ATSI sign acknowledgment to country



A special acknowledgement of country sign now sits in the ground floor foyer of the SSTUWA building in Perth.

The sign has been created using the artwork design of SSTUWA member and artist Carina Ward and acknowledges the Noongar people are the original custodians of the land on which the building sits.

According to Ms Ward, the circles and lines depict people from all walks of life coming from each region travelling to meet at this special place.

“The symbol in the middle represents a meeting place or gathering,” she said.

“The union is a meeting place for people to come and learn, share great ideas and get advice, just like a meeting place for Aboriginal people.

“I would hope people would see this artwork and recognise the connection that Aboriginal people have to the land on which this building sits.

“It’s saying ‘we recognise and respect the traditional owners of this country past and present – we are sharing our land with you, come and stand with us’.”

Ms Ward said the piece took two weeks to paint, which she did in her spare time away from her role as a classroom teacher at West Northam Primary School.

But the whole process, from concept discussions to completed artwork took almost a year.

“The SSTUWA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education (ATSIE) Committee was the brainchild of the artwork; they wanted something to represent the Aboriginal people of the land,” Ms Ward said.

“The ATSIE Committee and SSTUWA are an amazing bunch of people who work really hard for my benefit and other union members who work within the Department of Education.

“I wanted to give back and say thanks.”

The acknowledgement of country sign forms part of the SSTUWA’s commitment to acknowledging our Aboriginal culture

and heritage, while supporting Indigenous education.

“It is wonderful to know that the SSTUWA is a very culturally responsive union by at all times recognising and acknowledging the traditional owners of the land of which this building sits,” Ms Ward said.

“It also sends a very strong message as a welcoming sight for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people knowing they are represented and respected by a very inclusive union.”

The SSTUWA also acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which the building sits through Welcome to Country ceremonies at significant union events such as State Council.

Schools wishing to do the same can access the *Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country Protocols* document, recently updated by the Department of Education (DoE).

The protocols have been published to assist schools in appropriately and respectfully recognising Aboriginal custodianship of country at events conducted by the DoE.

To download the updated document visit: http://bit.ly/25iRkWg

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