

WELCOME TO COUNTRY

Guidelines for the Recognition of Indigenous Culture and Custodianship of Country at One Voice Events

The Policy

It is the policy of ONE VOICE to recognize the Indigenous custodianship of country where ONE VOICE public events are held, and acknowledge the continuing significance of Indigenous culture in Australia. This policy embraces the spirit of reconciliation between Indigenous and other Australians and reflects the national process of reconciliation as guided by the national Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation.

What is *Welcome to Country*?

Recognition is made through a formal process called *Welcome to Country*. It always occurs in the opening ceremony of the event, preferably as the first item. *Welcome to Country* is conducted by a representative (or representatives) of local Indigenous custodians who welcome the delegates to their country. Indigenous protocols in relation to *Welcome to Country* are wide and diverse and will vary according to region and locality. The form of the welcome is negotiated between the Indigenous people and the event organizers. For example, *Welcome to Country* may consist of a single speech, or it may include some kind of performance (a song, dance, *didjeridu* solo, etc), or it may be a combination of these. It is important to remember that the Indigenous representative/s must feel comfortable with the arrangements. Rather than a gesture of tokenism and political correctness, ONE VOICE acknowledges that *Welcome to Country* is a right of the local Indigenous custodians and not a privilege.

Who performs *Welcome to Country*?

Who performs *Welcome to Country* is agreed between appropriate representatives (individuals or organization) of local Indigenous custodians and the event organizers. There are a number of channels through which event organizers may contact appropriate Indigenous people. These include the local campus Indigenous student support or study centre, a local Indigenous land council, an Aboriginal health centre, an Aboriginal legal service, or the local office of ATSIC (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission). Officers of such organizations will be able to inform the event organizers of appropriate Indigenous people to contact. Contact should be made as early as possible in the planning of the event. It is traditional that some form of payment is made either to individuals or to an organization for providing such a service. The exact form and amount of payment is negotiated between the Indigenous custodians and the event organizers.

Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Convener to ensure that these arrangements are made. The Convener will make progress reports in the normal reporting process on the planning of the event. The President of the Society will ensure that satisfactory arrangements are in place by the time the event takes place.