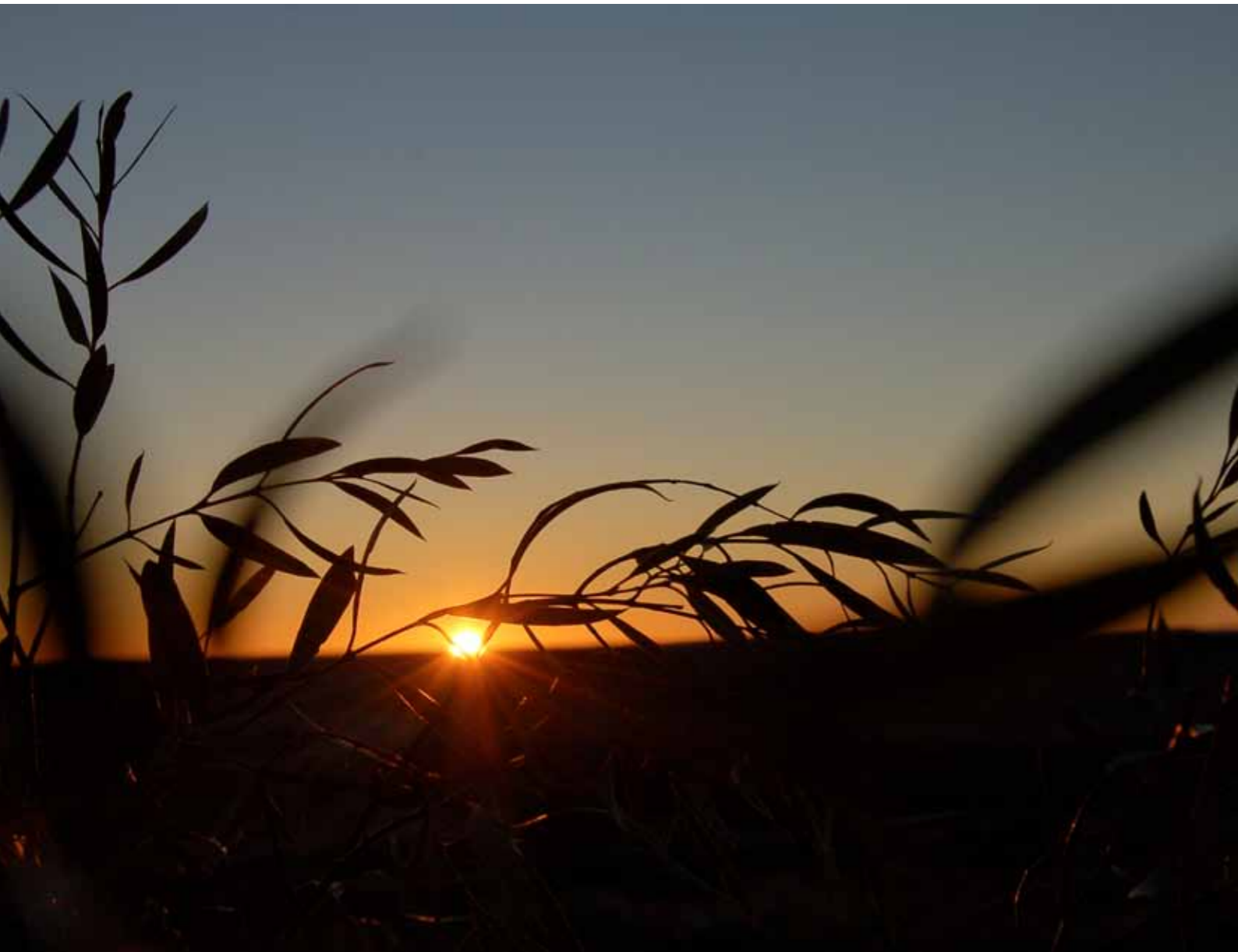


Welcome to Country and Acknowledgment of Country Ceremonies

An Acknowledgement of Country is a ceremony that pays respects to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Traditional Owners of the area on which the Parish stands and surrounds, or where a speech, event or presentation is taking place.



An **'Acknowledgement of Country'** is a way that all people can show awareness and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage and the ongoing relationship the traditional owners have with their land. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people can perform 'Acknowledgement of Country'. It is a demonstration of respect dedicated to the traditional custodians of the land (or sea) where the event, meeting, school function or conference takes place. It can be formal or informal.

A **'Welcome to Country'** is a small ceremony where traditional custodians, usually Elders, welcome people to their land.

This is a significant recognition and is made through a formal process, although it's up to the Elder how they decide to carry out the ceremony. It also depends on the location of the event and the practice of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community which can vary greatly according to region.

During a 'Welcome to Country' the Elders welcome those in attendance, guests, staff and students to their Country. It might be just a simple speech or a performance of some sort, like a song, traditional dance, a didgeridoo piece or any combination of these.

'Welcome to Country' should always occur in the opening of the event in question, preferable as the first item. Note that a 'Welcome to Country' is often considered a right and not a privilege.

Protocols for welcoming visitors to country have been a part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture for thousands of years (www.creativespirits.info).

The use of Acknowledgements or Welcome to Country have become more common place since the creation of Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs), which places an Acknowledgement or Welcome to Country as an important step in the process of practical Reconciliation in this country. The Council is aware that some Parishes already do it, some do it on special occasions and some do not do it at all.

A recent survey of Parishes in Australia indicated a strong desire to pay respect and acknowledge those that walked upon and cared for the land for thousands of years and still continue to do so.

NATSICC would like to recommend that Parishes consider the following forms of Acknowledgement:

- Acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which the Parish stands in a physical form (signage, plaque) on Parish grounds
- Provide an Acknowledgement to the Traditional Owners in Mass booklets, websites and other media produced by the Parish
- An Acknowledgement or Welcome to Country regularly on the Liturgical Calendar or on significant days.

NATSICC is happy to assist you to implement any of the above recommendations. Additionally, your local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Ministries work very hard in the community and provide a great resource to Parishes.

Suggestions for Acknowledgements

On Parish grounds, buildings, newsletters and websites:

The _____ Catholic Parish acknowledge the _____ people, the Traditional Owners who have walked upon and cared for this land for thousands of years. We acknowledge the continued deep spiritual attachment and relationship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to this country and commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of Reconciliation.

On published documents (traditional and electronic):

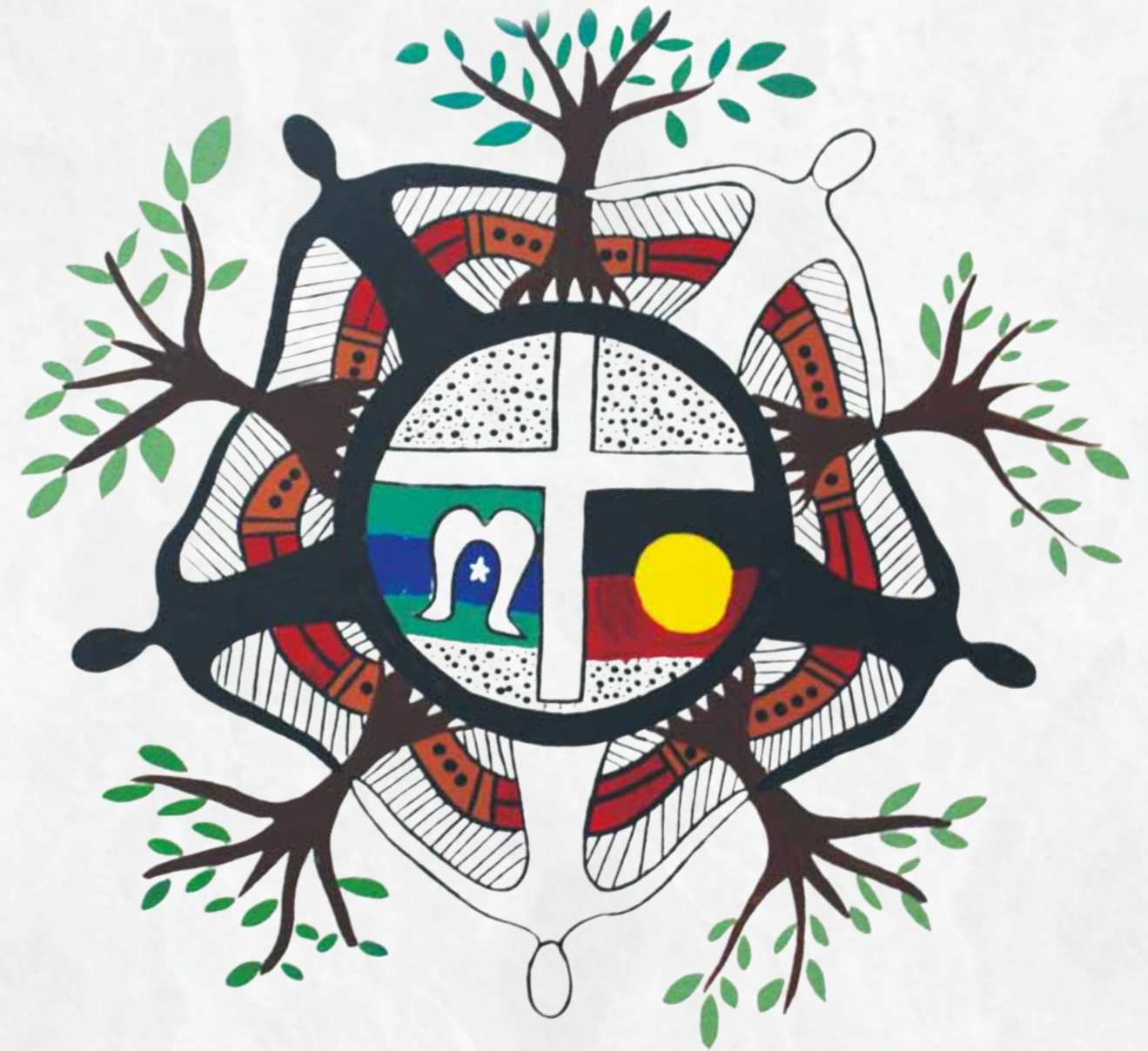
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are respectfully advised that this publication/production may contain the words, voices, names, images and/or descriptions of people who have passed away.

Acknowledgement of Country where the language group is not known:

I would like to show my respect and acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land, of Elders past and present, on which this event takes place.

Acknowledgement of Country using a specific nation:

I would like to acknowledge the _____ people who are the Traditional Owners of this land. I would also like to pay respect to the Elders past and present of the _____ and extend that respect to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people present.



We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians who have walked upon and cared for this land for thousands of years.

We acknowledge the continued deep spiritual attachment and relationship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to this country and commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of Reconciliation.

