

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL OWNERS AND WELCOME TO COUNTRY IN SCHOOLS

### Purpose:

This policy outlines the process for arranging a Welcome to Country at Briar Hill Primary School or acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land, and the types of occasions when our school may consider these events and acknowledgements.

### Background:

Briar Hill Primary School is dedicated to implementing the The Department's [Marrung: Aboriginal Education Plan 2016 – 2026](#) which envisages Victoria as a state where the rich and thriving cultures, knowledge and experience of First Nations peoples are celebrated by all Victorians.

Briar Hill Primary School encourages students, teachers, parents and the wider community to enact this vision in a variety of ways, including by:

- arranging for Elders to conduct a Welcome to Country at significant school events such as our Welcome Ceremony, Spring Fair, Winter Solstice and during lessons in our Cultural and Environment Program.
- conducting an Acknowledgement of Country personally written by our grade 6 school leaders for every assembly, at public meetings, smaller events or gatherings 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, this is encouraged and led by our student group. It is something our school leaders look forward to when stepping into the leadership team and we encourage their words to be their own personal acknowledgement which draws on their rich experience of Aboriginal Culture at BHPS.

BHPS School creates a learning environment for all students that acknowledges, respects and values Koorie people and culture.

To support this vision staff, students and the community are encouraged to:

- acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land at relevant school 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 school's website in a prominent position, and/or other school publications, e.g. Year Books, school newsletters and teachers' signature blocks
- consider inviting an Aboriginal Elder to conduct a Welcome to Country at significant school events such as the opening of a new building, graduation ceremonies, school concerts or as part of Reconciliation Week

#### Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

Where possible an Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners is conducted by the most senior person attending the event. However, at BHPS school we encourage student leadership to conduct the Acknowledgement. They have opportunities to work with our local Elders and share their own handwritten and personalised Acknowledgements. In addition, other speakers at a school 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 Wrundjeri 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.

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## 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 \(Vic\)](#)

### Resources

- [marrung@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:marrung@education.vic.gov.au)
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We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Owners of country throughout Victoria and pay respect to the ongoing living cultures of First Peoples.