



## Acknowledgement of Country

I wish to pay my respects to the traditional owners, the elders who have shaped our beliefs and have nurtured and guided our path, enriched in culture and connectiveness, to the strong Aboriginal communities that maintain our stance on growth, belief and value our bond in the present and also to our future generations, for they will continue to uphold our values and commitment to maintaining our traditions.

Some people have asked “why do we do a welcome or acknowledgement to country?”

My response is that of a simple one, we do this so we recognize Aboriginal people as the first Australians and custodians of our land and to promote an awareness of the past and ongoing connection to a place for all Aboriginal Australians.

Growing up on the South Coast in a family who taught me many cultural beliefs, a way of life and the value of being Aboriginal, it was embedded that I would one day learn the importance of being an elder, whenever that day arrives.

### So what does it take to be an Elder?

An Elder is not about age or your just your bloodlines nor is it about who you know. I read an anonymous letter once from a northern NSW Koori woman who wrote;

*“An Elder is thoughtful, strong and also compassionate. An Elder condemns all kinds of violence and abuse, not just those kinds of that it is convenient for them to condemn. An Elder stands up for the weak and speaks the truth to power. An Elder is not perfect, but neither is he or she a hypocrite.*

*An Elder recognizes that his or her strength comes from their long line of ancestors and their accumulated wisdom. An Elder is always learning. An Elder is somebody you can expect a “fair go” from. An Elder will not attack you when you least expect it, instead stand up for you when you most need it. An Elder will definitely not take responsibility for you but will encourage you to take responsibility for yourself and stand along side you while you try.*

*An Elder knows that true dignity comes from within and nobody can make you feel inferior without your consent. An Elder is slow to judge but fierce in his or her defence of the oppressed. An Elder understands that our history of colonization has left many of us hurting and afraid. An Elder will not manipulate our hurt and fear, but will help us to see that we can overcome it together.*

*An Elder has a vision for a better and more peaceful community and lives in such a way to make this happen. An Elder does not hit women or children. Elders do not tolerate the abuse of any man, woman and child in their community EVER!”*





## Family Services Australia

The land we are meeting on today has many stories to tell that can be told through art, songs, dance or by just asking someone connected to country.

I encourage you to learn, absorb and seek advice when speaking to Aboriginal people, working with Aboriginal organisations or attending any events of cultural significance.

My Name is Craig Bloxsome and I am a proud Aboriginal man from the Wandj Wandj tribe in the Umbarra region of the Yuin Nation.

Craig Bloxsome  
Team Co-Ordinator Shoalhaven  
[Craig.bloxsome@familyservices.org.au](mailto:Craig.bloxsome@familyservices.org.au)  
Ph: 0439 428 816

