

# Welcomes and Acknowledgements

As a mark of respect, members, volunteers and employees of the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW should recognise the traditional land owners/custodians when conducting events and significant meetings. Depending on the circumstance, this may be in the form of a Welcome to Country, an Acknowledgement of Country or our Prayer of Acknowledgement.

<p>Welcome to Country</p>	<p>Traditional welcoming ceremonies should be incorporated into the opening of major internal or public events, meetings, forums or functions.</p> <p>A Welcome to Country is performed by an Elder or appropriate member of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community to welcome people who are visiting and/or meeting on their traditional land. They can vary from speeches of welcome, to traditional dance and smoking ceremonies.</p>
<p>Acknowledgement of Country</p>	<p>The first speaker or most senior representative at any significant organisational forum should perform an Acknowledgement of Country. This is a mark of respect for the owners/custodians of the land on which the event is taking place. Subsequent speakers may also choose to acknowledge Traditional Custodians. The first speaker at a forum should also separately acknowledge all Elders, past and present.</p>
<p>Prayer of Acknowledgement</p>	<p>The St Vincent de Paul Society has been given a unique opportunity in the approval of a Prayer of Acknowledgement by Reconciliation Australia. It may be used at the beginning of a meeting that would traditionally begin with prayer to acknowledge and bless our First People and recognise our walk together in healing.</p> <p>The prayer was inspired by the work of Darlene Dreise, a Torres Strait Islander woman with familial links to Hammond Island and Thursday Island. Darlene is the Director of Mission for St Vincent's Hospital Toowoomba.</p>

## The meaning of country

*“When we talk about traditional ‘Country’...we mean something beyond the dictionary definition of the word. For Aboriginal Australians...we might mean homeland, or tribal or clan area and we might mean more than just a place on the map. For us, Country is a word for all the values, places, resources, stories and cultural obligations associated with that area and its features. It describes the entirety of our ancestral domains. While they may all no longer necessarily be the title-holders to land, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are still connected to the Country of their ancestors and most consider themselves the custodians or caretakers of their land.”*

Professor Mick Dodson

From Reconciliation Australia ‘Welcome to and Acknowledgement of Country’ (<https://www.reconciliation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Welcome-to-and-Acknowledgement-of-Country.pdf>)

For more Information about the use, process and significance of welcome and acknowledgements, please see the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW’s full Cultural Protocol.



# Acknowledgement of Country

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*We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the custodians of this land, with deep respect. May the Elders, past and present, be blessed and honoured. May we join together and build a future based on compassion, justice, hope, faith, and reconciliation.*

## Prayer of Acknowledgement

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*Holy Spirit,*

*We invoke your blessing on this country and on us as we gather today.*

*We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elders of this place, those who once lived here and into whose sacred space our forbearers came, changing forever an older way of life.*

*Bless their descendants and bless us.*

*Help us to join our hands and hearts together.*

*Help us to heal one another and the land, so that our lives may flow with harmony and that we may live with love and deep respect.*

*Amen*

