place name, or person's name and responders are advised to only use Aboriginal place and peoples' names if they are confident of the pronunciation. Again, care needs to be taken when using language as not all Aboriginal people in the audience may endorse the use of one language or words.

Responses to *Welcome to Country* will change depending on the context and place of the event or meeting.

## After the *Welcome to Country* Ceremony

For many Aboriginal people, the requirement to stand up and perform in front of a large group can be daunting. After the *Welcome to Country* some Elders/ Aboriginal presenters may choose to leave. If this is the case, arrange for someone to assist them to easily exit the event. Others may want to stay for some of the proceedings if this is appropriate. Protocol requires that *Welcome to Country* presenters and any support people are invited to share food and drink; for example, morning tea. Planning for what will happen after the *Welcome to Country* ceremony should be included in the planning process. A follow up phone call or email to the person who performed the *Welcome to Country* ceremony further demonstrates appreciation and continues to build relationships.

## *Welcome to Country* Service fee

This Guide serves the purpose of protecting Aboriginal cultural and intellectual property rights and in providing services such as a *Welcome to Country*, artistic performances and ceremonies, Aboriginal people draw on their cultural intellectual property. As such, providers of these services should be appropriately remunerated. There should be agreement between the cultural service provider and the agency about appropriate remuneration early in the planning process and well before the event. Remuneration should consider the following:

- travel requirements and expenses;
- the use and/or collection of cultural resources for the event;
- customisation of the *Welcome to Country*;
- public profile of the event; and
- time factors.

Remuneration should be paid/settled promptly.

## Aboriginal employees and *Welcome to Country*

Most Aboriginal employees working in the Tasmanian State Service belong to Aboriginal Communities and may also be traditional owners of the Land. However, consideration should be given as to whether an Aboriginal employee is the most appropriate person to perform a *Welcome to Country* as opposed to an Aboriginal Elder or recognised local Aboriginal person from their Communities who may maintain the view that this role/function best sits with them.

Consideration may to be given to:

- The nature and focus of the event (is the event for TSS employees, focused on TSS work or celebrating a community program or project?);
- Not all Aboriginal employees are Aboriginal 'experts' or want to provide advice relating to Aboriginal matters;
- Participants in the event (are participants from across the community and/or a range of organisations?);
- The individual experience/knowledge of Aboriginal employees and their willingness to undertake a *Welcome to Country* ceremony (don't assume that all Aboriginal employees will be comfortable undertaking a *Welcome to Country*); and
- Noting that every *Welcome to Country* Ceremony and audience is different.

If an Aboriginal State Service employee performs a *Welcome to Country* ceremony no remuneration is required.

## Checklist for *Welcome to Country*

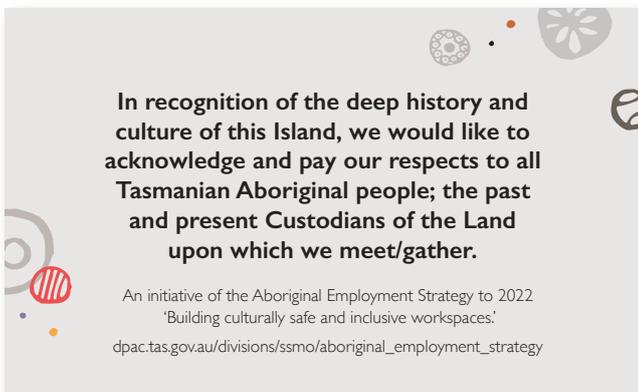
Aspects to check	Tick
Have you included a <i>Welcome to Country</i> in your event planning?	
Have you sought advice in relation to who might be the most appropriate Aboriginal person to do the <i>Welcome to Country</i> (this may include talking with Aboriginal colleagues, contacting local Aboriginal organisations, touching base with Aboriginal people you might know or have in your network)?	
Does the person delivering the <i>Welcome to Country</i> identify as Aboriginal?	
Does the person delivering the <i>Welcome to Country</i> belong to the local region in which the event or activity is being held?	
Have you made initial phone or email contact with the nominated/identified Aboriginal person regarding providing a <i>Welcome to Country</i> ; well in advance of the event?	
Have you got access to the person's correct contact details?	
Have you checked what title the person would like to be referred to as?	
Have you discussed and agreed on costs/remuneration? Check that costs include transport, accommodation, and other out of pocket costs such as preparation time, resource collection and preparation.	
<p>Following up from your initial contact use the points below to guide your written request:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• date;</li> <li>• time;</li> <li>• name and nature of event (theme) or activity;</li> <li>• venue name, address and any access considerations, access to parking;</li> <li>• offer for them to invite a support person;</li> <li>• information on who will likely to be present;</li> <li>• if there will be an Aboriginal focus/or Aboriginal content;</li> <li>• if Aboriginal people are likely to be present at the event/activity;</li> <li>• a commitment to connect with them regularly leading up to the event; and</li> <li>• confirmation of agreed remuneration.</li> </ul>	
Send out a formal written request to the person delivering the <i>Welcome to Country</i>	

# RESOURCES

The following resources are available on the DPAC website under the Tasmanian State Service Aboriginal Employment section at [https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/ssmo/aboriginal\\_employment\\_strategy/Acknowledgement\\_Welcome\\_Guide](https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/ssmo/aboriginal_employment_strategy/Acknowledgement_Welcome_Guide)

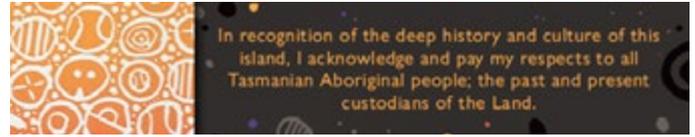
## Acknowledgement card

Acknowledgement cards can be ordered by filling out the Acknowledgement order form located on the DPAC website under the Tasmanian State Service Aboriginal Employment section at [https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/ssmo/aboriginal\\_employment\\_strategy/Acknowledgement\\_Welcome\\_Guide](https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/ssmo/aboriginal_employment_strategy/Acknowledgement_Welcome_Guide) and returning via email to [ssmo@dpac.tas.gov.au](mailto:ssmo@dpac.tas.gov.au)



## Signature block

An Acknowledgement Signature Block is available for use within emails and can be download for use at the end of your email messages via the DPAC website under the Tasmanian State Service Aboriginal Employment section at [https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/ssmo/aboriginal\\_employment\\_strategy/Acknowledgement\\_Welcome\\_Guide](https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/ssmo/aboriginal_employment_strategy/Acknowledgement_Welcome_Guide)



## Poster

Printable posters are available to support the promotion and use of the *Acknowledgement of Aboriginal People and Country and Welcome to Country Guide*.

Suggestions for building culturally inclusive and respectful workplaces and creating spaces that are visually welcoming and inclusive of Aboriginal clients, service users and employees:

- Wall Mural (entrance, conference or board meeting room, kitchen, staff room)
- Front door etching (glass sliding entrance doors)
- Display of local Aboriginal Artist works in prominent place
- An Aboriginal art installation in the entrance or foyer
- Acknowledgement Statement on desk or wall plaque in reception areas
- Acknowledgement Statement on signature blocks available on agency website

For support to build culturally inclusive and respectful workplaces and creating spaces that are visually welcoming and inclusive of Aboriginal clients, service users and employees contact SSMO via email at [ssmo@dpac.tas.gov.au](mailto:ssmo@dpac.tas.gov.au)

# CONTACTS

For further information and support relating to the *Acknowledgement of Aboriginal People and Country and Welcome to Country Guide*, please contact SSMO via email at [ssmo@dpac.tas.gov.au](mailto:ssmo@dpac.tas.gov.au)



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