

GUIDELINES FOR PARISHES

To show respect and acknowledgement within the Sunday Eucharist, parishes may like to implement these steps at the **beginning** of Mass.

- Welcome to the parish, theme of readings and any notices.
- Pause to show respect and acknowledgement (about 30 seconds).
- For a Welcome to Country, the commentator introduces the Aboriginal Elder.
- For an Acknowledgement of Traditional Custodians, an example is:

We Acknowledge the Traditional Custodians who have walked upon and cared for this land for thousands of years. We acknowledge the continued deep spiritual attachment and relationship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to this country and commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of reconciliation.

- Pause to show respect and acknowledgement (30 seconds).
- Then invite the congregation to stand for the Processional hymn or Introductory Rite.

To help you give an authentic Acknowledgement:

- Find out the name of your local Traditional Custodians (<https://aiatsis.gov.au/whosecountry> can help).
- Try to write your own Acknowledgement that is tailored to your area. Use it as an opportunity to educate and inform the congregation/group.
- Be genuine and enthusiastic.
- Use correct terminology (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, First Nations Peoples and First Australians are acceptable).

Additionally, NATSICC would like to recommend that Parishes consider the following forms of Acknowledgement:

- Acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the Country on which the Parish stands in a physical form (signage, plaque) on Parish grounds
- Provide an Acknowledgement to the Traditional Custodians in Mass booklets, websites and other media produced by the Parish.
- An Acknowledgement or Welcome to Country before every Mass and meeting or, at minimum, on significant days
- Use the Traditional place name for your location.
- Archbishop O'Regan and the Diocesan Pastoral Council encourage parish and school communities to include Acknowledgement of Traditional Custodians or Welcome to Country (including the incorporation of a smoking ceremony) before the commencement of Masses, other liturgical celebrations, meetings and gatherings.



Catholic
Archdiocese
of Adelaide

WELCOME TO COUNTRY

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS

A Guide for Parishes and Communities



This document was produced by the Archdiocese of Adelaide in consultation with the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council (NATSICC)
www.natalcc.org.au

WELCOME TO COUNTRY

A 'Welcome to Country' Ceremony is an important part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, where Traditional Custodians (Elders) welcome people to their land. It is a formal process that has been practiced for thousands of years and varies according to the region and practice of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community.

During a Welcome to Country, the Traditional Custodians welcome those in attendance, guests, staff, and students to their Country. It can take the form of a simple speech or a performance, such as a song, traditional dance, or didgeridoo piece. This Ceremony is a significant recognition of the connection to the land and is often considered a right and not a privilege.

It is important to note that a Welcome to Country should always occur at the beginning of an event, preferably as the first item. If you need assistance in implementing a Welcome to Country, the [National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council \(NATSICC\)](#) is happy to help.

As part of the planning process, we strongly advise that you meet with the Elder/s that you have asked to perform the Welcome to Country to discuss expectations and logistics. Get a feel for what the Welcome entails and be sure that you are both comfortable with the Ceremony and context. Discuss any materials that may be needed and be mindful of smoke detectors and alarms if a Smoking Ceremony is to be incorporated into the Welcome.

For more detailed information and suggestions on wording, please visit: <http://natsicc.org.au/acknowledgement-and-welcome-to-country.html>.

By acknowledging and respecting the traditions and customs of Australia's First Peoples, we can work towards reconciliation and a better understanding of our shared history.

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CATHOLIC COUNCIL

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council (NATSICC) is the peak advisory body to the Australian Catholic Bishops on issues relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics. There are over 130,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics in Australia and it is the youngest and fastest demographic.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS

An 'Acknowledgement of Traditional Custodians' is a way that all people can show awareness and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage and the ongoing relationship the Traditional Custodians have with their Country.

Both First Australians and non-Indigenous people can perform 'Acknowledgement of Traditional Custodians'. It is a demonstration of respect dedicated to the Traditional Custodians of the lands (or sea) where the Mass, event, meeting, school function or conference takes place. It can be formal or informal.

The Acknowledgement must be seen as more than simply 'ticking a box'. It is an opportunity to show the respect you have for the country, the waters and its people. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been experiencing exclusion, discrimination and oppression for so long that a genuine and authentic Acknowledgement conducted by your community can mean so much to Australia's First Peoples.