



Traditional Owners and Welcome to Country In Schools



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact Xiaomei Lin 9801 7450

Templeton Primary School Acknowledgement of Country

“We respectfully acknowledge the traditional owners and Elders, both past and present,
of the land, on which we come together.

We are lucky to stand on the traditional lands of the
Wurundjeri **(were-run- jury)**

We acknowledge the contributions of Indigenous Peoples in the past, present, and future.

We, Indigenous Australians, and non-Indigenous Australians
continue to work together to educate, unite and live in peace
on this beautiful land we all call home, Australia”.

Policy

This policy outlines the process for arranging a Welcome to Country at school or acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land, and the types of occasions when schools may consider these events and acknowledgements.

Summary

- The Department’s Marrung: Aboriginal Education Plan 2016 – 2026 envisions Victoria as a state where the rich and thriving cultures, knowledge and experience of First Nations peoples are celebrated by all Victorians.
- Schools are encouraged to enact this vision in a variety of ways, including by:
 - o arranging for Elders to conduct a Welcome to Country at significant school events
 - o conducting an Acknowledgement of Country at public meetings, smaller events or gatherings and school assemblies, or when Traditional Owners are not able to provide an official Welcome to Country

Details

Conducting a Welcome to Country or an Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners demonstrates respect for the Traditional Owners of the land on which the event is taking place and acknowledges the spiritual, physical, and cultural connection to Country as the First Peoples.

Welcome to Country is a traditional practice that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples perform to formally welcome people to their Country.

Acknowledgment of Country can be conducted by anyone (children or adults) who wishes to pay their respect to the Traditional Owners of the land on which the event or meeting is taking place.

Schools should create a learning environment for all students that acknowledges, respects and values Koori people and culture.

To support this vision schools are encouraged to:

- acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land at relevant school occasions and activities, such as assemblies, at the start of class, school council meetings and parent information sessions
- include an Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners on the school's website in a prominent position, and/or other school publications, e.g., Year Books, school newsletters and teachers' signature blocks
- consider inviting an Aboriginal Elder to conduct a Welcome to Country at significant school events such as the opening of a new building, graduation ceremonies, school concerts or as part of Reconciliation Week

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

An Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners should be conducted by the most senior person attending the event. However, schools should encourage students to conduct the Acknowledgement; for example, student leaders conducting school assemblies or other significant school events. In addition, other speakers at a school event may also choose to Acknowledge Traditional Owners.

Wording for Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

Where a school assembly or other event is being held and the Traditional Owners are known, the following words for Acknowledgement can be used:

I acknowledge the [insert Traditional Owner group name] people, the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet today, and pay my respects to their Elders past, present, and emerging.

If it is known that there are Elders and/or other Aboriginal people present, the following can be added.

I also acknowledge other Elders and Aboriginal people who are here today.

Where the Traditional Owners are not known, the following wording can be used:

I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet, and pay my respects to their Elders past, present, and emerging.

The same supplementary wording applies if there are known Elders and other Aboriginal people present:

I also acknowledge other Elders and Aboriginal people who are here today.

Identifying Traditional Owner groups

Schools need to identify the Traditional Owner group/s in their local area, if they are not already known.

In Victoria, Traditional Owners are recognised formally through three distinct pieces of legislation. These are the:

- Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010 (Vic)
- Native Title Act 1993 (Cth)
- Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Vic)

Under the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act, Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) are appointed by the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council.

To find out if a school, event or function is within an area of formally recognised Country, refer to the State-wide map of formally recognised Traditional Owners. If the school is located within a formally recognised Country, acknowledge the Traditional Owners identified.

Schools can contact the RAP to confirm the correct name and pronunciation. For contact information see the Registered Aboriginal Parties page.

Where there is no RAP with oversight of the location in which the event is taking place, use the above wording on “Where the Traditional Owners are not known”.

Welcome to Country

A Welcome to Country can only be conducted by a Traditional Owner of the land on which the event or meeting is taking place. The Welcome is usually performed by an Elder or can be made by a nominated representative of the Koori community.

Elders should be paid or otherwise remunerated for their cultural knowledge and authority within their community for conducting the Welcome.

Related policies

- Aboriginal Employment
- Cultural and Ceremonial Leave
- Koori Education

Relevant legislation

- Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Vic)
- Constitution Act 1975 (Vic)
- Native Title Act 1993 (Cth)
- Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010 (Vic)

For further information on the legislation that supports Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners, refer to: Resources tab.

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed in accordance with the school’s three-year review cycle.

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	March 2024
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	March 2027