

Acknowledgement of Country – Improving Aboriginal Cultural Respect

What

- An Acknowledgement of Country is an opportunity for anyone to show respect for Traditional Owners and the continuing connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Country. It can be given by both non-Aboriginal people and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Why

- A key finding from the 2018 Tasmanian Department of Health's consultation with Aboriginal people in Tasmania, is that many Aboriginal people feel their existence and culture is invisible in – and not respected by – health services, and this has an impact on health, wellbeing and access to effective services.
- An Acknowledgement of Country shows respect for Aboriginal people and recognises their ongoing connection to culture, language and country.
- It recognises the unique position of Aboriginal people in Tasmania's culture and shared history. Formally recognising this reminds us that Tasmanian Aboriginal people never ceded sovereignty of this land.
- It is an opportunity for people to acknowledge the impacts colonisation continues to have on the health and well being of Aboriginal people living in Tasmania.
- You may not be able to address structural inequalities but you can encourage and role model for not only your colleagues, but staff across the health sector and across government by delivering respectful Acknowledgments as the normal way we do things around here.

How

- We do this in the spirit of reconciliation.
- Always plan to have an Acknowledgement of Country; always plan your Acknowledgment.
- It doesn't need to be delivered by the Chair of the meeting.
- Make it more than just reading words from a script; if you add depth or personalise, it shows you have thought about it. Reflect on the relationship between Aboriginal people and the purpose of the meeting/forum.
- Acknowledgements do not need to be too long
- It's important to do it with commitment, understanding and truth. Practise!
- Avoid using the term 'emerging' (As in 'I pay my respect to Elders, past present and emerging') as many Aboriginal people are uncomfortable with this recent (bureaucratic) addition.

Useful:

What is an Acknowledgement of Country? Reconciliation Australia

www.communities.tas.gov.au/csr/oaa/further_information/acknowledgements_and_welcome_to_country Office of Aboriginal Affairs, Department of Communities, Tasmania