

Welcome To Country

Uncle Ray Peckham (Junior)

My name is Ray Peckham, and I'm a proud Wiradjuri man from Wellington NSW. I grew up 9km outside of Wellington on a mission called Nanima Reserve along the Macquarie River. I would like to begin by paying my respects to our Elders – Past & Present, and emerging - who have cared for this Country for countless generations.

It's a great honour to be here today to Welcome You all onto the Wiradjuri Nation, Wellington Valley and Wellington Caves.

I would like to acknowledge the ACKMA conference is based on building networking and relationships within the caving community to ensure the best practice of management of caves is adhered to, professional development.

This ACKMA conference is a moment of pride for our local community and the Wiradjuri Nation - not only because of the development itself, but because of what it represents to all caves.

This land we stand on has always provided, our ancestors lived sustainably - taking only what was needed, protecting the Country, and understanding the deep connection between people, place, and the environment. Today, with this ACKMA conference, we see those same values being reflected.

The ACKMA conference is also about developing future networking for the next generation. It shows a commitment to sustainability, and to make sure we look after this land and the environment of the Wellington Caves for the next generations, just as our old people did before us.

For our community, it brings opportunity, it brings jobs, skills investment, and a real chance for local people - especially our young ones and to be part of something that's shaping the future. It's also a step forward in recognizing that Aboriginal voices, knowledge and Country must be part of these conversations.

So again, I Welcome you all here today on Wiradjuri Nation (Country). May this ACKMA conference be guided by respect, for our culture, for Community, and for the environment.

I also like to thank the people that traveled long distance to be here today, and to have safe journey on their return.

So, as we stand here today on Wiradjuri Nation of Wellington Valley and let's always remember that this LAND was, and always will be, Aboriginal Land.

So Welcome and Have a great day, thank you.