

“LTSU would like to acknowledge the Giabal and Jarowair people of Toowoomba, Ugarapul people of Springfield, and Butchulla people of Fraser Coast as the traditional custodians of the lands where each USQ campus is located”.

Indigenous Protocol

An understanding of Indigenous protocol ensures the development and maintenance of positive relationships with local Indigenous communities. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members appreciate the courtesy of being consulted on matters related to their social, political and physical well-being.

Consulting with Indigenous communities

- It is important to establish who should be consulted within a particular Indigenous community.
- Usually, the Elder’s group is the first point of contact on matters of a cultural nature, but more specific issues may be clarified by an incorporated Indigenous organisation with carriage of that service.
- It is best to phone ahead to ensure that the appropriate people are available and feel comfortable enough to engage with individual or group representation.
- Be aware that some Indigenous communities have an entry permit system.
- If there are no Indigenous organisations to approach, make contact with the town council, hospital, police station, and court house. Staff there will suggest the contact person for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander business.
- In the main, English is the preferred medium of communication. Be aware not to sound patronising by assuming a broken English or deliberately slower speech pattern when in dialogue with representatives of the local Indigenous community.
- Formation of relationships may take time. Initial meetings are only a starting point. Keep the lines of communication open, both orally and in writing, and be patient in building the confidence of the local Indigenous community. If you make a commitment to follow-up on an issue, ensure that you do, and provide feedback. This will assist in building relationships.

Cultural Respect

Acquaint yourself with the local history of the area. This is a good beginning to develop cultural respect and to follow cultural protocol of the local area and the Indigenous community.

It is helpful to understand the demographics of the Indigenous population from the most recent ABS figures and to be aware of them when meeting with or writing about the local population. If in doubt on local Indigenous-specific issues, approach a nominated spokesperson from within the Indigenous community.

It is also helpful to have knowledge of the history of the Aboriginal and the Torres Strait Islander flags and to acknowledge the traditional custodians prior to all formal events.

Welcome to Country

‘Welcome to Country’ should be conducted at official events and may be carried out only by the Traditional Custodians of the land on which the meeting takes place. Welcome to Country is the process to welcome visitors to the land which is recognised as Aboriginal land.

If the Traditional Custodians cannot perform Welcome to Country, then the next step is to ask another Aboriginal person to perform ‘Acknowledgement of Country’.

USQ campus Traditional Custodians

Toowoomba – Giabal and Jarowair

Springfield – Ugarapul

Fraser Coast - Butchulla

Acknowledgment of Country

If the Traditional custodians are not available to conduct ‘Welcome to Country’, it is appropriate for an ‘Acknowledgement of Country’ to be conducted. This can be done by Aboriginal and non-Indigenous peoples. Aboriginal people would be mindful to identify their people and country and to pay respects to the Traditional Custodians.

What to say

Following is an example of what could be said when acknowledging Traditional Custodians.

“I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians on whose land this meeting takes place.”

If you know who the Traditional Custodians are you can name them, however, check that your pronunciation of the name is correct.

Why?

Acknowledging Traditional Custodians develops a relationship with the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community members in attendance. This is a sign that you value their presence and pay respect to the traditional history and culture of the Indigenous communities.

When?

Official functions (e.g. graduation ceremonies)

Meetings of various departments coming together (e.g. Student Equity Network)

The first class of each semester.

At the beginning of your resource materials for online learning.

When there are special guests, visiting scholars, and hosting of conferences.

Websites:

Aboriginal Flag - <http://www.ausflag.com.au/flags/ab.html>

Torres Strait Island Flag - <http://www.ausflag.com.au/flags/torres.html>

Macquarie University ‘Welcome to Country’:

<http://www.pr.mq.edu.au/EventsManual/Organising/Welcome/index.html>

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