

Information and guidelines for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country.

This protocol was approved by the Dharriwaa Elders Group Elders Council at its meeting 29 April 2011.

Welcome to Country

A "Welcome to Country" is where Aboriginal Custodians welcome visitors to their Land. This is a significant, formal recognition of continuing Aboriginal custodianship of Land and Aboriginal culture. It also shows that the event is taking place because it has been invited to take place by the local Aboriginal Custodians of the Aboriginal Nation where the event is located. A "Welcome to Country" should always occur in the opening ceremony of an event, preferably as the first item.

The Aboriginal Custodians of the Land, in Walgett's case a representative of the Dharriwaa Elders Group¹ who has been selected by the Dharriwaa Elders Group for their appropriate relationship to the Land and the event to take place, should undertake the "Welcome to Country" ceremony in Walgett. The Dharriwaa Elders Group requests that agencies submit a request for an Elder to perform this duty allowing enough time for the Dharriwaa Elders Group members to appoint a suitable Elder at their monthly meeting which occurs on the last Friday of every month. The suitability of the Elder will be decided by the Dharriwaa Elders Group taking into consideration the location where the event shall take place, the seniority and association of the Elder with the location of the event, Elders' availability and the subject of the occasion.

A "Welcome to Country" may consist of a single speech by the Elder described above, or it can also include a performance including a Welcoming Song, a speech in Yuwaalaraay or Gamilaraay language and its English translation by school children or others, a dance, or other welcoming activities.

It is important that the participating Elder is comfortable with the arrangements for the welcoming activities that should be mutually negotiated.

The Dharriwaa Elders Group presents three Welcome to Country speeches that its members have used, most notably the late Ted Fields Snr and George Rose OAM. Dharriwaa Elders Group members have recently undertaken a workshop in order to learn the Welcome of their choice, and modify it according to their circumstances. The term "Traditional Custodians" is used to indicate Aboriginal Elders born in the Country named. The use of the word "Traditional" includes the concept of "contemporary", because "Traditional Custodians" are also contemporary custodians of their Country today.

Example 1

Ngaya gulbiyay ngindali ngayani dhiyaan ngurambaa – gu. *I welcome you to my people's homeland.*

Nhalay ngurunbaa gunimaagu Gamilaraay dhiyaan. *This is the homeland of the Gamilaraay people.*

Gimbila yindali guwaali gimbali walan wii. *May your talk give us strength and wisdom.*

¹ The association that Walgett Aboriginal Elders themselves formed to undertake cultural leadership duties

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Example 2

My name is *(name)* and I am a *(dhingaa)* from *(birthplace)* in *(nation)* Country. *(Here can be added your mother's and father's nation/s)*. To the north of us is Yuwaalaraay country. To the west is Ngayiimbaa country. To the south is the home of the Wayilwan people. Where I stand today and to the east is the home of the mighty Gamilaraay Nation. On behalf of the Gamilaraay People, I would like to welcome you to the land on which this meeting takes place today and pay my respects to Elders both past and present.
(Then add a more personal encouragement for the success of the event and why it is important)

Example 3

My name is *(name)*. On behalf of the Traditional Custodians, who are the Gamilaraay People, I would like to welcome you to this land on which this meeting takes place today. I would also like to pay respect to the Elders both past and present and extend that respect to other Aboriginal people present here today. *(Then add a more personal encouragement for the success of the event and why it is important)*

Acknowledgement of Country

An "Acknowledgement of Country" is a way that all people can show respect for Aboriginal culture and heritage and the ongoing relationship Traditional Custodians have with the Land. At the beginning of a meeting or function of any kind to be held in Walgett, a Chair or Speaker begins by Acknowledging that the meeting is taking place in Gamilaraay Country. Visitors also are asked to formally Acknowledge Gamilaraay Country and its custodians when they speak first. If the function is held outside the town of Walgett, the Dharriwaa Elders Group can provide advice about which Country it is in. "Acknowledgement of Country" can be performed by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples of all ages.

Example

My name is *(name)*. I am a *(dhingaa)* from *(birthplace)* in *(nation)* Country². *(Here can be added your mother's and father's nation/s)*. I would like to show my respect and acknowledge the Gamilaraay people who are the Traditional Custodians of this Land. I would also like to pay respect to the Elders both past and present and extend that respect to other Aboriginal people present.

² This sentence would be said by an Aboriginal person of any age who may or may not be Gamilaraay