

Thomas Abourizk

From: [REDACTED] on behalf of Gary Johns
Sent: Wednesday, 31 October 2018 3:09 PM
To: ACNC_Staff
Subject: ACNC Signature block [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Importance: High

Dear colleagues

Last week I appeared at Senate Estimates.

Senate Estimates provides an opportunity for Senate Committees to question senior public servants on their agency's performance, staffing issues, and areas of focus for the future. I received questions about the new ACNC Charity Register, our role in preventing terrorism financing, the Review of the ACNC Act and high profile compliance activity and the APSC Employee Census results.

And as you have likely seen in the recent media, NSW Senator Jenny McAllister and I discussed the ACNC's corporate signature block.

I would like to reaffirm my stance on the ACNC's corporate signature block, so staff can make an informed decision as to whether they wish to include statements regarding traditional owners and elders.

Although this practice is common in the Australian Public Service, it is not compulsory. Each individual can choose whether they wish to make this statement.

In my view the statement commencing "We acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians ..." raises a problem because it can be taken as an acknowledgement made by the ACNC.

I believe the statement can be perceived as showing favour toward one group, and as such could be detrimental to the work of the Commission which registers and regulates diverse organisations including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander charities.

To preserve choice for those staff who wish to make the acknowledgement I have asked staff to use the personal pronoun. Staff are welcome to use any or all of the following statement:

I acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. I pay my respect to them and their cultures, and elders past and present.

The statement above is a combination of the ATO's official signature block that acknowledges traditional owners, and my request for staff to use "I", rather than "We". I believe that this is a reasonable compromise, which preserves choice for officers and the objectivity of the Commission in the eyes of constituent bodies and individuals with whom we work.

I would also like to take this opportunity to remind staff that emails to charities and others are official documents, and as public servants, we must remain neutral.

If you have any questions or concerns, please come and speak to me directly.

Regards

Gary.