

Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country Protocols

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the protocols Bridge Housing will use for **Welcome to Country** and **Acknowledgement of Country** when conducting its business in order to pay respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Scope

This policy applies for all Bridge Housing staff and Board members.

Policy overview

This policy provides an overview of when to use a **Welcome to Country** or an **Acknowledgement of Country** and key protocols for doing so.

Policy

Welcome to Country

Protocols for welcoming visitors to Country have been a part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures for thousands of years. The essential elements of welcoming visitors and offering safe passage on Aboriginal lands remain in place (www.reconciliation.org.au).

A Welcome to Country occurs at the beginning of all formal external Bridge Housing events such as the Annual General Meeting, opening of a new residential development, launch of new service or report. Only Aboriginal people on their own country can give a Welcome to Country. Otherwise, an Acknowledgement of Country is given.

The welcome to country is organised through the Local Aboriginal Lands Council for the area. It usually requires advance notice of a few weeks and a fee is required.

Inner City, Inner West and Northern Beaches - Metropolitan Land Council

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tenants Advisory Group have endorsed Uncle Ray Davison as a suitable local Gadigal elder and Aunty Millie Ingram as a Wiradjuri and community Elder, to conduct a Welcome to Country in the Inner City or Inner West areas. Both can be engaged through the Metropolitan Land Council.

Eastern Suburbs – La Perouse Land Council

For events in the Eastern Suburbs contact the [La Perouse Land Council](#)

Western Sydney – Deerubbin Local Aboriginal Land Council

For events in the Western Sydney Area (including Parramatta, Blacktown, Penrith) contact the [Deerubbin Local Aboriginal Land Council](#).

Consult the NSW Aboriginal Land Council website to identify the correct land council for any other region (<https://alc.org.au/>).

Acknowledgement of Country

An 'Acknowledgement of Country' is an opportunity to acknowledge, and pay respect, to the Traditional Owners and ongoing custodians of the land - the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Acknowledgements can be made at the commencement of an event, such as a meeting, speech, or formal occasion. An acknowledgement can be made by anybody, Indigenous or non-Indigenous (www.commonground.org.au).

Bridge Housing acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands on which we operate our business. To show our respect to the Aboriginal elders of those lands both past and present, we formally acknowledge the land's traditional owners, by name where this is known.

It is Bridge Housing practice to open every event, and significant internal meetings and events with an Acknowledgement of Country. Events at which an Acknowledgement of Country is made include Board and Board Sub-Committee meetings, Executive Meetings, staff meetings, and Annual General Meetings.

There are several tenant elders who can also give an Acknowledgement of Country and this is sometimes an appropriate alternative. Please contact the Sustainable Communities Manager if you wish to invite a tenant to deliver an Acknowledgement of Country.

We have adopted two versions of an Acknowledgement of Country, one recognising the Gadigal people of the area where we have been based traditionally and for use specifically at Bridge Housing's Head Office site, and a generic Acknowledgement for use at Bridge Housing's Brookvale office and across Sydney.

Both of these Acknowledgements have been developed in reference to existing practice, advice from Land Councils and cultural centres; and have been reviewed and endorsed by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tenant Advisory Group.

Northern Beaches Region

Research published by the Aboriginal Heritage Office in 2015 notes the difficulty in identifying a particular clan or group who identify as traditional owners in the Northern Beaches region, owing to the impact of colonial invasion and the devastating spread of disease that wiped out local populations and cultural knowledge (www.aboriginalheritageoffice).

There are currently multiple names in use among the community and Bridge Housing acknowledges the reasons for this. We commit to continue to actively research and engage with the community and the Local Aboriginal Land Council on the matter. For these reasons, Bridge Housing has decided to use an Acknowledgement with no specific clan name for events that operate in the Northern Beaches region.

Acknowledgement of Country – Office Sites		
	Bridge Housing Head Office ¹	Bridge Housing Brookvale Office
Bridge Housing/ public events	We acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, and pay our respects to elders past and present, and all Aboriginal people here today.	We acknowledge Aboriginal people as the traditional owners of the land, whose culture is the oldest living culture in human history. We pay our respects to elders past and present and all Aboriginal people here today.

Acknowledgement of Country – other locations or mediums

Acknowledgement for other regions	We acknowledge Aboriginal people as the traditional owners of the land, whose culture is the oldest living culture in human history. We pay our respects to elders past and present and all Aboriginal people here today.
Bridge Housing documents	We acknowledge Aboriginal people as the traditional owners of the land, whose culture is the oldest living culture in human history. We pay our respects to elders past and present and to all Aboriginal people and their communities.
Staff email sign off (Short form)	We acknowledge Aboriginal people as the traditional owners of the land, and pay our respects to elders past and present.