



Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country Policy

Approved/effective date	090920
Due for review	090923

Purpose

To recognise the cultural importance of Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country for First Nation people and Torres Strait islanders and its importance to Torquay's heritage and identity.

Incorporating Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country protocols into official meetings and events recognises First Nation people and Torres Strait Islanders as the First Australians and custodians of their land. It promotes awareness of both the past and ongoing connections to place of First Nation people and Torres Strait Islanders to enable the wider community to share in First Nation people and Torres Strait Islanders culture, thereby leading to better community relationships and understanding.

Torquay Community House (TCH) acknowledges the importance of paying respect to the traditional custodians of the land, the Wadawurrung people on whose land they sit, their Elders past and present and the continuing cultural and spiritual practices of local Aboriginal people. TCH will incorporate this practice for all appropriate events and activities held by the organisation.

Definitions

Welcome to Country is a ceremony performed by First Nation people and Torres Strait Islanders to welcome visitors to their traditional land. It can take on many forms, depending on the particular culture of the traditional owners, and can include singing, dancing, symbolic ritual or a speech in traditional language or English.

Acknowledgement of Country is a way for non-Aboriginal people to show awareness of and respect for the traditional First Nation people and Torres Strait Islanders owners of the land on which a meeting or event is being held, by

recognising the continuing connection of First Nation people and Torres Strait Islanders to their Country. It can be informal or formal and involves visitors acknowledging the First Nation people and Torres Strait Islanders as the original/traditional owners of the land as well as the long and continuing relationship between First Nation people and Torres Strait Islanders and their Country.

The Welcome to Country must be conducted by a recognised Elder or other appropriate representative from the local Wadawurrung community.

Torquay Community House recognises that Welcome to Country is a service and as such a fee is payable.

The Acknowledgement of Country should be performed at the beginning of any events deemed appropriate by type and size and could include but are not limited to:

- Annual General Meeting
- TCH activities
- Board of Management meetings
- One off event
- All publications

Once an Acknowledgement of Country has been performed, it is not required for any further speakers at the same event to re-perform the acknowledgement.

First Nation people and Torres Strait Islanders can subsequently determine themselves if they wish to do their own acknowledgement on the grounds of cultural obligation. There are no set protocols or wording for an Acknowledgement of Country, however the suggested statement is as follows:

'I acknowledge the Wadawurrung People as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we are meeting today. I pay respect to all Aboriginal Elders, past, present and future with a spiritual connection to these lands.'

In addition, Torquay Community House will affix a written Acknowledgement of Country sign in a prominent position at the front of its building and also display the Acknowledgement of Country on its social media pages including website, Facebook and email signatures.