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Former Council Worker Eyes Senate Run After Victory in Unfair Dismissal

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A former street sweeper who successfully challenged his dismissal from a local council is now considering a move into federal politics. Shaun Turner, 60, was terminated by Victoria's Darebin City Council in June 2024 after questioning the use of an Acknowledgement of Country during a toolbox meeting, a standard operational briefing for outdoor staff.

Turner raised concerns about the frequency and relevance of such acknowledgements in settings unrelated to government policy or cultural discussion. "People who have worn the uniform and fought for Australia should be thanked," he said at the time. The Fair Work

Commission (FWC) later ruled that his dismissal was unjust. A confidential compensation settlement was reached earlier this month through mediation.

Following the decision, Turner told *The Australian* he is seriously considering a Senate run. “Yeah, as I said, who knows? Maybe politics,” he said. “I’ve had a lot of time to read, I watch a lot of political shows... and I have ideas.” For now, he plans to take some time off, including a holiday to Sri Lanka, before making any formal decisions.

Turner’s case has sparked broader debate about political and cultural expression in the workplace. He previously told *Sky News Australia* that the repeated use of Acknowledgement of Country protocols in workplace settings had become excessive and disruptive. “If you go to eight meetings, you’re probably going to get eight acknowledgements. You spend half your day at it,” he said.

The Acknowledgement of Country is a formal statement recognizing Indigenous Australians as traditional custodians of the land. While it is common in public and corporate settings, its frequency and context have drawn criticism from those who feel such practices are being inserted into spaces that should remain apolitical.

Turner, who grew up in the working-class Melbourne suburb of Broadmeadows, rejected any accusations of racism. He pointed out that he has Indigenous relatives and strong friendships with Aboriginal Australians formed through local sports. Referring to his niece, he said, “She’s got three beautiful boys and one wild daughter. So I have no problems with Aboriginals.”

When asked about his political views, Turner expressed admiration for One Nation leader Pauline Hanson. “People will throw the racist word at her, but she goes, ‘No, I look after Australians, not the illegals that come into it,’” he said. One Nation has long campaigned for stricter immigration controls and a stronger emphasis on Australian cultural values in public policy.

Turner’s case has resonated with Australians who feel uneasy about what they perceive as overreach in cultural or symbolic workplace practices. His willingness to challenge the council’s decision has earned him media attention and a potential political platform.

If Turner decides to pursue a Senate seat, he is likely to attract support from voters frustrated with what they view as symbolic politics taking precedence over practical

governance, particularly in local government and the public sector.

As the national conversation continues over the role of political and cultural expression in everyday institutions, Turner's next move may serve as a sign of a broader shift among Australians who believe their voices are being sidelined.