

# Inclusive Event Welcomes and Introductions

## A Guide for Presenters

At Monash Health, we seek to create a safe and welcoming environment that embraces everyone's skills, perspectives and experiences, and promotes fair opportunities and resources for all.

As part of our commitment to an equitable and inclusive culture, this document provides advice for presenters on delivering acknowledgments and inclusive welcomes for events and forums at Monash Health.

We encourage you to model respectful and inclusive behaviours by following this guidance and adapting it as needed for your event.

### What should be included in an Event Welcome/Introduction?

The key elements for presenters to consider are:

1. Welcome to Country or Acknowledgement of Country
2. Inclusive Speaker Introductions

The approach to these elements will vary depending on the type of event/meeting, the delivery channel and the audience. We seek to create an inclusive environment while remaining responsible stewards of employee time and public funds.

An outline of suggested approaches for different types of events is below:

	Welcome to Country	Acknowledgement of Country	Inclusive introduction
<b>Internal Events where speakers may not be known to the audience</b> e.g. Employee Forums / Manager or Leader Forums / Team meetings with new team members	X	✓	✓
<b>Internal Events where speakers are known to the audience</b> e.g. Senior Leadership Team / Team meetings	X	✓	X
<b>Formal/External/Public</b> e.g. Annual General Meeting, Site openings	✓ *To be Considered for milestone events with fee via the Aboriginal Health Team / council	✓	✓

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### Acknowledging Traditional Owners

We are committed to working together with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to promote reconciliation, to provide culturally appropriate health services and to improve health outcomes.

Our events provide an opportunity to show awareness of and respect for the Traditional Owners of the land on which a meeting or event is being held. It can also be an educational opportunity, as we progressively increase awareness of our country's Indigenous history and aspiration for a culturally safe workplace and greater self-determination for First Nations people.

An event should start with a **Welcome to Country**, or an **Acknowledgement of Country**.

### Welcome to Country (Formal Events)

A Welcome to Country is delivered by Traditional Owners, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have been given permission by Traditional Owners, to welcome visitors to their country.

A Welcome to Country occurs at the beginning of a formal event and can take many forms, including a speech, traditional dance, music and/or smoking ceremony.

A Welcome to Country should be considered for formal or milestone events at Monash Health and can be organised through the Aboriginal Health team and local Land Council for a fee.

A Welcome to Country is not required for standard events, meetings or forums – instead, an Acknowledgement of Country is appropriate.

At an event with a Welcome to Country, the first speaker following the Welcome to Country should provide an Acknowledgement of Country.

### Acknowledgement of Country (All events)

An Acknowledgement of Country can be delivered by anyone and is a way of showing awareness of, and respect for, the Aboriginal Traditional Owners of the land on which a meeting or event is being held.

The first speaker at an event/meeting should give the Acknowledgment of Traditional Owners. This should not be repeated by subsequent speakers, to ensure we balance respectful stewardship of a welcoming environment, employee time and public funds.

Generally speaking, acknowledgement should be part of every event and included at the start of meetings where the meeting format requires an agenda to operate.

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Who should I acknowledge?

Monash Health delivers care across the lands of the Bunurong (Bun-er-rong)/Boonwurrung (Boon-wur-rung) and Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung (Wur-und-jerry Woy-wur-rung) peoples of the Eastern Kulin Nation.

When working from home, you may be on the lands of another of the Traditional Owner groups located across Victoria. You can find out whose country you're on with [this map from the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council](#).



## Acknowledgment of Country wording

Delivering an Acknowledgement of Country can be a little intimidating the first few times. No-one wants to make a mistake and offend the people they are trying to show respect to.

It's important to remember that the effort of making an acknowledgement goes a long way. It's OK if you make a mistake - what's important is that you have a go.

We've provided some suggestions below to help you get started. Start with these, and over time, as you gain confidence, adapt them to your own presentation style, or better still, develop your own Acknowledgement (see *How can I elevate my Acknowledgement of Country?* below)

You can use these words as a starter:

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## If face to face:

*"Our meeting/forum/workshop is being held on the lands of [insert either the Bunurong/Boonwurrung or Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people], and I wish to acknowledge them as the Traditional Owners. I would also like to pay my respects to them, their culture and their Elders past, present and future."*

## If virtual or combination of face to face and virtual:

*"I wish to acknowledge the Bunurong/Boonwurrung and Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung peoples as the Traditional Owners of the lands our Monash Health services are situated on. I would also like to pay my respects to them, their culture and their Elders past, present and future."*

or

*"I am joining this meeting from my [home or insert the site you are on] on the Traditional Lands of the [insert the correct traditional land owners] people. I pay my respect to them and their Elders, past and present. I would like to extend that respect to the Elders on the lands where you are joining from."*

How can I elevate my Acknowledgement of Country?

To deliver a truly meaningful Acknowledgement, consider how the words you use relate to the Traditional Owner history of the local area, and to you personally.

- **Start by [finding out about the Traditional Owners where you live and work](#).**  
Since time immemorial, every piece of this country has been spoken for and tended by First Nations peoples and each people have a story, language and a culture as deep and rich as the next.
- **Do your research.**  
There are great online resources available to learn more about the Traditional Owners where you live and work, such as [the Koorie Heritage Trust Victoria and State Library of Victoria collections](#). You can also learn more about the proud histories of First Nations peoples with resources like [The Biggest Estate on Earth \(also a book\)](#); or [The First Australians SBS Documentary series](#).
- **Make it personal, meaningful and purposeful.** Examine your own connection to where you live and work, and learn more about the history and ongoing culture of Traditional Owners, and the important part acknowledgement plays in creating a culturally safe environment for your First Nations colleagues.
- **Make it respectful.** A key element of an acknowledgement is to pay your respects to Elders and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are part of your event or meeting. Consider how every respectful acknowledgement reflects the spirit of reconciliation. As part of your research, be conscious of any cultural sensitivities.

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## Providing Inclusive Speaker Introductions

An inclusive self-introduction is important to ensure a welcoming, inclusive, and accessible meeting or event experience for all.

All speakers and presenters at an event should provide a short inclusive self-introduction where there are members in the audience/meeting who do not know them.

Inclusive introductions should be kept short, around 10-15 seconds.

**Here is an example of what to share when introducing yourself:**

- *My name is...*
- *I am the [your role] at Monash Health.*
- *My pronouns are...*
- *To offer context and access for everyone joining us today, I am a [Brief description of your visual appearance and surroundings]*

*You may choose to describe your gender identity, race or ethnicity, skin colour, hair colour and style, whether you have facial hair, what clothing and jewellery you're wearing, and a short description of your background.*

*(Example: I am a caucasian woman with straight brown hair and round red glasses wearing a blue shirt. Behind me is a grey wall with several framed pictures next to a bookshelf).*

## Pronouns

Pronouns are a way people refer to themselves and each other. Some people use the pronouns 'he/him' or 'she/her', while others may use gender-neutral pronouns like 'they/them', or gender-neutral neo-pronouns such as 'ze/hir', 'ze/zir' or 'xe/xem'. In some instances, pronouns may be context specific.

[Read more about gender diversity and inclusive language.](#)



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## Bringing it all together

Here is an example of how you might bring an Acknowledgement of Country together with an Inclusive Introduction to create a safe and welcoming introduction to an event.

**Name:** *My name is [insert name]*

**Organisation and Role:** *I am the [insert title] at Monash Health*

**Pronouns:** *My pronouns are [insert pronouns – e.g. she/her]*

**Traditional Owner Acknowledgment** *[insert your acknowledgment; example provided below]:*

*I acknowledge the First Peoples of the land where we live, work and play: the Bunurong (Bun-er-rong) /Boonwurrung (Boon-wur-rung) and Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung (Wur-un-jerry Woy-wur-rung) peoples of the Eastern Kulin Nation.*

*I recognise that they have delivered healthcare on these lands since time immemorial.*

*More and more, we are seeing that ancient and living wisdom recognised as best practice for First Nations people.*

*Birthing on Country, for instance, is now seen as a powerful tool for closing the gap, by returning birthing services to Indigenous communities and Indigenous control to enable a healthy start to life.*

*And so I pay my respects to Elders, past and present, and acknowledge the ongoing spiritual link First Nations Peoples have to their lands, culture and lore; and recognise that their connections build healthier families and communities.*

**Brief description of your visual appearance and surroundings** *[example provided below].*

*To offer context and access for everyone joining us today, I am a caucasian woman with straight brown hair and round red glasses wearing a blue shirt. I am in my office at home. Behind me is a grey wall with several framed pictures next to a bookshelf.*

*[If you feel comfortable, you may also share your own access needs; e.g. I need glasses to conduct screen work; I may need to take short breaks with my camera off etc]*

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Find out more:

## Acknowledging Traditional Owners

- View a map depicting the vibrant diversity of First Nations cultures across Australia [on the AIATSIS website](#).
- Watch Shelley Reys's empowering TEDx Talk: "[Deliver an Acknowledgement of Country that really means something | Shelley Reys | TEDxSydney](#)"
- Find more resources on [the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council website](#).

## Inclusive Introductions

- Learn [How to Make Accessible, Inclusive Self-Introductions](#)
- Learn more about respectful language with the [Victorian Government's LGBTIQ+ Inclusive Language Guide](#)