

ASSOCIATION OF CONSULTING ARCHITECTS (ACA)

Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan

July 2023 – July 2024



In the spirit of reconciliation, the Association of Consulting Architects acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the Country where we meet today. We acknowledge the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations, each with their own language, land and clans. And we acknowledge our gratitude that we share these lands, waters and sky today and our hope and belief we as members of a professional alliance within the built environment sector, can help move Australia to a place of equity, justice and partnership together. We pay our respect to Elders past, present, emerging.

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Front cover artwork:
Judith Coppin, *Our Malyari,*
The Pleiades Seven Sisters
Star System

STATEMENT FROM CEO OF RECONCILIATION AUSTRALIA

Inaugural Reflect RAP

Reconciliation Australia welcomes Association of Consulting Architects to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

Association of Consulting Architects joins a network of more than 2,200 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have made a formal commitment to reconciliation through the RAP program.

Since 2006, RAPs have provided a framework for organisations to leverage their structures and diverse spheres of influence to support the national reconciliation movement. The program's potential for impact is greater than ever, with close to 3 million people now working or studying in an organisation with a RAP.

The four RAP types — Reflect, Innovate, Stretch and Elevate — allow RAP partners to continuously develop and strengthen reconciliation commitments in new ways. This Reflect RAP will lay the foundations, priming the workplace for future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives.

The RAP program's strength is its framework of relationships, respect, and opportunities, allowing an organisation to strategically set its reconciliation commitments in line with its own business objectives, for the most effective outcomes.

These outcomes contribute towards the five dimensions of reconciliation: race relations; equality and equity; institutional integrity; unity; and historical acceptance.

It is critical to not only uphold all five dimensions of reconciliation, but also increase awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and leadership across all sectors of Australian society.

This Reflect RAP enables Association of Consulting Architects to deepen their understanding of their sphere of influence and the unique contribution they can make to lead progress across the five dimensions. Getting these first steps right will ensure the sustainability of future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives, and provide meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

Congratulations Association of Consulting Architects, welcome to the RAP program, and I look forward to following your reconciliation journey in the years to come.

Karen Mundine

Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia





ACA National Executive and Executive Officers, 2022

WELCOME

The implementation of a RAP for the ACA is not something that we, as an Association, have taken lightly. Our commitment stems from a genuine belief that a RAP is a powerful step towards fostering positive outcomes, healthy relationships, mutual respect, and enhanced opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. As a business, I want to ensure we are constantly aligning ourselves and the work we do with ethical values that impact not just the architectural profession, but the wider communities that we serve. We are serious about contributing to meaningful change, and change can only occur if we mean it. The Reflect RAP is one, of many, exciting examples of this commitment and the ACA looks forward to working with Reconciliation Australia on this important journey for years to come.

Angelina Pillai, CEO

OUR BUSINESS

The Association of Consulting Architects (ACA) leads the discussion on business matters in architecture in Australia. The association is a registered employer body under the Fair Work Commission, representing architectural employers.

The ACA was founded in 1987 as the national peak body representing the interests of employers in industrial matters, including workplace conditions and Award negotiations. This remains the basis of ACA's charter, however we also have a responsibility to positively influence practice management in architecture and to engage in the wider industry. As a result, the ACA now addresses the “business of architecture” more broadly, with industrial relations remaining as a vital core of ACA activity.

The ACA helps architectural firms navigate the changing world of practice by providing regular advice and information on business and employment matters, by promoting awareness of and discussion about business issues, and by advocating for better business practices and legislative frameworks.

Through this leadership, support and advocacy, the ACA helps to ensure the long-term health and viability of the profession, and thereby supports the important contribution that architecture makes to our cities, environments, communities and cultures.

Whilst industrial relations underpin the core of ACA's charter, we have an equally critical obligation to educate and support our profession on important issues directly linked to equitable and innovative architectural practice. We do this by engaging in strategic partnerships with leading experts and organisations, serving as a conduit between our members and the reputable offerings of our strategic partners.

The ACA has branches covering all states and territories in Australia. Activities, initiatives and advocacy are framed by the Strategic Plan and national co-operation is facilitated by the National Executive Committee.

ACA members cover the spectrum of practice sizes – from sole practitioners to large practices – and include a range of business types, from individuals to partnerships and companies.

The ACA employs 7 people across Australia, including a CEO, national sponsorship and communications staff, and Executive Officers representing the following branches: VIC/TAS, NSW/ACT, QLD/NT, SA and WA.

The ACA is overseen by a National Executive Committee and five Branch Committees. The roles on these committees are voluntary and occupied by people committed to improving business practices within the architectural profession.

The ACA is not aware of any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in our workplace.

The ACA is a national organisation with members in each State and Territory. In February 2023, we recorded 808 member practices, representing 6400 staff.

Our paid workforce is entirely flexible, both in hours and location. Our committee meetings are held online or in the offices of our committee members.

OUR RAP

Put simply, we are developing a RAP because we believe it is the right thing to do.

Firstly, we are an organisation of considerable influence within the built environment sphere, and we want to use this influence to create a more diverse, equitable and sustainable profession. We acknowledge that we have much to learn from Traditional Owners in relation to the impact of colonisation and care for the land and environment. We are just beginning to understand what Country, with its layers of complexity and richness, means to First Nations people and we are committed to engaging in authentic, meaningful exchange to learn more.

Secondly, we acknowledge that much work is to be done in improving diversity and inclusion within the profession. We want to be part of a profession in which First Nations students view architecture as a viable and rewarding career path. Our role in this is to provide our membership with the resources and understanding to lead culturally safe work environments and to raise awareness of supportive programs such as CareerTrackers and Reconciliation Australia.

Thirdly, many of our members work with government and are increasingly being asked to demonstrate an understanding of Country and First Nations concerns as part of procurement processes. The NSW Government's Draft Connecting to Country Framework is a clear example of how the architectural profession is being asked to incorporate First Nations history, truth telling and continuous culture in the built environment. Similar policies are emerging across Australia.

Fourthly, the National Standard of Competencies for Architects has been updated to require that Architects build their knowledge of First Nations culture to maintain Registration. The onus is now on practices and individuals to upskill and embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture in their work. We see it as our ethical responsibility and our business remit to assist architectural practices with this endeavour.

Lastly, by establishing a RAP, we could offer this opportunity to our smaller-sized member practices who may not be able to develop their own RAP, thus extending the value and benefits of RAP initiatives.

Our first step in delivering our RAP is to develop a RAP Working Group that includes representation from each Australian state and territory; the intent of which is to build an understanding and ownership over the RAP across our membership, but also to better incorporate the unique needs of each region. The Working Group will meet quarterly and will establish KPIs in line with our RAP deliverables.

At a national level, we will offer online CPD on topics decided by the RAP Working Group. Topics that have already been discussed include:

- Cultural awareness training
- How to give a meaningful Acknowledgement of Country
- Exploring the Draft Connecting to Country Framework, and
- Building a culturally safe working environment.

Each Branch will have the opportunity to build on the national program by developing an annual event that responds to the unique issues and interest of each state. The national RAP Working Group will provide advice and guidance to ensure that Branch events are aligned with the national programme.

A critical part of the ACA's remit is to provide members with the resources to manage their businesses and to remain abreast of contemporary work practices. We see ourselves as a conduit between expert speakers and our membership. As such we have committed to establishing a portal on our website that allows members to easily access information related to our RAP and First Nations events and learning opportunities.

Our Reconciliation Journey To Date

Graphical Timeline

2019	Acknowledgement of Country at the commencement of meetings, events and online webinars
May 2021	RAP webinar
July 2022	CareerTrackers interview
Sept 2022	Samantha Rich interview
Oct 2022	ACA NEC approved the development of our first RAP
Oct 2022	WA Branch delivers a webinar on First Nations history in WA

We have established relationships with the following individuals and organisations:

Reconciliation Australia: in 2021, we hosted a webinar on the Reconciliation Action Plan program. Our panel included a Senior RAP Officer from Reconciliation Australia as well as representatives from architectural practices who had been through the RAP endorsement process. This webinar was attended by representatives from 232 practices and is available to view through our CPD on Demand program.

Deadly Djurumin is led by First Nations women and is an initiative of Parlour, a research-based organisation working to improve gender equity in architecture. Deadly Djurumin exists to offer support to First Nations women working in the built environment, and to build the capacity of non-Indigenous practitioners to incorporate notions of Country and cultural protocol in their work. We work closely with Parlour and share much of their programming, including the Deadly Djurumin Yarning series, with our members.

CareerTrackers: we are very supportive of the CareerTrackers program and its ability to assist young First Nations architectural students. To promote the program to our membership we have done two things: an interview with University Program Director Sharon Hiserman and Alumni Program Manager and former participant Darcee Duroux; and an interview with graduate architect and former CareerTrackers' student, Samantha Rich.

Mecca Events: we have a close working relationship with online CPD provider, Mecca Events, who support us as a Knowledge Partner, and we support them by sharing their content with our members. Mecca has a strong portfolio of First Nations focussed CPD including topics such as 'First Nations Engineering and Sustainable Design' and 'First Nations Design Principles in Architecture & Building'.

RELATIONSHIPS

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence.	July 2023	Marketing Coordinator
	Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	August 2023	CEO
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May 2024	Marketing Coordinator
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May – 3 June 2024	CEO
	Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May – 3 June 2024	CEO
	Provide information to our members regarding NRW events in each state and territory.	May 2024	Editorial Manager
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.	July, Nov 2023 March, 2024	CEO
	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all members.	July, Nov 2023 March, 2024	Editorial Manager
	Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	August 2023	Marketing Coordinator
	Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	August 2023	Marketing Coordinator
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	September 2023	CEO
	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	October 2023	HR Adviser
	Develop an HR policy template that includes a clause regarding anti-discrimination that can be downloaded by ACA Members.	March 2024	HR Adviser

RESPECT

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	Develop a business case for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation.	November 2023	CEO
	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	November 2023	Marketing Coordinator
	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our membership.	December 2023	Marketing Coordinator
	In consultation with First Nations advisers, we will develop a programme of three national webinars that address the cultural learning needs of our membership (to be rolled out across 2024).	January 2024	CEO
	Develop a framework that enables each Branch to confidently deliver their own event related to First Nations topics.	February 2024	CEO
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	Review content on our website portal where members can access information, CPD and advice regarding First Nations topics. Ensure that the activities of affiliate organisations, including Deadly Djurumin are up to date.	July 2023	Editorial Manager
	Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area.	July 2023	Marketing Coordinator
	Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	August 2023	CEO
7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	Increase our membership's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	August 2023	CEO
	Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.	June 2024	Marketing Coordinator
	Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	June 2024	Marketing Coordinator
	Introduce our membership to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in each state.	June 2024	Editorial Manager
	RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	First week in July 2024	CEO

OPPORTUNITIES

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
8. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	Develop a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation.	February 2024	CEO
	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	March 2024	CEO
9. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	April 2024	CEO
	Investigate Supply Nation membership.	February 2024	Marketing Coordinator

GOVERNANCE

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
10. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	Form a RWG to govern RAP implementation.	July, 2023	CEO
	Draft a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	July, 2023	CEO
	Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	August, 2023	CEO
11. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	July, 2023	CEO
	Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	August, 2023	CEO
	Appoint a senior leader to champion our RAP internally.	July, 2023	CEO
	Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	August, 2024	Marketing Coordinator
12. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	Contact Reconciliation Australia to verify that our primary and secondary contact details are up to date, to ensure we do not miss out on important RAP correspondence.	June annually	Marketing Coordinator
	Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire.	1 August annually	Marketing Coordinator
	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September, annually	Marketing Coordinator
13. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	<i>[three months prior to RAP expiry date]</i>	Marketing Coordinator

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