



Acknowledging those on whose Country we live and work

FLEET Acknowledgement of Country

FLEET values the contributions of our diverse members, spanning 27 cultural backgrounds. In particular, we acknowledge and respect the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as First Australians. We celebrate the uniqueness of knowledges, cultures, science, histories and languages that have been created and shared for at least 65,000 years.

FLEET members are encouraged to consistently acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country at the beginning of any formal functions, meetings and forums. This includes Zoom sessions and online events where the local moderator should offer the acknowledgement, and in documents such as the Centre annual report and PhD theses.

Members are encouraged to say this in their own words, with some examples given below intended to aid, not replace, the drafting of a genuine statement.

FLEET does not consider a script that members are required to read out to be the ideal (the most compelling or the most sincere) way to acknowledge traditional ownership. We encourage members to do some research and then write out their own version instead. That said, if an example script helps get you started, here's some that people have used before:

'We acknowledge the ____ people as traditional owners and their custodianship of the lands on which we meet today. We pay our respects to their ancestors and their descendants, who continue cultural and spiritual connections to Country. We recognise their valuable contributions to Australian and global society.'

Or, 'We gather today on lands of the ____ people, who have met and discussed science on these lands for many thousands of years.'

Or, 'I wish to acknowledge the people of the ____ Nations, on whose land we are gathered today. I pay my respects to their Elders, past and present.'

Some suggestions:

Be genuine.

Acknowledge traditional owners by name (take the time to find out who they are, rather than just saying 'the traditional owners' or 'first nations').

A brief pause afterwards is a common mark of respect.

We encourage members to try to avoid making it sound like they are only acknowledging Country because they are officially required to. Eg by avoid wording such as "*Before we start, the university/Centre has a policy to always start these events by acknowledging...*"

Instead of saying "I acknowledge the owners of this land..." or "I *would like to* acknowledge the owners of this land...", you could just say "I'm talking to you today from ____ land." (Ie, actually *acknowledge* the owners, rather than *saying* you acknowledge them, or saying you would *like* to acknowledge them.)



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If possible, you can also consider putting your acknowledgement in the context of the event (eg, sci-comms events often acknowledge “the people who’ve *told stories about science* on this land for thousands of years”, or FLEET members might talk about traditional material science).

Consider [looking up a greeting](#), saying or story in the local language (eg, in Wurundjeri a common greeting is ‘womin-djeka’), or find out and explain what the local name of your area is.

If you are moderating a zoom talk with people from across Australia, you could encourage your listeners to look up and/or take a moment to think about the traditional owners of their own land (eg, provide the URL below via Chat).

Members are encouraged to look into the traditional owners of their own area, using a tool such as [the AIATSIS map of indigenous Australia](#). The list below may help guide your search, with traditional owners of the Country on which FLEET participating nodes sit:

- Wollongong: the Dharawal people
- UNSW/Sydney: the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation (note Gadigal is sometimes pronounced Bedegal)
- University of Queensland: the Turrbal and Yugara people (of Brisbane)
- ANU: the Ngunnawal people
- Melbourne: the people of the Kulin nations, or the Wurundjeri/ Bunurong people of the Kulin nations, or of the Woi-wurrung language group.
Bunurong and Boonwurrung are variants of the same name
(There’s an interesting note about recently agreed boundaries/connection lines between the two groups, [here](#), indicating for example that RMIT and Swinburne are on Wurundjeri land while Monash Clayton is on Boon-wurrung land. Again, FLEET doesn’t prescribe a particular wording for this – members are encouraged to look into it themselves).

FLEET’s members nodes have their own guidelines about acknowledgement of country.

See [ANU](#), [Monash](#), [RMIT](#), [Swinburne](#), [UNSW](#), [UOW](#), [UQ](#)

You may read other suggested versions for what should be included in an acknowledgement of country, and you are warmly encouraged to read, engage, research, and make up your own mind.

This document is intended to help with beginning your research into the traditional owners of the land you stand upon, not be the end of discussion. Submissions to these guidelines are encouraged. Please email [Errol Hunt](#) and David Cortie with suggestions and feedback.

Note that there is a difference between a ‘Welcome to Country’ (delivered by someone who is a traditional owner/custodian) and an ‘Acknowledgement of Country’ (delivered by anyone else). For a smaller event, it is fine if non-traditional-owner/custodians, make an ‘Acknowledgement’. For larger formal functions, where official guests and dignitaries are in attendance, a Welcome to Country delivered by an Aboriginal or a Torres Strait Islander Elder or authorised representative is strongly recommended.