Australian Government

Australian Citizenship Ceremonies Code

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PART 1

Overview

The Australian Citizenship Ceremonies Code (the Code) follows the *Australian Citizenship Act 2007* (the Citizenship Act). The Code has been developed in recognition that ceremony organisers and in particular Local Government Councils (Councils) conduct the majority of Australian citizenship ceremonies on behalf of the Australian Government and is provided as guidance on the mandatory requirements for conducting citizenship ceremonies.

The Code also sets out the roles and responsibilities for those involved in citizenship ceremonies.

Ceremony organisers (other than the Department) must abide by the requirements of the Code. Only in exceptional circumstances may ceremony organisers apply for an exemption by writing to the Department of Home Affairs (the Department).

Where the Department is the ceremony organiser, the Department will be guided by the requirements of the Code. The Department will comply with the requirements for citizenship ceremonies as set out in the Citizenship Act and the *Australian Citizenship Regulation 2016*.

The Code is structured in five parts, providing relevant responsibilities and advice for before, during and after the ceremony to assist with planning and conducting citizenship ceremonies.

The resources in the Code are reviewed regularly to ensure that information is up to date. This version of the Code was published in December 2025.

What is a citizenship ceremony?

Citizenship ceremonies are public, ceremonial occasions, which fulfil legal requirements prescribed by the Citizenship Act and the *Australian Citizenship Regulation 2016*.

The final legal step in the acquisition of Australian citizenship, for most people, is to make the Pledge of Commitment (the Pledge) at an Australian citizenship ceremony.

At the citizenship ceremony, conferees pledge that they share Australia's democratic beliefs and respect the rights and liberties of the people of Australia.

Our democratic beliefs:

- parliamentary democracy
- the rule of law
- living peacefully
- respect for all individuals regardless of background
- compassion for those in need.

Our freedoms:

- freedom of thought, speech and expression
- freedom of association
- freedom of religion and secular government.

Our equality standing:

- equality before the law
- equality of genders
- equality of opportunity.

Citizenship ceremonies also provide an important opportunity to formally welcome new citizens as full members of the Australian community. Since the early 1950s, Councils have conducted the majority of citizenship ceremonies on behalf of the Department responsible for citizenship. Councils are well placed for this welcoming role as the arm of government closest to new citizens and the communities to which they belong. Citizenship ceremonies may also provide an opportunity for Councils to partner with other community organisations in their locality or the Department to hold a citizenship ceremony to mark events/days of significance and for community organsiations to hold ceremonies (with appropriate approval from the Department) to welcome individuals from the local communities within which they work.

Citizenship ceremonies often include the Australian Citizenship Affirmation, giving everyone present an opportunity to publicly affirm their loyalty to Australia in a similar way to the new citizens.

The nature of the ceremony

To reflect the significance of the occasion, citizenship ceremonies should be formal and meaningful occasions conducted with dignity, respect and ceremony. The ceremony is an opportunity to warmly welcome new citizens as full members of the community. Conferees are the most important people at the ceremony and the focus of attention should be on them, as such **ceremonies must be apolitical and secular. They must not be used as forums for political, partisan or religious expression, for the distribution of political material or the sale of souvenirs.** As conferees come from diverse cultures, it is important to be aware and respectful of cultural differences.

They should also be designed to impress upon conferees the responsibilities and privileges of Australian citizenship.

Responsibilities

Australian citizens must:

- obey the laws and fulfil your duties as an Australian citizen
- vote in federal and state or territory government elections, and in a referendum
- serve on a jury if called to do so
- defend Australia should the need arise.

Privileges

Australian citizens have the right to:

- vote in federal, state or territory, and local government elections, and in a referendum
- apply for work in the Australian Public Service or in the Australian Defence Force
- seek election to parliament
- apply for an Australian passport
- receive help from Australian officials while overseas
- register their children born overseas as Australian citizens by descent (subject to relevant eligibility).

Legal requirements of Australian citizenship

There are three legal requirements under the Citizenship Act that must be strictly adhered to when conducting a citizenship ceremony:

1. an authorised Presiding Officer
2. reading the Preamble
3. administering the Pledge

Authorised Presiding Officer

It is a legal requirement that the presiding officer is authorised by the Australian Government minister responsible for citizenship matters. Authorisation is given to **Australian citizens only** and is specific to a position or person.

Further information on the role of the Presiding Officer is at page 12.

The Preamble

It is a legal requirement that the Presiding Officer must read aloud to the conferees the Preamble for citizenship ceremonies (found at Schedule 1 of the Australian Citizenship Regulation 2016).

The Preamble

Australian citizenship represents full and formal membership of the community of the Commonwealth of Australia, and Australian citizenship is a common bond, involving reciprocal rights and obligations, uniting all Australians, while respecting their diversity.

Persons on whom Australian citizenship is conferred enjoy these rights and undertake to accept these obligations:

(a) by pledging loyalty to Australia and its people;

(b) by sharing their democratic beliefs;

(c) by respecting their rights and liberties; and

(d) by upholding and obeying the laws of Australia.

The Pledge of Commitment

The Pledge made by conferees under section 27 of the Citizenship Act is the last step in becoming an Australian citizen. It is a legal requirement that most conferees 16 years of age and over (at the time of application) make the Pledge before an authorised Presiding Officer.

The Presiding Officer reads the Pledge aloud, generally line by line, for the conferees to repeat. This is referred to as 'administering' the Pledge.

The Pledge comes in two forms, Pledge 1 includes the words 'under God' whereas Pledge 2 does not.

At the time of making the Pledge, conferees may choose whether or not to say the words 'under God', and this choice should be made clear to conferees (including a reminder by the Presiding Officer, when the formal component of the ceremony commences). For the purposes of inclusivity, it is recommended that both Pledges are undertaken simultaneously, with those taking Pledge 2 omitting the words 'under God'.

Pledge 1

From this time forward, under God,
I pledge my loyalty to Australia and its people,
whose democratic beliefs I share,
whose rights and liberties I respect,
and whose laws I will uphold and obey.

Pledge 2

From this time forward,
I pledge my loyalty to Australia and its people,
whose democratic beliefs I share,
whose rights and liberties I respect,
and whose laws I will uphold and obey.

Privacy

Ceremony organisers are reminded that the improper use or disclosure of personal information provided by the Department to ceremony organisers for the purpose of conducting citizenship ceremonies may be in breach of the *Privacy Act 1988* (Privacy Act).

Inappropriate use of personal information could also lead to revocation of authorisation to conduct citizenship ceremonies.

Ceremony organisers should ensure they are aware of their obligations under the Privacy Act.

Contact the Department of Home Affairs

For all enquiries relating to Australian citizenship ceremonies, contact the departmental team in your state or territory.

In the event of crises, such as pandemics or natural disasters, ceremony organisers are to follow state-based guidelines. Further guidance can be sought from the Department by contacting the relevant departmental team in your state or territory.

Enquiries from applicants relating to their citizenship application, including their ceremony, should be referred to the Department's website.

PART 2

Roles and responsibilities

This section outlines the roles and responsibilities for those involved in Australian citizenship ceremonies.

Minister

The Australian Government Minister(s) responsible for citizenship matters has precedence to preside at any ceremony they choose to attend. The Minister does not require individual invitations from ceremony organisers to attend a ceremony. The Department regularly provides the Ministers office with a list of scheduled ceremonies for the purpose of identifying those ceremonies the Minister may wish to attend.

When attending a ceremony, the Minister must be invited to speak immediately after the opening address and Welcome to Country/Acknowledgement of Country and before any other official speeches. The Minister is not required to read the Minister's message and it is open to them to deliver a speech specific to the ceremony. It is also open to the Minister to advise ceremony organisers that another official guest may be invited to read the message on their behalf.

A copy of the Minister's message is available on the Department of Home Affairs website.

The Department of Home Affairs

The Department manages the Citizenship Program including the policy around Australian citizenship ceremonies, and the list of conferees who have been approved for citizenship and are ready to attend a ceremony.

Generally, officers of the Department will:

- liaise with ceremony organisers undertaking ceremonies to ensure ceremony organisers are aware of, and abide by, the requirements set out in the Code
- provide advice to identify an appropriate authorised Presiding Officer
- provide regular reports to Councils on the number of people waiting for a ceremony in their local government area
- work with ceremony organisers to ensure that ceremonies are held regularly to facilitate timely conferral of prospective citizens
- ensure that the pledge verification list (PVL) is provided to ceremony organisers in a timely manner
- distribute citizenship certificates to the ceremony organisers prior to the ceremony and ensure any certificates for non-attendees are returned to the Department
- ensure citizenship certificates are treated as accountable documents and stored correctly
- provide advice and assistance on ceremonies to ceremony organisers.

Attendance by departmental officers to assist with a ceremony may occur at the discretion of the Department. Where arrangements have been made for departmental officers to assist at a ceremony, this may include:

- assisting with registration and verification of the identity of conferees on arrival
- ensuring the legal and other requirements of the Code are adhered to
- assisting with enquiries and other issues where these arise.

The Department may also provide assistance such as sending invitation letters to conferees and provide a Presiding Officer.

Australian Electoral Commission

The Australian Electoral Commission's (AEC) enrol-to-vote information sheet must be given out by ceremony organisers even when the AEC is in attendance.

The AEC may send staff to attend a citizenship ceremony, particularly at those times of the year when there are the highest numbers of people becoming citizens (around Australia Day and Australian Citizenship Day, for example) and will contact ceremony organisers directly to arrange attendance in these instances. Where AEC representatives seek to attend a ceremony, organisers must facilitate their attendance.

See page 38 for further information on Australian electoral enrolment.

Ceremony organisers

Ceremony organisers are usually staff from Councils, but can also include staff from community organisations approved by the Department to host a ceremony.

Responsibilities for ceremony organisers are to:

- ensure that ceremonies are conducted in accordance with the Code
- ensure that the Presiding Officer is an Australian citizen and is authorised to preside over a ceremony
- consider the availability of authorised Presiding Officers such as the local Federal MP or mayor when scheduling citizenship ceremonies and consider alternative authorised officers should the intended Presiding Officer no longer being available rather than rescheduling the ceremony
- ensure that all elected officials of the locality, at all levels of government, are invited to attend including:
  - Local Federal MP/s; and a Senator from the Government, Opposition and Cross-bench, where not already represented through the local Federal MP/s
  - Local state or territory MP/s
  - Local government representatives
- provide advice to those who have a role in the ceremony
- ensure that the ceremony is conducted in a meaningful, dignified, orderly and memorable way with proceedings designed to impress upon conferees the significance of the occasion
- ensure all conferees are informed about appropriate protocols for the citizenship ceremony
- ensure that every conferee aged 16 and over gets a how to enrol to vote information sheet
- ensure a Welcome to Country/Acknowledgement of Country is conducted



- conduct identity verification of conferees
- ensure citizenship certificates are transported and stored according to the accountable document requirements
- ensure that all speeches are in accordance with the nature of citizenship ceremonies which are apolitical, bipartisan and secular and that material which could be perceived to be political, commercial or religious is not distributed during or after the ceremony. Ceremony organisers should remind speakers ahead of each ceremony of the above and in the event that there is an occurrence of a breach at a citizenship ceremony, then this should be reported to the Department.

Where multiple Federal MPs or Senators are in attendance, ceremony organisers must offer a speaking role to all House of Representative members with constituents in the ceremony. Should House of Representative members not wish to speak, ceremony organisers should consider offering the speaking role to other Federal MPs or Senators on a rotational basis to ensure that official proceedings are not too lengthy and to provide greater opportunities for these MPs/Senators to have an active role in ceremonies.

Most citizenship ceremonies are conducted by Councils, however, other community organisations may also conduct citizenship ceremonies, either in their own right or in partnership with a Council or the Department.

Community organisations or other groups within the community that wish to conduct a citizenship ceremony must contact the Department. They will be required to complete an Expression of Interest form outlining the details for the ceremony, the Presiding Officer and official guests and provide this to the Department for consideration of approval at least three months before the proposed date of the ceremony.

Presiding Officer

It is a legal requirement that the Presiding Officer is authorised by the Australian Government Minister responsible for citizenship matters. Authorisation is given to Australian citizens only and is specific to a position or person. These are outlined in the Instrument of Authorisation.

It is possible to apply for one-off authorisation to preside at a citizenship ceremony by writing to the Minister.

Presiding Officers have no power to appoint a proxy or to share the role of presiding officer at a ceremony.

However, a person may perform the duties of the Presiding Officer when they are acting in place of an authorised person for a period of time.

The Presiding Officer has the lead role in a citizenship ceremony. Their legal responsibilities involve:

- reading out the Preamble for citizenship ceremonies (Schedule 1 of the *Australian Citizenship Regulation 2016*)
- administering the Pledge.

To allow for a more inclusive ceremony experience, the Presiding Officer is encouraged to invite all conferees to make the Pledge together. Additionally, the Presiding Officer:

- reads the Minister's message in the Minister's absence and where no Federal parliamentary representative is present, or the video/audio recording of the Minister's message is not played
- signs the PVL immediately at the completion of the citizenship ceremony after ensuring that it is accurate. This includes ensuring that:
  - any conferees who have not attended or not made the Pledge appropriately have been crossed out (see page 40 for further information)
  - any conferees who have attempted to present fraudulent identification documents or no identification have been crossed out (see page 40 for further information) and immediately referred to the Department.

To avoid the appearance of conflict of interest, Presiding Officers must not confer Australian citizenship on family members or close friends. Ceremony organisers should contact the Department for advice on how to manage potential conflict of interest matters in public ceremonies.

Official guests

The presence of official guests serves to introduce new citizens to Australia's three-tiered, democratic system of government, as well as to formally welcome them into the local community. Invited elected representatives cannot send a delegate to act in an official capacity on their behalf. Delegates may attend in a private capacity. Delegates must not be provided with an official speaking role, VIP seating or referenced in the ceremony speaking notes.

Official guests can include:

- Governor-General
- Federal Members of Parliament
- community leaders
- representatives of community organisations
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elders or leaders.

Federal Members of Parliament

Ceremony organisers must invite all elected officials of the electorate, at all levels of government including:

- Local Federal MP/s; and a Senator from the Government, Opposition and Cross-bench, where not already represented through the local Federal MP/s.
- Local state or territory MP/s
- Local government representative's.

This is to allow local representatives to introduce themselves and welcome new citizens as full members of the community.

Invited elected representatives cannot send a delegate to act in an official capacity on their behalf. While an MP or Senator cannot be prevented from asking an individual to attend on their behalf, their delegate attends in a private capacity and must not be provided with an official speaking role, VIP seating or referenced in the speaking notes.

Where the Minister is not attending, the MP or Senator should read the Minister's message (regardless of the political party that they represent). Where both an MP and Senator are in attendance, precedence goes to the MP. When no Federal representative is present, the Minister's message is required to be either read by the Presiding Officer, or the video/audio of the Minister's message played.

In addition, MPs and Senators should also be offered the opportunity to deliver a short address at the ceremony. Where multiple Federal MPs or Senators are in attendance, the ceremony organiser must offer speaking roles to all House of Representative members with constituents in the ceremony. Should House of Representative members not wish to speak, ceremony organisers should consider offering the speaking role to other Federal MPs or Senators on a rotational basis to ensure that official proceedings are not too lengthy and to provide greater opportunities for these MPs/Senators to have an active role in ceremonies. MPs and Senators are reminded that their speeches must be apolitical, bipartisan and secular and that material which could be perceived to be political, commercial or religious must not be distributed at any time.

All Federal MPs and Senators have standing authorisation to preside at Australian citizenship ceremonies.

This allows ceremony organisers to approach their local MP or Senator if they wish to hold a ceremony and require a Presiding Officer. MPs and Senators should not assume that an invitation to attend a ceremony is an invitation to preside. This will be specified in the invitation.

MPs and Senators make occasional requests to conduct citizenship ceremonies that may be accommodated on an exceptional basis. The Department can provide advice regarding all aspects and requirements of a ceremony.

It is important that MPs and Senators do not seek to fulfil ceremony requests from constituents as the Department manages ceremony attendance to ensure fair and equal treatment for all conferees. Additionally, to avoid the appearance of conflict of interest, citizenship must not be conferred on family members, close friends or members of staff at private ceremonies.

State and Territory Members of Parliament

If invited to a ceremony as an official guest, the same guidelines apply to State and Territory MPs as for Federal representatives. However, state and territory parliamentarians do not have standing authorisation to preside at citizenship ceremonies, and are not permitted to read the Minister's message.

If invited to preside at a ceremony, requests may be made in writing to the Minister for one-off authorisation on each occasion they wish to preside. State and territory parliamentarians should include a signed letter of agreement with their request, indicating they will abide by the requirements for the conduct of citizenship ceremonies set out in the Code. A copy of this letter can be provided by the Department.

Where a State and Territory MP has been authorised by the Minister to preside, they then can read the Minister's message (in line with the Presiding Officer's roles and responsibilities).

Mayors

Mayors play an important role in formally welcoming our nation's newest citizens into the Australian community by hosting the majority of Australian citizenship ceremonies. The Mayor will fulfil the role of Presiding Officer, unless other arrangements have been made.

Unless specifically excluded, Mayors have standing authorisation to preside under the relevant Instrument of Authorisation.

Other positions authorised to preside over citizenship ceremonies (such as Deputy Mayors or Chief Executive Officers of local government councils) are also detailed in the Instrument of Authorisation.

Upon election, Mayors are requested to complete an Authorised Presiding Officer form to confirm their Australian citizenship status and indicate that they will abide by the requirements when conducting citizenship ceremonies as set out in the Code. This form is available from the Department.

Conferees

A conferee is a person who has made an application for Australian citizenship which has been approved and whose details have been provided by the Department to a ceremony organiser for attendance at a ceremony.

Guests of conferees

Guests may be invited to attend a citizenship ceremony with conferees. Ceremony organisers may be limited according to the practicalities of organising a ceremony, for example, size/capacity of the venue, and this will be outlined in the invitation to the ceremony.

PART 3

Before the ceremony

Scheduling ceremonies

Councils

In keeping with government policy that ceremonies be held at regular intervals and to ensure that people have an opportunity to attend a citizenship ceremony within a reasonable timeframe, most Councils should arrange for ceremonies to be held at least every two to three months, and more frequently if necessary. There is no maximum or minimum number of conferees prescribed in order for a citizenship ceremony to proceed.

Councils must provide the Department contact (in their state or territory) with a schedule of their planned ceremony dates. This allows the Department to allocate conferees to particular ceremonies. In localities which confer more than 100 conferees per year the Council should provide the ceremony schedule for the calendar year. Any changes to the schedule should be advised to the Department as soon as possible.

It is important and appropriate that elected representatives have the opportunity to welcome new citizens as formal members of the Australian community, so when scheduling citizenship ceremonies ceremony organisers must not schedule ceremonies:

- for the year ahead prior to the Parliamentary sitting days calendar being confirmed and
- on House of Representatives sitting days.

A sitting calendar for Federal parliamentary sittings can be obtained from the Proposed Parliamentary sittings PM&C website.

In the event that a sitting day is added late to the sitting calendar, the Department will engage with the ceremony organiser to determine alternative arrangements, if required, for any ceremonies already scheduled on a newly added House of Representative sitting day. Relevant considerations would include where no external venues have been secured, where there would be a financial loss to the ceremony organiser or where rescheduling the ceremony would result in a significant delay for conferees to be able to attend a ceremony.

The Department monitors the number of clients waiting for ceremonies and may reach out to Councils to request for more ceremonies to be scheduled throughout the year. Councils must remain flexible with their ceremony schedules, incorporating the availability of venues, Presiding Officers and staffing, to accommodate for increases to the number of clients waiting to become citizens and new ceremonies to be scheduled. Councils may also schedule extra ceremonies throughout the year, in liaison with the Department, if the numbers of people waiting to attend a ceremony have increased.

Community organisations

Community organisations holding approved/special ceremonies must complete an Expression of Interest form and provide it to the Department at least three months before the proposed date of the ceremony. Community organisations should also work in partnership with Councils to ensure a coordinated approach to scheduling ceremonies in a particular local area and to identify partnership opportunities. The Department may also engage with community organisations to identify opportunities to partner on citizenship ceremonies.

Community organisations should consider the availability of authorised Presiding Officers such as the local Federal MP, Senator or Mayor when scheduling citizenship ceremonies.

Citizenship ceremonies during election periods

Ceremonies can continue as usual during the caretaker period. At the Federal level, the caretaker period begins at the time the House of Representatives is dissolved and continues until the election result is clear or, if there is a change of government, until the new government is appointed.

Ceremony organisers must be aware that candidates for election (ie those who currently do not hold elected office), may attend the ceremony in a private capacity, however they must not receive an official invitation, be included as an official guest, be provided with a VIP seat or be acknowledged in speaking notes or speeches.

It is particularly important that the above guidelines are adhered to in the period leading up to and during the election period. The emphasis remains on elected representatives welcoming new citizens to the local community and are apolitical and must not be used for political or partisan expression or for the distribution of political, promotional or election material.

Local council elections

Councils should continue to host citizenship ceremonies to meet the demand during and before the election results are known, however, there are exceptions to who is authorised to be a Presiding Officer.

During this time the Presiding Officer should be a local Federal MP or the Council CEO.

Ceremony organisers should contact the Department for advice if it is unclear whether a Presiding Officer is authorised.



State and Federal elections

MPs and Senators should not be invited to ceremonies held after the election date until the results of the election are known.

An MP or Senator is technically regarded as an MP or Senator from the day of election—that is, when they are, in the words of the Constitution, 'chosen by the people'. A new MP or Senator is entitled to use the title MP or Senator once this status is officially confirmed by the declaration of the poll.

Candidates for election, who currently do not hold elected office, may attend the ceremony in a private capacity, however they must not receive an official invitation, be included as an official guest, provided with a VIP seat or be acknowledged in speaking notes or speeches. The emphasis remains on elected representatives welcoming new citizens to the local community.

Persons currently authorised to preside at citizenship ceremonies (i.e. Mayors) may still preside at a ceremony in their current capacity if they are intending on running for State or Federal Government. They are to be reminded that they must remain apolitical and that citizenship ceremonies are not to be used to promote a political or ideological agenda or for the distribution of political or election material.

Federal election

The Minister's message can be read (or played) at ceremonies after the election date until it has been announced that there is a new Minister. If there is a new Minister, the new Minister's message will be provided.

Citizenship certificates with the incumbent Minister's signature can be issued up until a new Minister is sworn in. In the event there is a change of Minister, there will be a period of time where certificates will not be available.

Once printing of certificates resumes, the Department will commence distribution. Conferees who attended their ceremonies during this period will receive their certificate by registered mail directly from the Department.

It is particularly important that the above guidelines are adhered to in the period leading up to an election. The emphasis remains on elected representatives welcoming new citizens to the local community.

Ceremonies – Events/Days of significance

The Government expects ceremony organisers to schedule citizenship ceremonies on days of significance, for example in the context of annual celebrations to mark Australia Day (26 January) and Australian Citizenship Day (17 September).

Ceremony organisers may also wish to hold citizenship ceremonies in conjunction with other community events or activities, such as Harmony Week or Refugee Week provided these do not coincide with parliamentary sitting days. Citizenship ceremonies may, for example, be incorporated into annual festivals or activities of community organisations.

Australia Day—26 January

Australia Day provides an opportunity for all Australians to reflect, respect and celebrate our national day.

Many thousands of Australians have had their citizenship conferred on Australia Day, and many Australians would like to receive their citizenship on our national day, in their community. Councils must hold a ceremony as part of their Australia Day celebrations, either on the day or during the three days prior or after Australia Day.

Councils that conferred citizenship on fewer than 20 people in the previous year are exempt from this requirement. More information about Australia Day celebrations can be found at australiaday.org.au

Australian Citizenship Day—17 September

Introduced in 2001, Australian Citizenship Day is a day the community to reflect on and celebrate the meaning and importance of Australian citizenship, the role Australian citizens have played in shaping our nation and think about what unites us as Australians in our diverse society.

Councils, community organisations, schools and others in the community are encouraged to participate in Australian Citizenship Day. Councils are encouraged to hold a citizenship ceremony on or around 17 September.

For ideas on events and activities for celebrating Australian Citizenship Day visit the Department of Home Affairs website.

Note: Australian Citizenship Day is an exception to the expectation that citizenship ceremonies be held outside of parliamentary sitting days.

Overseas Australian citizenship ceremonies

All applicants are expected, as far as possible, to attend a citizenship ceremony in Australia. In limited circumstances, it may be possible for eligible conferral clients who meet certain requirements to be offered a ceremony overseas. An application must be made to the Department for consideration.

Ceremony organisers must ensure that the Presiding Officer is an Australian citizen and is listed in the Instrument of Authorisation, or request a one-off authorisation for the ceremony. Written requests for authorisation should be sent to the Minister.

Online citizenship ceremonies

Where a ceremony organiser is not able to conduct in-person ceremonies or would like to supplement their scheduled in-person ceremonies, they are able to conduct online citizenship ceremonies.

Online citizenship ceremonies must be conducted in accordance with legislative requirements, which include:

- identification of the conferee prior to conducting the ceremony
- the Presiding Officer must be authorised to receive the Pledge and must be an Australian citizen
- the Presiding Officer must read the preamble from Schedule 1 of the *Australian Citizenship Regulation 2016*.

Further guidance on conducting an online ceremony can be provided by the Department.

Special purpose ceremonies

The majority of citizenship ceremonies are public occasions and conferees are encouraged to participate in a public citizenship ceremony wherever possible.

Special purpose ceremonies, or private ceremonies, may only be arranged in exceptional circumstances, for example, where a conferee has a significant disability preventing them from attending a public ceremony, or where the Department has asked the ceremony organiser to provide urgent conferral for an applicant.

All special purpose ceremony requests are to be referred to the Department for assessment.

Departmental-hosted ceremonies

The Department may host citizenship ceremonies or partner with Councils, community organsiations or other community groups to hold citizenship ceremonies.

Departmental-hosted ceremonies may be held for a variety of reasons including:

- days of significance
- for a special purpose
- to assist Councils with ensuring that conferees have an opportunity to attend a citizenship ceremony within a reasonable timeframe of being approved
- at the discretion of the Minister responsible for citizenship or as otherwise arranged by the Department.

Locality of invitees

Departmental-hosted ceremonies may draw conferees from multiple Local Government Area's (LGA) into a ceremony. Unlike ceremony organisers, the Department is not bound by LGAs or electorate boundaries when identifying conferees to attend a departmental-hosted ceremony.

Ceremony Venue

The location of Departmental-hosted ceremonies is considered on a case-by-case basis with reference to:

- the various LGA's where conferees are being drawn from
- venue availability
- capacity of available venue(s) to accommodate anticipated ceremony numbers
- suitability of venue in regard to accessibility considerations.

Official Guests

At a minimum, the following official guests will be invited to all departmental-hosted ceremonies:

- Mayors - from each of the LGA's where conferees have been drawn from
  - Where the Mayor is unable to attend, they can request consideration by the Department that the relevant Deputy Mayor or Councillor be approved to attend on their behalf.
- Federal MP – all Federal MPs of the electorates where conferees have been drawn from.
- Senators - who hold an electorate office within 100km of the ceremony venue, regardless of the political party that the represent.
- State MPs – the local State MP of the electorate where the ceremony venue.
  - Where there is more than one elected State MP in the locality of the venue, the Department will extend the invitation to all elected State MPs.

Note: It is open to the Minister to invite other official guests to Departmental-hosted ceremonies or make other adjustments to the conduct of such ceremonies as may be deemed necessary, while always ensuring the non-partisan nature of all citizenship ceremonies.

Rescheduling ceremonies

Conferee request

Where a conferee contacts a ceremony organiser following receipt of their ceremony invitation, requesting to change the date of their allocated ceremony the ceremony organiser must refer the person to the Department.

Ceremony organiser request

Rescheduling of citizenship ceremonies should be avoided where possible, as rescheduling may affect the validity of the Australian citizenship certificates, the PVL and invited conferees. Where rescheduling a ceremony is unavoidable, the ceremony organiser must raise this with the Department at the earliest possible opportunity.



Organising the ceremony

Venue

Citizenship ceremonies are significant occasions and care should be taken to ensure that the venue reflects the importance of the occasion.

In choosing a location for the ceremony, ceremony organisers should ensure they undertake the necessary event planning and/or a risk assessment in line with their own policies and procedures. Consideration should also be given to accessibility such as ramps or elevators.

It is important to select a venue that is appropriate to the size of the ceremony. In the case of Councils, the most suitable venue may be the town hall or council chambers. Many community organisations also have appropriate sized function rooms on their premises. Where a ceremony venue is within a community organisations commercial premises (eg a Leagues club, Surf Life Saving Club), ceremony organisers must ensure that the ceremony is not used for the purpose of promoting the commercial enterprise and be in keeping with the nature and purpose of citizenship ceremonies. Consideration must also be given to avoid exposing conferees and guests to areas such as drinking and gaming areas. Attendees should not have to pay entry in order to attend the ceremony. If this is not the case, an appropriate venue could be hired for the occasion.

Citizenship ceremonies may be held outdoors, for example, in a park or in the same locality as a relevant community event. In case of inclement weather, an alternative venue or other arrangements (eg marquees) must be arranged. Ceremony organisers should also ensure an outdoor venue is conducive to conferees being present throughout the ceremony to make the Pledge and receive their citizenship certificate.

As citizenship ceremonies are apolitical and secular, they should not be held in a place of worship or in a venue which has political affiliation. A community hall adjacent to a place of worship is acceptable where there are no religious symbols in view.

Promotional Products

Free citizenship promotional products are available to either download or order online from the Department's website using the order form.

Dress Code

A Dress Code is to be set by the ceremony organiser and must be included in ceremony invitation.

The Dress Code should reflect the significance of the occasion and at a minimum should be set as smart casual attire. Ceremony organisers may also wish to note in the invitation that national or cultural dress is permitted.

Seating plan

Prior to the ceremony, the Department will provide a ceremony planning report which lists the people waiting to attend a ceremony. This report has a linking group section which can be used to identify groups or families who are having Australian citizenship conferred upon them and who wish to attend the same ceremony. The Citizenship Planning Report also provides the linking group detail to aid seating arrangements.

Symbols

Citizenship ceremonies are conducted under the authority of the Australian Government Minister responsible for citizenship matters. In keeping with other Commonwealth official occasions, the following national symbols must be present at a citizenship ceremony:

- the Australian national flag
- the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags
- the Commonwealth Coat of Arms
- an official portrait or photograph of Australia's head of state, The King of Australia, His Majesty King Charles III
- the Australian national anthem (*Advance Australia Fair*) played.

These national symbols and the Australian national anthem are available free of charge through your local Federal MP or Senator under the Constituents Request Program.

Further guidance on displaying national symbols and flag protocols is available on the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet website at Information on Australian Flags and Symbols.



Portrait of the King

The portrait is to be displayed and should be placed behind the Presiding Officer or in another prominent position at the same level and to the left (when facing) of the Commonwealth Coat of Arms.

The portrait must be:

- a minimum A3 size (or the same size as the Commonwealth Coat of Arms if larger)
- full colour print
- High Resolution (300 dpi).

Commonwealth Coat of Arms

The Commonwealth Coat of Arms is to be displayed. The Commonwealth Coat of Arms is the formal symbol of the Commonwealth of Australia that signifies Commonwealth authority and ownership.

The Commonwealth Coat of Arms must be:

- a minimum A3 size (or the same size as the Portrait of the King if larger)
- full colour print
- High Resolution (300 dpi).

The Australian national flag

The Australian national flag is to be displayed in one of the following ways:

- Flat against a surface, whether horizontally or vertically, with the top left (first) quarter placed uppermost on the observers' left as viewed from the front
- On a staff, with the top left quarter placed in the position nearest the top of the staff. When carried, the flag should be aloft and free
- On a flag rope (halyard) with the top left quarter placed uppermost, raised as close as possible to the top and the flag rope tight.

Other Australian flags

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags should also be displayed at citizenship ceremonies. State flags or local government flags may also be displayed.

The Australian national flag should always have precedence over all flags.

Australian national anthem

The Australian national anthem (Advance Australia Fair) must be played at the ceremony, however it is at the discretion of ceremony organisers whether only the first verse or both verses are played, though verse two is appropriate to new citizens.

This may be played as a live performance or a recording and all attendees should be invited to join in singing the Australian national anthem. The words of the Australian national anthem should be provided to all attendees.

Gifts and entertainment

Ceremony organsiers may wish to consider incorporating other features into the ceremony to enhance the occasion, such as gifts, entertainment and refreshments. It is noted that the inclusion of these is voluntary and at the discretion of the ceremony organisers.

Gifts

Ceremony organisers may choose to present gifts to new citizens to mark the acquisition of Australian citizenship. Gifts presented to conferees as part of the ceremony (ie at the same time they are presented with their citizenship certificate) must not be of a political, commercial or religious nature.

Gifts which would be appropriate to provide to conferees as part of the citizenship ceremony (ie during the ceremony when presented with their citizenship certificate) may include:

- a native plant that could grow well in the local area (consider size)
- a genuine item reflecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures
- a book about the local region
- a commemorative coin or pin
- a professional photograph of the occasion.

It is open to ceremony organisers to provide conferees with information on local community services including volunteering opportunities and multicultural services.

Where a ceremony organsier is a community organisation, or partnering with one, it is open to them to provide:

- information on their services, however this information must not seek to influence or give the perception that the conferee has an obligation to join the community organsiation.

  - For example information on their services which require a membership or payment of fees must not be provided.
- a gift that represents the community organsiation (ie a sporting group may wish to gift a free ticket or supporter pack), however to maintain the focus of the purpose of the ceremony on the conferees and importance of Australian citizenship these must not be provided until after the conclusion of the ceremony.

Any gifts must be given without conditions or obligations and must be non-resalable.

Entertainment

Entertainment befitting the occasion may be incorporated into a ceremony.

If music is being played, ceremony organisers should ensure that the appropriate music license is obtained by contacting APRA AMCOS (Australasian Performing Right Association Limited Australasian and Mechanical Copyright Owners Society Limited).

Ceremony organisers may like to consider inviting local school choirs or community groups to perform to incorporate local community elements into the ceremony.

Refreshments

Citizenship ceremonies may be followed by a gathering that includes refreshments. The gathering provides an opportunity for officials and new citizens to become acquainted and enhances the welcoming atmosphere of the occasion.

The form of the gathering and the choice of refreshments are at the discretion of the ceremony organiser. In making these arrangements, it is important to take into account any dietary or religious requirements people may have.

Incorporating First Nations elements

There is great value in incorporating appropriate First Nations elements into citizenship ceremonies and the Department encourages ceremony organisers to do so.

Incorporating First Nations elements into citizenship ceremonies enhances awareness and understanding by new citizens, as well as the wider community, of their histories and cultures and their status as the first Australians and traditional custodians of the land.

The Presiding Officer or other appropriate person should publicly acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land where the citizenship ceremony is taking place. Suggested wording can be found on the Reconciliation Australia website.

The following are a range of ideas for incorporating First Nations elements into citizenship ceremonies:

- Invite a local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander leader(s) to Acknowledge Country and/or perform a Welcome to Country ceremony
- Invite members of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to perform other traditional ceremonies, such as a smoking ceremony
- Invite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists to perform or a local leader or personality to address the ceremony.

Incorporating First Nations cultural considerations into a citizenship ceremony should be done in consultation with representatives of the local traditional peoples.

Invitations

The Department will provide the ceremony organiser with a Ceremony Planning Report which lists the people who are to receive invites to a particular ceremony and identifies individuals who wish to sit together. This list must not be provided to any official guests or other parties before or after the ceremony as this contains personal information under the Privacy Act.

Only approved conferees as advised by the Department may be invited to take the Pledge at a ceremony. If a person approaches the ceremony organiser or the Presiding Officer for a private ceremony, or inclusion in a planned public ceremony, they must be referred to the Department. The ceremony organiser must not include additional people in a ceremony unless advised to do so by the Department.

Conferees are invited to attend their ceremony by letter, which can be posted or emailed (depending on their preferred method of correspondence as advised to by the Department). Depending on local arrangements, invitation letters are sent to conferees either by the Council or the Department. For ceremonies conducted by community organisations, the Department will generally send out invitations.

Invitation letters sent from the Department include the following information:

- Date, time and location of the ceremony
- Expected arrival time for registration
- Conferees 16 years of age and over must bring photographic identification, such as a driver license or passport
- Children under 16 years are not required to make the Pledge or attend a ceremony although they are welcome and encouraged to do so if they wish
- Conferees who wish to make the Pledge on a holy book or scripture must bring it with them to the ceremony.

If invitations are sent by the Department, conferees may also receive a reminder email and SMS closer to the ceremony date.

Ceremony organisers may wish to add the following information to their invitations:

- Process for RSVPs (if relevant)
- Dress Code (refer to page 22 for further information)
- Advice that a voluntary Australian Citizenship Affirmation will take place after the citizenship ceremony (if relevant)
- Any special arrangements concerning seating and the taking of photographs or video during the ceremony
- The number of guests each conferee may invite
- Advice that attendees may be asked to sign a form providing their consent for photographs or video taken during the ceremony to be used for citizenship promotional purposes
- Advice on venue accessibility or parking.

Additionally, information for conferees about attending ceremonies is available on the Department of Home Affairs website.



Media, photos and consent forms

Media

Publicising citizenship ceremonies promotes, to the wider community, the importance of Australian citizenship and the contribution of new citizens to Australia. Every effort should be made by ceremony organisers to publicise forthcoming ceremonies and encourage local media and local community organisations to attend.

Media coverage can be enhanced by providing local media, with details of the ceremony as far in advance as possible. Details provided should include a list of speakers and official guests. However, the details of attendees must not be provided to media without the individual's express consent.

Where a ceremony could be of interest beyond the local area, consideration could be given to advising the national media. Examples of such situations include:

- an unusually large ceremony
- where the ceremony is planned to coincide with a local or national event such as Australia Day or Australian Citizenship Day
- where conferees include prominent figures in local affairs, the arts, sport or other fields (noting these must not be provided without the individual's express consent)
- where there are particularly interesting features planned for the ceremony.

Conferees should be informed in advance that ceremonies may attract media attention and that departmental officers or representatives of the media may attend to video, photograph or interview conferees for promotional purposes or for social media.

Ceremony organisers should be aware of obligations under the Privacy Act when considering the release of personal information.

When the Minister is in attendance, liaison with their media adviser is required for any press releases or media coverage. Public affairs officers of the Department will liaise with the Minister's media adviser and can also assist with publicity arrangements.

Photographs

There is no requirement for ceremony organisers to hire a professional photographer to take photos of the citizenship ceremony but having photographs is a great way of recording the occasion. The photos can also be used to present as a gift to the conferees.

It is important to be aware that images of individuals or Australian citizenship certificates or videos are treated as personal information under the Privacy Act where the person's identity is clear or can reasonably be worked out from that image.

Ceremony organisers should ensure they are aware of their obligations under the Privacy Act.

Consent forms

If a photo or video is to be used for something that the attendee is unaware of, the attendee will likely be required to give consent, unless they would reasonably expect their image to be used for this other purpose.

If images are to be used by the ceremony organiser in a publication, website or on their social media, consent forms must be signed and collected from the relevant individuals. Personal details in these images (such as names on certificates) must not be visible.

It may be applicable to include information on media and promotional image use in the invitation.

Ceremony organisers should ensure they are aware of their obligations under the Privacy Act.

Suggested program for ceremony

The names of the Presiding Officer, master of ceremonies and official guests should be inserted.

1:30 pm Conferees arrive, are registered and identity verified then seated.

1:55 pm Official party enters (List names and titles of official guests).

2:00 pm (*Master of ceremonies*) Welcomes all present.

2:02 pm Welcome to Country or Acknowledgment of Country.

2:05 pm (Master of ceremonies) introduces official guests, delivers the opening address, and foreshadows the Australian Citizenship Affirmation.

2:15 pm (*Master of ceremonies*) introduces each speaker in the following order:

- Minister or Minister's representative
- If the Minister/Minister's representative is not in attendance, the Minister's message is required to be either read by the Presiding Officer or the video/audio of the Minister's message is to be played
- Other speakers

2:30 pm *(Presiding Officer*) reads the preamble for a citizenship ceremony to the conferees.

2:32 pm (*Presiding Officer*) administers the pledge to conferees.

2:35 pm (*Presiding Officer, master of ceremonies or official guest*) presents Australian citizenship certificates to new citizens and congratulates them*. Each conferee who has made the pledge is called forward to receive their Australian citizenship certificate.

A gift may also be presented at this time.

2:50 pm (*Master of ceremonies*) advises that new citizens must enrol to vote by completing an online enrolment application form. New citizens can access the AEC's website via the QR code on the information sheet provided.

2:52 pm (*Master of ceremonies*) introduces dignitary to conduct affirmation ceremony (if relevant).

2:54 pm (*Presiding Officer, master of ceremonies or other appropriate Australian citizen*) conducts affirmation ceremony.

2:57 pm (*Master of ceremonies*) asks all present to stand for the Australian national anthem.

3:00 pm (*Master of ceremonies*) concludes the ceremony; invites new citizens, official guests and all present to join him/her for light refreshments (if relevant).

Note: To ensure the ceremony runs smoothly and that official proceedings are not too lengthy, it is open to ceremony organisers to provide conferee's with their citizenship certificate at Registration. Where this occurs the Presiding Officer would administer the Pledge, followed by the Master of Ceremonies information on enrolling to vote.

Before the Ceremony Checklist

Before the ceremony	
Annually	
	Provide the Department of Home Affairs with an annual schedule of planned ceremonies **(for councils with >100 conferees per annum)**
	Check Federal parliamentary sitting days
3-6 months before	
	Check Federal parliamentary sitting days
	Ensure scheduled ceremonies avoid Federal parliamentary sitting days
	Advise Department of Home Affairs of the date of ceremony to allow provision of certificates and PVL
1-2 months before	
	Check venues for suitability (access, size/capacity, power, secular, wet weather contingencies)
	Prepare invitations for conferees with relevant ceremony details using the PVL to identify attendees
4 weeks before	
	Invite conferees from list of approved applicants provided by the Department of Home Affairs
	Invite elected government members and other official representatives.
	Prepare a ceremony program. Include which officials are to preside and present a speech
	Order products such as pledge cards and affirmation cards
1 week before	
	Confirm the Master of Ceremonies, and arrange lectern and sound system
	Ensure receipt of Australian citizenship certificates, PVL and AEC enrol-to-vote information sheet
	Ensure portrait of The King, Commonwealth Coat of Arms and Australian, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags are available for display
	Arrange for the Australian national anthem to be played/performed
	Arrange for Welcome to Country and/or Acknowledgement of Country
	Arrange who will deliver the Australian Citizenship Affirmation (if relevant)
	Arrange seating plan for VIPs and conferee guests
	Arrange seating plan for conferees with families/groups together
	Ensure certificate of currency for insurance purposes (if applicable)
Additional considerations	
	Arrange gifts and entertainment
	Arrange catering
	Arrange photography
	Notify media of ceremony
	Print media consent forms if images to be used on social media or in publications
	Arrange speaking notes for the Presiding Officer and Master of ceremonies
	Order commemorative certificates, promotional items

PART 4

At the ceremony

Registration

The Department provides a copy of the PVL for each citizenship ceremony. The PVL includes personal details of conferees and must be used by ceremony organisers to verify their identities.

It is a requirement that each conferee making the Pledge be formally registered at the ceremony. Ceremony organisers must mark non-attendance or failure to make the Pledge on the PVL by marking a single line through the person's name. The Presiding Officer must initial next to all annotations made to the PVL, in addition to signing the PVL.

Registration areas should be well lit to allow proper verification of conferee identity.

Identity verification

The Minister cannot approve a person becoming an Australian citizen unless satisfied of a person's identity.

All conferees aged 16 years and over at the time of application must have their identity verified prior to making the Pledge and receiving their citizenship certificate.

Children under the age of 16 do not have to present identification at citizenship ceremonies and verification of their identity is not required. However, the identity of the responsible parent will need to be verified.

Photographic identification is required for each person aged 16 and over, which will allow facial comparison between the person and their identification. A current driver licence, passport or other official document with a photograph is acceptable and ceremony organisers must sight the original document (not a photograph or photocopy).

If a conferee cannot produce any form of photographic identification, at least three documents bearing their name and/or current address, for example, bank statements, credit cards or bills, are required. Conferees may bring their invitation letter to the ceremony to assist with registration but the letter is not an identity document.

If the conferee has attended without any/sufficient identity documents or there are doubts about the person's identity and their identity cannot be verified, they cannot proceed to the ceremony. Ceremony organisers must refer the person to the Department.

Guidance on face-to-photo identification is available from the Department.

Welcome to Country/ Acknowledgement of Country

A Welcome to Country is a ceremony performed by a First Nations traditional owner of the location where the ceremony is being held or by a First Nations person/s who have been given permission from traditional owners, to welcome visitors to their Country. It can take many forms, depending on the particular culture of the traditional owners. It can include singing, dancing, smoking ceremonies or a speech in traditional language or English.

An Acknowledgement of Country is a way of showing awareness of and respect for the First Nations owners of the land on which a meeting or event is being held, and of recognising their continuing connection to their Country. An Acknowledgment of Country can be informal or formal and involves visitors acknowledging the traditional owners of the land, as well as the long and continuing relationship between First Nations and their Country.

Further information is available on Welcome to and Acknowledgement of Country at the Reconciliation Australia website.

Ceremony organisers should consult with their local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander elders or leaders about the most appropriate way to recognise their communities.

If the Minister attends

If in attendance, the Minister will have precedence to assume the role of Presiding Officer, conduct the citizenship ceremony and confer Australian citizenship on conferees.

The Department will advise ceremony organisers if the Minister will be attending a citizenship ceremony.

Speeches

The Minister/Minister's Representative

If in attendance the Minister must be given the opportunity to speak at the citizenship ceremony. It is noted that the Minister is not required to read their message verbatim, as they may wish to deliver a speech specific to the event.

If the Minister does not attend, the local Federal MP or Senator (if present) should read the Minister's message. This must be read in its entirety and without amendment.

When neither the Minister nor a federal representative attends, the Minister's message must be read by the Presiding Officer or the video/audio of the Minister's message is to be played in its entirety and without amendment.

Inviting official guests to speak

Speeches by other official guests must immediately follow the Minister's speech/message.

Ceremony organisers must offer a speaking role to all House of Representative members with constituents in the ceremony. Should House of Representative members not wish to speak, ceremony organisers should consider offering the speaking role to other Federal MPs or Senators, in attendance, on a rotational basis to ensure that official proceedings are not too lengthy and to provide greater opportunities for these MPs/Senators to have an active role in ceremonies. In addition, all elected local representatives, at the federal, state/territory and local government level should, over time, have an opportunity to provide a welcoming speech to conferees. It is preferable, however, that not all elected representatives speak at every ceremony. It is recommended that three elected representatives be provided the opportunity to speak at a ceremony. This will ensure that the number of speeches remains manageable, particularly where local areas cross a number of electorates.

Federal MPs or Senators are still to be invited to attend the ceremony as guests if no formal role is given.

Appropriate arrangements should be reached at the local level to meet the requirements of all concerned. Ceremony organisers may wish to reach early agreement with elected representatives on appropriate dates in the year for each representative to speak, for example in the context of setting up or reviewing the annual ceremony schedule.

The emphasis remains on elected representatives welcoming new citizens to the local community. Candidates for election, other than the existing local Federal MP/s, must not be invited to speak and are not to be formally acknowledged (refer to page 16–18 for further information).

Other official guests do not have to be invited to speak, however, subject to the number of speeches by elected representatives, a few brief messages of welcome from any local community leaders and/or local clubs and associations may contribute to a feeling of welcome.

Suggested length and content of speeches

Ceremony organisers should give speakers an indication of how long they are expected to speak and ensure that they are aware that the speeches must be relevant and appropriate to the occasion. To manage the length of the ceremony, it is recommended that each speech be between three to five minutes.

Speeches must:

- avoid issues that may be contentious from a political, racial or sectarian point of view
- not be of a particular political or denominational overtone
- not be used as an opportunity for political or partisan expression
- avoid assumptions and generalisations about the background of conferees and their reasons for coming to Australia.

Ceremony organisers should draw these matters to the attention of all speakers in their invitations.

Speakers may welcome conferees as new citizens and refer to the economic, social and cultural contribution that new citizens make to Australia.

Preamble

It is a legal requirement under section 10 of the Australian Citizenship Regulation 2016 that the Presiding Officer read aloud to the conferees the Preamble for citizenship ceremonies. The words of the Preamble are found in *Schedule 1* of the *Australian Citizenship Regulation 2016*.

The Preamble should be read immediately before the Pledge.

The Pledge

It is a legal requirement that most conferees 16 years of age and over make the Pledge before the Presiding Officer. Only conferees listed on the PVL can take the Pledge. A person who attends a ceremony but is not on the PVL cannot be allowed to make the Pledge before the Presiding Officer.

Ceremony organisers are encouraged to invite all conferees to make the Pledge together, regardless of which version they are reciting (see page 12 for further information).

Conferees may choose whether or not to say the words 'under God', and this choice should be made clear to conferees (including a reminder by the presiding officer, when the formal component of the ceremony commences). A person may elect to switch from either saying or not saying the words 'under God' on the day and as long as one form of the Pledge is made, their citizenship is conferred.

Pledge cards may be placed on the conferees' seats or handed to conferees on arrival. Pledge cards are available from the Department's website order form.

As a matter of practice, and to facilitate the making of the Pledge, the Presiding Officer 'administers' (i.e. reads out and the conferees repeat) the Pledge. The Presiding Officer, with the support of organising staff, should observe that each conferee makes the Pledge.

If it is observed that a conferee has not said the Pledge, they are considered not to have acquired citizenship and must not be presented with their citizenship certificate. The conferee should be taken aside at the end of the ceremony, advised that making the Pledge is the final legal requirement to become an Australian citizen, and given another opportunity to say the Pledge before the Presiding Officer.

If they refuse, they must not be presented with their citizenship certificate, their name should be ruled out on the PVL and the Department advised.

While it is preferred that conferees say the Pledge aloud in English, where they are unable to do so ceremony organisers must make arrangements to facilitate that person being able to demonstrate that they understand and acknowledge the Pledge in some other way. This can include allowing a family member or friend to assist the conferee with saying the words of the Pledge or via the use of an interpreter. This situation usually arises in circumstances where the conferee is over the age of 60 years and the English language requirement is not an eligibility requirement under the application pathway they have applied under. Ceremony organisers can contact the Department for advice if required.

Conferees who have an impairment that prevents them from saying the Pledge aloud may have the Pledge read to them. The conferee may then acknowledge by some pre-arranged signal that they understand and agree to the Pledge. Ceremony organisers may become aware through the invitation process that a conferee may require assistance during the ceremony and will be made aware by the Department of conferees with other needs (e.g. an Auslan interpreter) to allow enough time to prepare the necessary support.



If conferees are wearing a face covering, this can include face coverings for religious or health reasons, ceremony organisers will generally be able to tell if they are reciting the Pledge as they will be able to see the face covering move with the mouth opening and closing. If ceremony organisers are standing close to conferees they will also be able to hear them take the Pledge.

Children under 16 years of age

Children under 16 years of age are welcome to make the Pledge if they wish. Children who were under 16 years at the time of their application, but have since turned 16 are not required to make the Pledge. The conferral of their citizenship is dependent on their responsible parent making the Pledge.

If their responsible parent does not attend the ceremony or fails to make the Pledge, then the child does not acquire Australian citizenship, even if they are present at the ceremony. They must not be presented with their citizenship certificate and their name should be ruled out on the PVL.

Children aged 16 years or over

Most children aged 16 years or over must make the Pledge, refer to page 7 for further guidance.

Holy books and scriptures

It is not a requirement for conferees to use a holy book or scripture or hold up their hand/s when making the Pledge, however, conferees are permitted to do so if they wish.

Conferees who wish to use a holy book or scripture when making the Pledge, should be invited to bring the holy book or scripture of their choice to the ceremony in the invitation.

Ceremony organisers who wish to provide holy books are not permitted to place the books on the conferees' chairs. They should be placed in an area where conferees may choose to use one during the ceremony, but it must not be made to look like a requirement.

Holy books must not be provided as gifts to conferees.

Australian citizenship certificates

Citizenship certificates are legal evidence of Australian citizenship and should be treated as an accountable document. Accountable documents are documents or forms that can be exchanged or negotiated for a benefit such as money, goods or services.

Ceremony organisers must store citizenship certificates in a safe (or lockable container) when not being used for the purpose of arranging the ceremony. If ceremony organisers are required to transport citizenship certificates to a ceremony venue, at a minimum the certificates should be stored in an opaque envelope/folder, during transportation.

Presenting Australian citizenship certificates to conferees

While common practices at ceremonies, it is not a legal requirement that:

- Australian citizenship certificates be presented to conferees attending a ceremony
- Australian citizenship certificates be presented by the Presiding Officer or another authorised person.

When family members are conferred Australian citizenship at the same ceremony, each family member should be presented with their own certificate. If children under 16 years do not attend the ceremony, their certificates may be handed to their responsible parent.

Usually, the Department will provide citizenship certificates to ceremony organisers in advance of the ceremonies for distribution to conferees at the ceremony. Where certificates are not available, the ceremony should continue as scheduled and the certificates will be sent to the new citizens at a later date by the Department.

It is recommended that ceremony organisers hold a quantity of commemorative certificates to present to conferees in this situation. Commemorative certificates must not be created by ceremony organisers, they can be obtained by contacting the Department for a copy of the file or ordered free of charge through the Department's website order form. Commemorative certificates are of no legal standing and are not official evidence of Australian citizenship.

Australian citizenship certificates are only valid if the conferee makes the Pledge before a Presiding Officer on the date printed on them. Where conferees fail to attend a scheduled ceremony or does not make the Pledge, their certificates must be returned to the Department by registered mail (along with the PVL) within two days of the ceremony.

Conferees must not leave the ceremony with their citizenship certificate prior to making the Pledge. Conferees should be informed to hand their certificate back to ceremony organisers if they leave seek to leave the ceremony area prior to making the Pledge.

Altering citizenship certificates

The Presiding Officer may, if they wish, sign each certificate at the dotted line on the bottom right corner of the certificate.

Other than the Presiding Officer signing the certificate, no other amendments, additions, deletions or marks may be made to the certificate by the ceremony organiser or Presiding Officer.

Note: Altering Australian citizenship certificates is an offence under the Citizenship Act and carries serious penalties.

Details incorrect on the citizenship certificate

If a conferee claims that information on their citizenship certificate is incorrect, they should be allowed to make the Pledge and be presented with the certificate.

It is the responsibility of the conferee to make contact with the Department following the ceremony should any changes be required. Conferees should be directed to the Department of Home Affairs website for further information on how to have the certificate corrected.

The Australian Citizenship Affirmation

The Australian Citizenship Affirmation (the Affirmation) is a statement affirming loyalty and commitment to Australia and its people. It is based on the Pledge made by conferees at citizenship ceremonies in order to become Australian citizens.

The Affirmation increases awareness of the responsibilities and privileges of Australian citizenship, promotes community involvement and participation, and helps people feel that they belong. It also helps to build pride in Australians about their citizenship.

Unlike the Pledge, the Affirmation is voluntary, has no status in law and has no legal effect.

To further enhance the meaning and symbolism of citizenship ceremonies, ceremony organisers are encouraged to incorporate the Affirmation at the conclusion of the ceremony to provide an opportunity to those present to join with the new citizens to publicly affirm their loyalty and commitment to Australia and its people. Non-citizens are able to participate by joining in at the second line. The Affirmation must be led by an Australian citizen. They may be a person of some standing in the community, such as an official guest, a leader within the community, a federal or state/territory parliamentarian or other appropriate person.

As an Australian citizen
I affirm my loyalty to Australia and its people,
whose democratic beliefs I share,
whose rights and liberties I respect,
and whose laws I uphold and obey.

If the Affirmation is to be included, affirmation cards may either be placed on all seats, or handed to all members of the audience as they arrive. Affirmation products can be ordered through the Department's website by using the order form.



Australian electoral enrolment

Electoral enrolment is an important right for all new citizens. Ceremony organisers should promote a citizen's obligation to enroll by highlighting the role of the AEC.

Every conferee aged 16 years and over must get an AEC enrol-to-vote information sheet. The Department provides these to the ceremony organisers.

Enrolment and voting is compulsory for every Australian citizen aged 18 years or over. After someone has taken the Pledge and received their Australian citizenship certificate, they must be advised to:

- use the QR code on the information sheet to access the AEC's website
- complete the online enrolment application form as soon as they can.

Conferees can contact the AEC for further help or information on enrolling and voting. The AEC's contact details are on the information sheet.

At the Ceremony Checklist

On the day	
	Arrange flags, Commonwealth Coat of Arms and official portrait/photo of His Majesty King Charles III, according to protocols
	Australian citizenship certificates should be transported and stored, at a minimum, within an opaque envelope/folder as they are accountable documents, and should not be left unattended until they have been distributed to conferees
	Verify identity of conferees against photographic identity document provided
	Mark attendance or non-attendance on the PVL
	Collect written consent of conferees to use images if they are to be used for promotional purposes
	Issue pledge cards, program, AEC enrol-to-vote information sheet and affirmation cards to the conferees/guests (as relevant)
	Ensure no political, commercial, promotional or religious material is available for distribution
	Advise conferees they must complete an online enrolment application form accessible through the QR code on the AEC information sheet they have been provided
During the ceremony	
	Welcome to Country and/or Acknowledgement of Country
	Reading/playing of the Minister's message
	Reading the Preamble
	Conferees must not leave the ceremony with their certificates prior to making the Pledge
	Observe conferees making the Pledge
	Present Australian citizenship certificates to conferees who have made the Pledge
	Play the Australian National Anthem
	Conduct the Affirmation

PART 5

After the ceremony

Returning the PVL

The PVL is the official evidence that an applicant has fulfilled the final legal obligation of making the Pledge before the Presiding Officer. The Department is required to retain PVLs as a record documenting acquisition of Australian citizenship on behalf of the National Archives of Australia. It is therefore important that ceremony organisers return the signed PVL to the Department in accordance with the requirements of the Code.

The Presiding Officer must sign the PVL immediately after the conclusion of a ceremony, certifying that each person on the list has attended and has been observed making the Pledge.

The names of people who:

- did not attend the ceremony
- whose identity has not been verified or
- who have not made the Pledge

must have a line ruled through them on the PVL. If they are a responsible parent, their child must also have a line ruled through their name. The PVL should not be altered in any other way. The Presiding Officer must initial against any annotation made to the PVL, in addition to signing the PVL.

A copy of the signed PVL must be emailed to the Department by close of business on the day of the ceremony.

The hard copy of the PVL and citizenship certificates for all non-attendees must be returned via registered mail **to the Department within two working days following the ceremony**. Where departmental officers are at the ceremony, the PVL (and any citizenship certificates for non-attendees) can be handed to the departmental officer.

Returning Australian citizenship certificates

Australian citizenship certificates are only valid for the date printed on them and under the condition that the conferee makes the Pledge on that date.

Where conferees fail to attend a scheduled ceremony, their identity was not verified or they did not make the Pledge, their certificates must be returned to the Department (with the PVL) via registered mail within two working days of the ceremony.

Where departmental officers are at the ceremony, the citizenship certificates (and signed PVL) can be handed to the departmental officer.

Disclosing names and addresses of new citizens

Whether local federal, state and territory MPs and Senators attend the ceremony or not, it is important and appropriate that they have the opportunity to welcome new citizens as formal members of the Australian community. Providing the names and addresses of conferees to elected representatives for the purpose of them welcoming their constituents to the community, is an authorised secondary use of conferees' personal details under the Privacy Act. This is because citizenship applicants are informed through the application form for conferral of Australian citizenship that their information may be disclosed to MPs, Senators and local government councillors for the purpose of welcoming new citizens as constituents.

Where requested, Councils must forward the names and addresses of new citizens (including email addresses) to local federal, state and territory MPs, Senators and local government councillors, for the purpose of welcoming the new citizens to their communities/electorate. Welcoming new citizens to the local community can take a variety of forms including a formal letter, an invitation to a morning/afternoon tea or invitation to another event being held for the purpose of welcoming the new citizens to the local community. Where the primary purpose of an event is to welcome new citizens, the information should be provided for this purpose.

Copies of the PVL containing other identity and personal information must not be released. Conferee details must not be provided before the ceremony. They must only be provided only after the ceremony is completed and where a request made within three months of the date of the ceremony.

Councils must ensure that:

- details of new citizens from the MPs, Senators or local government councillors electorate are provided, noting that two people who are in the same LGA does not necessarily mean they are in the same Federal or State electorate. Councils should make their own assessment under the Privacy Act when releasing conferee's personal information for this purpose.
- advice is included that clearly states the names and addresses of new citizens are disclosed only for the purpose of welcoming new citizens to the community and must not be used for any other purpose. This advice aligns with the disclosure statement conferees agree to as part of the citizenship process and must be provided to be consistent with privacy legislation.
- advice is included that clearly states that the names and addresses of new citizens must not be forwarded to any other persons or organisations or shared with candidates for election.

Councils must ensure that any conferee who did not attend the ceremony, whose identity was not verified, or who did not make the Pledge is removed from the PVL prior to it being released.

Ceremony organisers can contact the Department for further guidance if required.



After the Ceremony Checklist

After the ceremony	
	Non-attendees, those whose identity was not verified, or those who did not make the Pledge (including their children) have been ruled out on the PVL
	The Presiding Officer has signed the PVL
	Completed PVL has been returned to the Department electronically by close of business on the same day as the citizenship ceremony The hard copy PVL and non-attendee certificates should be returned to the Department by registered post within two working days
	Any issues regarding identity or the Pledge have been referred to the Department
	Names and addresses forwarded to MPs, Senators and local government councilors (on request)

Glossary

Term	Meaning
Apolitical	Having no connection to any political party and or having no involvement in political affairs.
Australian Citizenship Affirmation	The Australian Citizenship Affirmation offers an opportunity to those who wish to express their pride in being an Australian citizen and affirm their loyalty and commitment to Australia and its people.
Australian citizenship ceremony	Fulfils the legal requirements prescribed by the *Australian Citizenship Act 2007* and the *Australian Citizenship Regulation 2016* that a person must make a pledge of commitment to become an Australian citizen.
Australian citizenship certificate	Evidentiary notice given to a person stating that the person is an Australian citizen at a particular time.
Bipartisan	Is an agreement or cooperation of two political parties that usually oppose each other's policies.
Ceremony Organisers	Local Government Councils and other non-departmental organisations who are approved to hold Australian citizenship ceremonies.
Ceremony Planning Report	Lists the people who are to receive invites to a particular ceremony and identifies groups who wish to sit together.
Commemorative certificate	A memento given to conferees when the citizenship certificate is not available for the ceremony. The commemorative certificate has no legal status and cannot be used as evidence of Australian citizenship. Commemorative certificates are not to be created by ceremony organisers, they can be ordered free of charge from the Department.
Community organisation	An organisation that has a not for profit status under the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1997* or is registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission whose activities are intended to benefit its members, the local community within which it operations and the wider Australian community. Examples include organisations such as sporting clubs (amateur or professional including Cricket Australia; National Rugby League, Australian Football League and Football Australia) or community service organisations (including Rotary Clubs, Scouts and Guides Associations and Surf Life Saving Associations).
Conferee	A person who has applied for Australian citizenship by conferral whose final step to becoming a citizen is to attend a ceremony.
The Citizenship Act	The *Australian Citizenship Act 2007* is the legal basis for all citizenship provisions.
The Department of Home Affairs	Australian Government department responsible for citizenship matters.

Term	Meaning
Master of ceremonies	A local government official or other person who assists the Presiding Officer in conducting citizenship ceremonies.
Minister	Australian Government Minister responsible for citizenship matters, may also include other Ministers sworn into the portfolio including Assistant Ministers.
Non-attendee	A conferee who has been invited to a particular ceremony but did not attend the ceremony to make the Pledge.
Presiding Officer	A person who is an Australian citizen and who has been approved in writing by the Minister to confer Australian citizenship.
Pledge	Made by conferees under section 27 of the Citizenship Act as the last step in becoming an Australian citizen. It is a legal requirement that most conferees 16 years of age and over (at the time of application) make the Pledge before an authorised Presiding Officer
Pledge verification list (PVL)	Provides the details of people who are to attend a particular ceremony, their Australian citizenship certificate number, whether they are part of a family group and their Pledge preference
The Regulation	The *Australian Citizenship Regulation 2016* is the subordinate legislation that sets out detailed requirements for some matters as provided for by the Citizenship Act.

