

# Acknowledging Country



By **TIM SINGLETON NORTON**

Scouting provides so many with the opportunity to experience the Australian bush in new and exciting ways, and it's fantastic that the natural beauty of our country can be the backdrop to our hikes, camps and activities.

But it's equally important to acknowledge that this land is Aboriginal land, and that Scouting activities have the privilege of operating on country that has been cared for and protected for thousands of years.

At 4th Preston, we strive to ensure that we are properly paying respect to the longest continuous culture on the planet and trying to create a welcoming environment for our local Wurundjeri Aboriginal

community. After all, our local area has one of the largest proportions of Aboriginal residents in Greater Melbourne.

Last year we were gifted both the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island flags by our federal MP, Ged Kearney, and these now fly permanently in our hall. We've researched the Wurundjeri words for the two creeks that flow either side of our hall and teach this to every newcomer. The Darebin (swallow) and Merri (rocky) creeks are represented in the two blue colours of our scarf.

We also have an acknowledgement of country that is printed on the wall and read out at our opening parades, and we're working with our local council to paint a mural on the front of our hall that includes Aboriginal motifs and designs.

It's relatively easy to incorporate a respectful acknowledgement of Aboriginal Australia into Scouting activities. Here's a few ideas:

- Print and display an Acknowledgement of Country for your hall, and incorporate it into opening or closing parades
- Fly the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island flags in your hall (you can obtain these for free from your federal MP's office)



- Research the Aboriginal names for local landmarks such as mountains, rivers or lakes
- Incorporate Aboriginal history and placename research into the planning for hikes or camps
- Teach the Aboriginal names for local indigenous animals or plants
- Purchase a map of Aboriginal Australia from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) for your hall
- Make sure that key Aboriginal dates are included in your planning, such as NAIDOC Week, National Reconciliation Week or Aboriginal Children's Day
- Invite Aboriginal elders and community to join Scout events like ARAPs or regular nights

**Tim Singleton Norton is a Scout Leader at 4th Preston.**

