

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL OWNERS AND WELCOME TO COUNTRY POLICY

## Policy

This policy outlines the process for arranging a Welcome to Country at Northern Bay College or acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land, and the types of occasions when the college 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:
  - arranging for Elders to conduct a Welcome to Country at significant school events
  - 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.

Northern Bay College creates a learning environment for all students that acknowledges, respects and values Koorie people and culture.

To support this vision staff and students are encouraged to:

- acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land at relevant college 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 college website in a prominent position, and/or other school publications, e.g. teachers' signature blocks
- consider inviting an Aboriginal Elder to conduct a Welcome to Country at significant college 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, Northern Bay College encourages students to conduct the Acknowledgement; for example student leaders conducting college and campus assemblies or other significant college events. In addition, other speakers at a college 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 Wathaurong 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

Northern Bay College has identified the Traditional Owner group/s in their local area: The traditional owners of the land on which Geelong sits are the Wadawurrung (also known as Wathaurong) Aboriginal people of the Kulin nation.

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 Koorie 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](#)
- [Koorie Education](#)

## Relevant legislation

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