



Acknowledgement of Country Protocol

ANMF Federal Office Staff

Acknowledgement of Country says to the world, and more importantly to ourselves, that we accept the fact we are in a place that has a history and story far beyond 220 years. It says to our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander fellow Australians that we are all in the future journey of our country together.¹

Preamble

The inclusion of an Acknowledgement of Country at the commencement of a meeting (formal or informal) is a way of showing awareness and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, recognising their unique position in Australian culture and history. This acknowledgement can be given by anyone, Indigenous or non-Indigenous, to pay respect to the fact that the meeting is on Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander land.²

Importance of Acknowledgment of Country

The importance of Acknowledgement of Country is articulated by “Common Ground”, an Aboriginal-led organisation, as follows:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have experienced significant exclusion from Australian society for many years. Further, many non-Indigenous Australians have not had the opportunity to learn about, and celebrate, the rich cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This contributes to a disparity between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians that persists today.

Acknowledging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in events is one part of ending this exclusion. It recognises the place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the first custodians of this land and, importantly, promotes awareness of the history and culture of Indigenous people. This increased awareness will help us create a more united Australia, that celebrates and embraces our First Australians.³

Guidance

Acknowledgement to Country does not need to be an elaborate ceremony. A simply worded statement offered at the beginning of a meeting, speech or formal occasion is all that is required, and some examples are set out below. There is a minimum standard protocol, as seen in the examples, so that wording can be tailored by the speaker to create a more personal and individual acknowledgement or to fit the particular event.

When preparing the Acknowledgement to Country statement it is important to:

- find out the name of the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander group and nation
- find out how to properly pronounce the name of the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander group and nation
- note that it is acceptable to make a broad acknowledgement when the name of the group is not known, or, you are referring to whole of the country
- as a sign of respect, always capitalise “Elders”
- always include a reference to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander land.

¹ Richard Wynne, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Victoria (Koori Mail)

² Creative Spirits, Jens Korff, *Welcome to Country & Acknowledgement of Country*, viewed 02 January 2019 from <https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/spirituality/welcome-to-country-acknowledgement-of-country>

³ Common Ground, viewed 20 February 2019 from <https://www.commonground.org.au/learn/acknowledgement-of-country>



Sample words for an Acknowledgement of Country - where group and nation is known

I would like to acknowledge the people (for example, Wurundjeri people if in Melbourne) who are the traditional custodians of this land on which we meet. I pay my respects to Elders past and present of the Kulin Nation (for Melbourne), and to emerging leaders, and I extend that respect to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are present.

I would like to acknowledge that we meet on Aboriginal [or Torres Strait Island] land, the land of the people (for example, Wurundjeri people if in Melbourne) of the nation ((for example, Kulin nation if in Melbourne). I'd like to pay my respects to their Elders past and present, and to emerging leaders. I extend that respect to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are present.

Before we begin the proceedings, I would like to acknowledge and pay respect to the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet: the [Aboriginal/Torres Strait Island group/clan] people of the [Aboriginal/Torres Strait Island nation] nation.

I wish to acknowledge the custodians of this land, the [Aboriginal/Torres Strait Island group/clan] people of the [Aboriginal/Torres Strait Island nation] nation, their Elders past and present, and emerging leaders. I acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.

Sample words for an Acknowledgement of Country - where group and nation is not known

I acknowledge the traditional custodians of country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and community. I pay my respects to them and their cultures; to Elders both past and present, and to emerging leaders.

I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today and pay my respects to the Elders past and present, and to emerging leaders. I extend my respect to the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander [people/colleagues/staff/students] who are present today.

I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we have gathered on today. I pay my respects to the Elders past and present, and to emerging leaders, for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the nation.

Source: <https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/spirituality/welcome-to-country-acknowledgement-of-country>

Signed by Chair:  Date: 21/08/19

This protocol should be read in conjunction with the ANMF Federal Office Welcome to Country Protocol.