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City of Adelaide

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT & WELCOME TO KAURNA YARTA PROTOCOL

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Acknowledgement of Country

The City of Adelaide acknowledges the Kaurna People of the Adelaide Plains as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we live, work and gather. We acknowledge and honour the spiritual and cultural stewardship of this Country and recognise their deep and enduring relationship with its lands, waters, the sky, and all living things. We pay our respects to Kaurna Elders past and present and recognise the important role of emerging leaders in sustaining and strengthening culture.

Ngai tampinhi, ngadlu Kaurna yartangga panpapanpalyarrinhi (inparrinhi).
Kaurna Miyurna yaitya mathanya Wama Tarntanyaku. Parnaku yaitya, parnuku tapa purruna, parnuku yarta ngadlu tampinhi.
Yalaka Kaurna miyurna ithu yaitya, tapa purruna, yarta kuma puru martinhi, puru warri-
apinhi, puru tangka martulayinhi.
Kumartarna yaitya miyurna iyangka yalaka ngadlu tampinhi.

Kaurna Yerta Aboriginal Corporation and Native Title Determination

On 21 March 2018 the Kaurna People were recognised as Native Title holders for lands around Adelaide. That event was a significant milestone in Adelaide's history, marking progress towards reconciliation and justice. Recognising and respecting the rights of Aboriginal peoples is crucial, and acknowledging the Kaurna People's Native Title was a step in the right direction.

This decision marks the first positive recognition of Native Title over a capital city area since the enactment of the Federal Native Title Act in 1993. It highlights the ongoing efforts to address historical injustices and honour the deep connections the Kaurna community has with their traditional lands. Justice Mortimer's ruling granted Native Title rights across 17 land parcels stretching from Lower Light to Myponga. This marks the culmination of an 18-year journey since the initial filing of the Kaurna claim. The boundaries of the city are situated at the heart of Kaurna Country. The City of Adelaide acknowledges the Kaurna community as the traditional custodians of the lands and the Adelaide Plains.



The Kaurna Yerta Aboriginal Corporation (KYAC) was established in 2018 and has been providing advice and advocacy across multiple South Australian Government and Non-Government Departments since its formation. The City of Adelaide is committed to deepening our relationship with KYAC through a process of reconciliation.

Please note: the correct spelling is *Yarta* (with an 'A'). The variation *Yerta* (with an 'E') is used only by KYAC.

A note on terminology

In this protocol, we use the term *Aboriginal people* to refer to *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples* and *Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people* (with *and/or* recognising that some individuals identify as both).

The term *Indigenous* should be used with care. Wherever possible, it is preferable to use more specific terms such as *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples* or the name of the relevant Nation or language group.

The term *First Nations* can be used interchangeably with other collective terms where appropriate, particularly in community-facing or cross-cultural contexts. Some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people prefer *First Nations* because it acknowledges sovereignty, self-determination, and the existence of multiple distinct Nations across Australia.

Terms such as *Aboriginal*, *Torres Strait Islander* and *First Nations*, should always be capitalised. Where appropriate, plural forms (for example, *peoples*) should be used to reflect the diversity of cultures, languages, and identities that exist across Australia.

We use 'community' or 'communities' to refer collectively to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Cultural Authority refers to individuals or groups who hold the recognised right and responsibility to speak on cultural matters for their community, Country, or Nation. Cultural Authority is about knowledge, connection, and community recognition—not age or job title.

Elders in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are respected people who are acknowledged for their wisdom, cultural knowledge, and leadership. Elders are not necessarily older in years; they are recognised for their experience, guidance, and standing within the community.

Quote – standout - **Country** from Professor Mick Dodson views. "*Country*" encompasses both lands, inland waterways and seas, reflecting the deep spiritual connection Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples have with the environment, where Country serves as both a teacher and a source".

Some Aboriginal people and custodians reject the Western legal concept of ownership, which implies possession and control. Instead, they embrace *Custodianship*, which emphasises a deep, reciprocal relationship and responsibility for caring for the land while acknowledging that the land is not "owned" but cared for across generations.

Custodianship encompasses stewardship, respect, and the responsibility to protect Country for future generations. This concept is rooted in Aboriginal lore and culture and differs fundamentally from the transactional concept of ownership under Western property law.

In current practice, the terms "Traditional Owners" and "Custodians" are sometimes used interchangeably, which can cause confusion. The City of Adelaide uses *Custodianship* to reflect cultural perspectives and responsibilities.

Message from the CEO

The City of Adelaide is proud to work in genuine partnership with the Kaurna Yarta Aboriginal Corporation (KYAC) and the City of Adelaide Reconciliation Committee to strengthen our shared commitment to reconciliation. Together, the Reconciliation Committee and KYAC have led and endorsed the development of the Acknowledgement and Welcome to Kaurna Yarta Protocol, a guiding framework that ensures these important cultural practices are carried out with respect, integrity, and authenticity.

As the registered Native Title body for Kaurna Yarta, KYAC provides leadership, guidance, and endorsement on matters relating to cultural protocols, including Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country, ensuring all practices are grounded in Kaurna Lore, values, and traditions.

This partnership reflects our shared goal of ensuring that all protocols within the City of Adelaide are respectful, accurate, and aligned with Kaurna cultural values and governance, supporting a consistent and meaningful approach to cultural recognition across our city.

The City of Adelaide also reaffirms its commitment to the Uluru Statement from the Heart, recognising it as a powerful call for truth, justice, and self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We are dedicated to embedding its principles into our policies, practices, and reconciliation initiatives—working together towards a future built on recognition, empowerment, and partnership with First Nations communities.

Introduction

The delivery of an Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country holds profound cultural, spiritual, and historical significance for Aboriginal People. It is not merely a “tick-box” exercise followed by a ceremonial formality but an important expression that recognises the enduring connection between Aboriginal peoples and their connection to lands, waters, plants, animals, the skies, and communities. These practices embody respect, responsibility, and relationship-building, providing an opportunity for all Australians to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land and their unceded sovereignty.

Historical protocols and their contemporary adaptation

Historically, Aboriginal protocols surrounding entering and welcoming people onto Country were detailed and prescriptive. Visitors were required to seek permission, state their purpose, negotiate access to resources such as water, food, and shelter, and abide by cultural laws and responsibilities during their time on the land.

These protocols included complex ceremonies — smoking, dance, song, and language — that demonstrated respect, hospitality, and the transfer of knowledge. Welcome ceremonies were vital cultural practices that ensured safety, spiritual protection, and mutual respect.

Modern Acknowledgements of Country should seek to retain and embed these essential elements while adapting respectfully to contemporary contexts. This involves acknowledging the history and purpose of protocol, not reducing them to brief, perfunctory statements detached from their cultural meaning.

Embedding historical context into Acknowledgements provides the audience with a richer understanding of the cultural significance of the land and Aboriginal peoples’ continuing custodianship. It invites people to engage thoughtfully with the narratives of sovereignty, survival and reconciliation.

What is the difference between an Acknowledgment and a Welcome to Country on Kurna Yarta?

Acknowledging Kurna People and Country is a way to show respect for Kurna People, their culture, and their ongoing connection to the land.

An Acknowledgement can be performed by anyone participating in an event, meeting, or gathering. It honours the Kurna People as the Traditional Custodians of the lands, waters, and skies of the Adelaide Plains and surrounding areas.

Acknowledging Kurna Country recognises both traditional custodianship and the continuing cultural and spiritual connection Kurna People have with their Country. Many organisations and community groups now include this practice at events, ceremonies, and meetings as a meaningful act of respect.

A **Welcome to Country on Kurna Yarta** is delivered by Kurna cultural leaders or other recognised Kurna authority bearers—respected community members of any age—who hold the knowledge and community-given authority to speak for their Country and culture.

Only Kurna People can perform a Welcome to Country on Kurna Country. Where a Welcome to Country is being performed, this ceremony always takes place at the beginning of an event and is the first item on the program. One or more Kurna People may conduct the ceremony, which can include a speech, activity, song, dance, ritual, or a combination of these.

To decide if an Acknowledgement or Welcome is appropriate, ask the following questions:

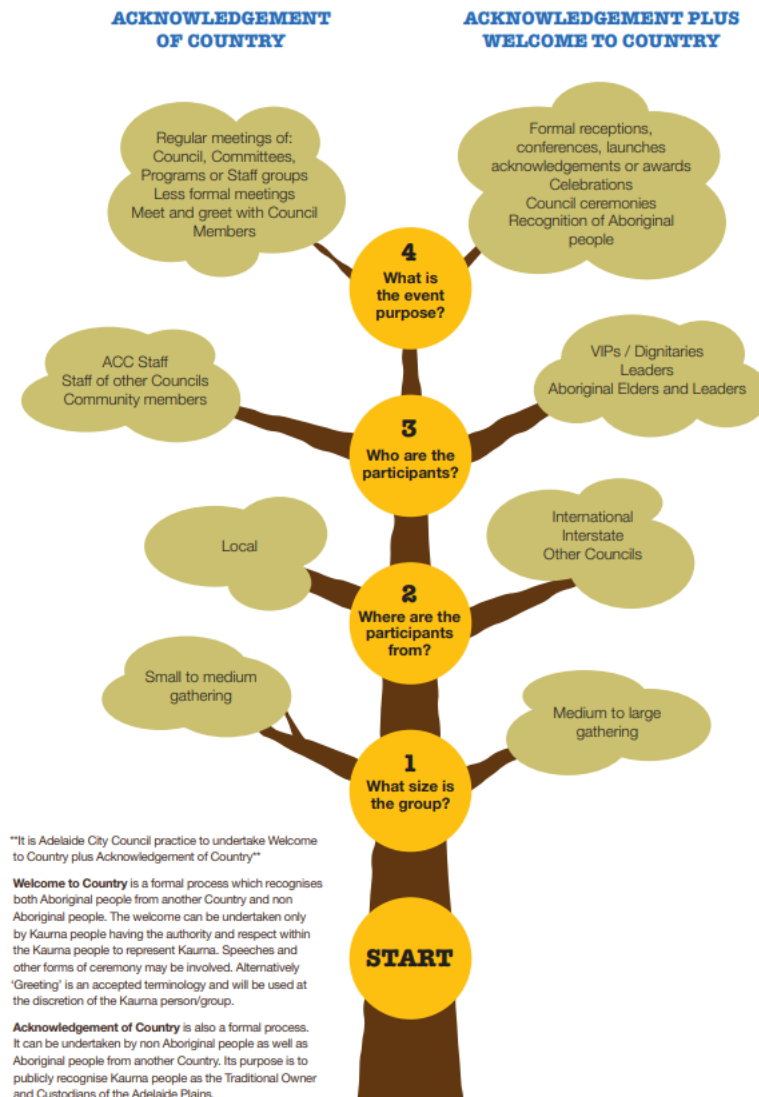
Question 1 - **What is your group size?** For example, if a small gathering (10 people) is involved, an Acknowledgement may only be needed, but if 50 people are involved, then an Acknowledgement and Welcome are likely to be more appropriate.

Question 2 - **Where are the participants from?** – If visitors are local and internal, an Acknowledgement may be appropriate; if the audience is international, interstate or external, a Welcome could be more appropriate

Question 3 - **Who are the participants?** i.e. their level of seniority, authority, leadership and influence – again, your answer may keep you on the same side as Question 2 or may take you to the other side.

Question 4: **What is the event's purpose?** An Acknowledgment is appropriate for regular meetings of Council, Committees, programs, or employee groups, less formal meetings, and meet-and-greets with Council Members.

A Welcome is more appropriate for formal receptions, conferences, launches or awards Celebrations, Council ceremonies and Recognition of Aboriginal people.



<Note – this above decision tree is from the current Protocol and will be updated as per the preceding text.>

The Acknowledgment of Country

Acknowledgement of Country is deeply embedded in Aboriginal cultural practices and protocols. It is a formal recognition of the enduring connection that Aboriginal peoples maintain with their traditional lands and waters — relationships shaped over tens of thousands of years. The Kaurna People of the Adelaide Plains articulate this connection through spiritual, social, and environmental dimensions that include the land itself, the sea, the sky, and all living beings.

The City of Adelaide is committed to treating the Acknowledgement of Country as a living, evolving practice. We will ensure that guidelines and documents grow over time, incorporating input from the Kaurna community and reflecting contemporary cultural context. Language, format, and delivery methods will be regularly reviewed to maintain cultural relevance, and innovative approaches—including multimedia, visual storytelling, and non-linear formats. Representatives of the City of Adelaide will be supported to deliver Acknowledgements in a personalised, authentic way while upholding cultural integrity and respect.

When the City of Adelaide meets on the lands of other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nations, employees, Council Members, and representatives should acknowledge the Traditional Custodians by naming them and delivering an appropriate Acknowledgment of Country. You may want to use the Acknowledgment below as a guide:

I'm joining today from Kaurna Country in Adelaide. I pay my respects to Kaurna Elders past and present. I also acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands where others are today — including INSERT LOCATION/s — and honour the continuing connection First Nations peoples hold to their lands, waters, and cultures.

Acknowledgement of Country

The City of Adelaide's Acknowledgement of Country for meetings follows, noting this can be updated to personalise the Acknowledgement of Country.

The City of Adelaide acknowledges the Kaurna People of the Adelaide Plains as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet today. We acknowledge and honour the spiritual and cultural stewardship of this Country and recognise their deep and enduring relationship with its lands, waters, the sky, and all living things. We pay our respects to Kaurna Elders past and present and recognise the important role of emerging leaders in sustaining and strengthening culture.

Personalising an Acknowledgement of Country

For members of the Administration and Council that wish to provide a personalised Acknowledgement of Country, the following guidance is provided.

An Acknowledgement of Country is most meaningful when it reflects the speaker's own connection, understanding, and respect for the land and its Traditional Custodians. While standard wording can be used, personalising your Acknowledgement conveys sincerity and deepens audience engagement.

When preparing your own Acknowledgement, consider the following:

- Reflect on place - Consider your relationship with the land. Have you experienced its landscapes, waterways, plants, animals, or seasonal changes?
- Acknowledge cultural connections – Recognise the deep, ongoing spiritual and cultural relationship Aboriginal peoples have with their Country, and the responsibilities that come with custodianship.
- Share personal respect – Speak from the heart about why you value this connection and what it means to you.
- Use storytelling and reflection – Personal stories or observations can engage audiences on a deeper level and create moments of pause, fostering respect and learning.
- Avoid tokenism – Ensure your words are not rushed or recited without thought; take a moment to truly acknowledge.

By embracing personalisation, storytelling, and heartfelt reflection, an Acknowledgement moves beyond protocol, honouring the enduring custodianship of Aboriginal peoples, deepening audience engagement, and reinforcing respect, responsibility, and connection to Country.

Guide to personalise your Acknowledgement:

You could start with: I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet, the Kurna People, and their deep spiritual relationship with the land.

When giving your own Acknowledgment, take a moment to reflect on what this Country means to you. Have you walked its paths, swum in its waters, or watched its sunsets and seasons shift? How do you see and feel the connection the Kurna People have nurtured for thousands of years? What responsibilities do you carry in caring for this place into the future? Let these reflections guide your words, so your Acknowledgment is genuine and from the heart.

Incorporating Kurna Language

Integrating Kurna language into an Acknowledgement of Country and other communications is a meaningful way to strengthen cultural visibility and support the ongoing revitalisation of the language. Kurna language use not only honours the Traditional Custodians but also encourages all participants and audiences to engage more deeply with Aboriginal culture.

Key approaches to embedding Kurna language:

- A short acknowledgment in Kurna:

Marni ngadlu tampinhi ngadlu Kurna yartangka inparrinhi
[marni nudlu thamp-in-thi nudlu Gaurna yartanka in-par-in-thi]
Good that we acknowledge all here meeting on Kurna land

- Use in an Acknowledgement: Incorporate Kurna words or phrases in spoken and written Acknowledgements. This might include greetings, the name of the land, or terms that reflect spiritual or cultural connections.

Some words you can use are:

Kurna Word	Meaning / Context	Suggested Usage
Kurna (Gurna)	Name of the local Aboriginal people of the Adelaide Plains	"We acknowledge the Kurna People, the Traditional Custodians of this land."
Tarntanya (tarn- tanya)	Adelaide (place name) – Big Red Kangaroo	Reference the city's Kurna name in signage or Acknowledgements.
Yarta (Yarrta)	Land, Country	"We pay respect to the Kurna Yarta we are meeting on today."
Miyurna (me -yur -na)	People / mob	Inclusive reference to Aboriginal communities.
Kardla (gard -la)	Fire	Could be used symbolically or when describing cultural practices like smoking ceremonies.
Pari (paree)	River, waterway	Useful in acknowledging waterways and their significance.
Tirntu (turn-too)	Sun	Can be included in descriptions of spiritual or natural elements.
Ngadlu (ngad-loo)	We / us	Helps personalise language in Acknowledgements.

Below are examples of Acknowledgements of Country, noting these can be updated to personalise the Acknowledgement of Country. Where a document warrants a tailored Acknowledgement of Country this can be crafted in consultation with the Reconciliation Team.

CoA Documents:

The City of Adelaide acknowledges the Kurna People of the Adelaide Plains as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we live, work and gather. We acknowledge and honour the spiritual and cultural stewardship of this Country, and recognise their deep and enduring relationship with its lands, waters, the sky, and all living things. We pay our respects to Kurna Elders past and present, and recognise the important role of emerging leaders in sustaining and strengthening culture.

Meetings and Video-conferencing

The City of Adelaide acknowledges the Kurna People of the Adelaide Plains as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet today. We acknowledge and honour the spiritual and cultural stewardship of this Country, and recognise their deep and enduring relationship with its lands, waters, the sky, and all living things. We pay our respects to Kurna Elders past and present, and recognise the important role of emerging leaders in sustaining and strengthening culture.

Incorporation of Kurna language

The City of Adelaide acknowledges the Kurna Miyurna (People) of the Adelaide Plains as the Traditional Custodians of the Yarta (Land) on which we live, work and gather. We acknowledge and honour the Kurna People's spiritual and cultural stewardship of this

Country and recognise their deep and enduring relationship with its lands, waters, sky, and all living things. We pay our respects to Kurna Purka (Elders) past and present and recognise the important role of emerging leaders in sustaining and strengthening culture.

Short Tagline Options:

- *On Kurna Country*
- *Respecting Kurna Elders past, present, and emerging*
- *With respect to Kurna People, Custodians of the Adelaide Plains*
- *The City of Adelaide acknowledges Kurna People as Traditional Custodians*

Welcome to Country on Kurna Yarta

Welcoming visitors to Country is also an act of sharing and responsibility. Traditional protocols required that visitors seek permission to enter, stating their purpose and duration, respecting the sovereignty and custodianship of the Traditional Custodians.

Cultural leaders, or cultural authority bearers, are recognised by their community as having the right and responsibility to speak for their Country and culture. In a Welcome to Country, they bring deep cultural knowledge, connection to ancestral lands, and community-granted authority. Their role is determined by cultural standing and trust, not age, enabling them to share language, stories, and protocols that honour the Traditional Custodians and the ongoing relationship between people, land, and culture.

The City of Adelaide Aboriginal Business Register is a curated directory of businesses owned, operated, or led by Aboriginal people. It provides a valuable resource for promoting economic participation, supporting Aboriginal entrepreneurship, and fostering connections between councils, organisations, and Aboriginal-owned enterprises.

You may be able to locate a Kurna Welcome to Country provider through the register:
[Aboriginal Business Register | City of Adelaide](#) <QR Code to be provided>

Do I need a Welcome?

Welcome to Country Checklist

Planning	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you need to include a Welcome to Country in your event?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you sought advice in relation to who might be the most appropriate Aboriginal person to do the Welcome to Country? The City of Adelaide Aboriginal Business Register may support.
	Have you ensured the person is a Traditional Custodian for Kaurna Country?
Contact & Agreement	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Make initial contact well in advance.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Confirm correct contact details and preferred title.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Discuss and agree on costs/remuneration (travel, accommodation, preparation).
Written Request	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>When preparing your formal written request after initial contact, be sure to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The scheduled date and start time of the event or activity. • The event's name, theme, or purpose. • The venue details, including address, accessibility, and parking options. • An invitation for the Welcome to Country speaker to bring a support person if needed. • Information about the expected audience or attendees. • Whether the event includes Aboriginal content or has a specific Aboriginal focus. • Confirmation of whether Aboriginal community members are likely to attend. • A commitment to maintain ongoing communication in the lead-up to the event. • Clear agreement on payment, including any costs for travel, accommodation, or preparation.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Share details on attendees, Aboriginal focus, and likely Aboriginal presence.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Confirm regular communication and agreed remuneration.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Confirm final arrangements before the event.