

A large, thick, olive green curved shape that starts from the top left, curves around the top and right, and ends at the bottom right, framing the text.

# Central Coast Council

## Guidelines for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country

FEBRUARY 2022

# Table of Contents

BACKGROUND.....	2
WHY IS IT IMPORTANT? .....	2
WHAT IS COUNTRY?.....	2
WHAT IS A WELCOME TO COUNTRY? .....	3
WHEN SHOULD A WELCOME TO COUNTRY BE GIVEN? .....	3
WHAT IS AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY? .....	3
WHEN SHOULD AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY BE GIVEN? .....	4
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION .....	4
WORDING FOR AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY .....	4
PRONUNCIATION GUIDE.....	5
REVIEW .....	6

## BACKGROUND

Through the development of the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), the Central Coast Council RAP Working Group have learnt that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is one embedded in deep respect—respect for each other, for Lore (beliefs and accumulated knowledge) and for land.

Lore is a big part of the culture and values and can be compared to modern western law. Lore drives everything aboriginal people do; it sets boundaries and determines acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and guides many morals and values.

Traditionally, if mobs ever had to cross on to neighbouring lands, they would first seek permission. If granted, a ceremony would take place to grant the travellers safe passage while on their land. This ceremony was also when the lores of the land would be explained as well as the consequences of breaking them.

Today, this practice has evolved into what is known as a Welcome to Country. The practice of acknowledging Country has also developed as our traditions have adapted to modern times. The key difference between a *Welcome* and an *Acknowledgement* is who performs each one.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

The Council is committed to the process of reconciliation, and recognition through an Acknowledgement is very important in this process. An Acknowledgement isn't simply words to be read and ignored, but rather it is an important custom of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in this modern day and a symbol of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' ongoing culture, community, and contributions.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders continue to experience exclusion, discrimination, and oppression. Acknowledging Country is a positive step towards reconciliation. To take the time to learn and be informed about Aboriginal culture, is regarded as being genuine and demonstrates a willingness to understand the complex history and actively engage in the reconciliation process. Researching and reciting an Acknowledgment as a non-Indigenous Australian, provides an opportunity to learn more about the true history of the Country you are on.

## 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.

## **WHAT IS A WELCOME TO COUNTRY?**

A Welcome to Country is given by Aboriginal people, to welcome visitors to their Land.

Only Tasmanian Aboriginal people can deliver a Welcome to Country in Tasmania. It is considered highly disrespectful for anybody else to do so.

A Welcome to Country might involve:

- A speech from a Tasmanian Aboriginal Elder or Community representative
- Short history of the people and the area
- Story telling
- Singing and dancing
- Smoking ceremony or other ritual.

## **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.

If there is a Welcome to Country, it should always be the first item of proceedings.

## **HOW TO ORGANISE A WELCOME TO COUNTRY OR AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY FOR AN EVENT?**

The type of Welcome to Country will depend on who is giving the Welcome to Country, and to whom it will be given, and at what type or event or activity it is. Involving a local Elder or Aboriginal custodian is a good way to build respect.

Assistance and guidance for including a Welcome to Country at an event can be provided by contacting the Office of Aboriginal Affairs.

## **WHAT IS AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY?**

An Acknowledgement of Country is provided by somebody who is not a Tasmanian Aboriginal person, as a way of recognising Tasmanian Aboriginal peoples' connection with the land, as well as paying respect to any Tasmanian Aboriginal people present.

An Acknowledgement can be delivered by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person who comes from another area, or a non-Aboriginal person.

## WHEN SHOULD AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY BE GIVEN?

An Acknowledgement of Country should be given at an event, conference, meeting, or exhibition, regardless of whether there is an Aboriginal focus or if there are Aboriginal people present.

An Acknowledgement will always follow a Welcome to Country if a Welcome is given. If there is no Welcome, then an Acknowledgement of Country is the first item of proceedings.

The Council has committed to placing an Acknowledgement card in each meeting space and community facility. The Acknowledgement cards are displayed as a reminder of our reconciliation journey and to encourage staff, Councillors and other users to deliver an Acknowledgement.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Office of Aboriginal Affairs: [www.communities.tas.gov.au/csr/oa](http://www.communities.tas.gov.au/csr/oa)
- National Indigenous Australians Agency: [www.indigenous.gov.au/contact-us/welcome\\_acknowledgement-country](http://www.indigenous.gov.au/contact-us/welcome_acknowledgement-country)
- Central Coast Council's Reflect, Reconciliation Action Plan 2022–2023.

## WORDING FOR AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

Council has developed two options of an Acknowledgement for Council use, a long-form option and a short-form option.

### Long-form option

*The Central Coast Council acknowledges the palawa-pakana people as the Traditional Custodians of lutrawita (Tasmania), including the land, community, sea and waters where we live and work.*

*Our community respectfully acknowledges the Punnilerpanner tribe of the Northern Country of Tasmania, their continuing relationship to this land and their ongoing living culture.*

*We recognise that we have much to learn from the First Nations Peoples who represent one of the world's oldest continuing cultures, and we pay our respects to Elders past and present and to all First Nations Peoples living in and around the Central Coast Community.*

When to use it:

## Guidelines for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgment of Country

- Key, public-facing Council documents (e.g. Council Agendas, Strategic Plan, Annual Report)
- When displaying an Acknowledgement on, or in a Council building
- May be used by staff and Councillors for a verbal Acknowledgement of Country.

### Shorter option

*The Council acknowledges and pays respect to the traditional owners of lutruwita (Tasmania), the palawa/pakana people. We acknowledge the Punnilerpanner tribe of this Northern Country, and in doing so, we celebrate one of the world's oldest continuous cultures.*

When to use it:

- Email signatures
- In written material such as flyers and invitations, when the longer version is impractical
- May be used by staff and Councillors for a verbal Acknowledgement of Country.

## PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

Correctly pronouncing the name of the land and the traditional custodians in *palawa kani* language, is a simple but important sign of respect. The following is provided to assist:

<i>lutruwita</i>	lu tru wee tah	Tasmania
<i>palawa</i>	pal a wah	Tasmanian Aboriginal people
<i>pakana</i>	pak a nah	Tasmanian Aboriginal people

<i>Punnilerpanner</i>	puh nil er pan er	One of the clans/people of the Northern Country
<i>kukuninka</i>	koo koo nin kah	River Leven
<i>wuwinilili</i>	woo wi nee li lee	River Forth

The words palawa and pakana have the same meaning, but come from different original languages. Both are used.

## REVIEW

This Policy will be reviewed every three years by the Council, unless organisational and legislative changes require more frequent modification/s.

SANDRA AYTON  
GENERAL MANAGER

Date of approval:            /            /  
Approved by:

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