# Controversy reignites over Welcome to Country ceremonies in Australia



Controversy has reignited in Australia over Welcome to Country ceremonies after US political commentator Tucker Carlson described them as "grotesque" and "profound humiliation rituals" during a recent visit. Carlson, a former Fox News host known for his right-wing views, shared his opinions in a video discussing Australian politics, which has since resurfaced and sparked debate amid recent protests targeting the ceremonies.

Speaking about his experience, Carlson said: "When I was in Australia, the thing that shocked me the most was the land acknowledgment... I found it one of the most grotesque things I've ever seen. One of the most profound humiliation rituals I've ever witnessed in my life." He questioned who benefits from these acknowledgements, concluding that while Indigenous communities do not gain tangible advantages such as jobs or government grants, the ceremonies instead serve those "who seek to steal your country."

Carlson drew a striking analogy between the acknowledgements and a home invasion scenario. He explained: "When you are forced to say something is not yours, that means someone else is about to take it from you... If you're sitting at home one night and an armed group of people show up at your house, with guns, and say 'henceforth, we would like you to say, out loud every single day, this is not our house'... When they do steal your house, you won't put up a fight because you've been trained to believe it is not your house. That's exactly what a land acknowledgement is."

Last year, Carlson toured Australia on a speaking tour as a guest of businessman Clive Palmer, and he has expressed support for Palmer’s Trumpets of Patriots political party.

Welcome to Country ceremonies are traditional rituals performed by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander elders, who formally welcome visitors to their land and offer their blessing for events held on their traditional territories. Intended as inclusive gestures, these ceremonies have in recent years become a point of contention, with some critics labelling them divisive, tokenistic, or emblematic of so-called "woke culture."

This debate intensified following an incident at an Anzac Day Dawn Service in Melbourne, where a small group of protesters—including a self-described neo-Nazi named Jacob Hersant—booed an address by Bunurong-Gunditjmara elder Uncle Mark Brown. The disruption received widespread attention, with Liberal leader Peter Dutton weighing into the controversy by describing Welcome to Country ceremonies as "overused."

Speaking on the campaign trail, Mr Dutton stated that such ceremonies should be reserved for very significant events and explicitly said that Anzac Day did not meet that standard. "Listening to a lot of veterans in the space, Anzac Day is about our veterans," he explained.

The issue has drawn criticism from members of the Labor Party and Indigenous leaders. Labor campaign spokesman Jason Clare suggested that right-wing extremists were taking control of the conversation, while Finance Minister Katy Gallagher accused Mr Dutton of attempting to "reignite culture wars."

Wurundjeri elder Aunty Joy Murphy Wandin was deeply affected by the controversy when her scheduled Welcome to Country at a Melbourne Storm NRL game was initially cancelled following the Anzac Day incident. Although the decision to cancel was later reversed, she chose not to participate, saying she was too upset. Aunty Joy, whose father served in World War I, emphasised the ceremony’s longstanding importance, calling it "a matter of respect" that has been practised between communities for thousands of years.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese weighed in, describing the ceremonies as "a mark of respect" and stating that the decision to include them should be left to the individual organisations hosting events.

Further reflecting on the matter, Alyawarre woman Pat Anderson AO, co-chair of the Uluru Dialogue, expressed disappointment at how Indigenous voices were being sidelined. "Aboriginal elder critics miss the point of Welcome to Country," she said, adding, "Again, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are used as a political football in an outdated and tired match." She also lamented the disrespect shown during the Anzac weekend, calling the ceremony "an ancient act of generosity and peace."

As the debate continues, the prominence of Welcome to Country ceremonies in Australian public events remains a contentious issue, intersecting with broader discussions about national identity, Indigenous recognition, and cultural respect.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)