

REFLECT RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN



Architects
CONSERVATION
CONSULTANTS

M. NICHOL, 2014

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Yaluk-ut Weelam clan of the Bunurong people as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Euro-Yroke (St Kilda), on which our office is based. We recognise their profound and continuing connection to Country and pay our respects to Elders past and present. We extend that respect to all First Nation peoples throughout Australia.



**RBA ARCHITECTS +
CONSERVATION CONSULTANTS PTY LTD**
FITZROY STREET 4C/171
ST KILDA VIC AUSTRALIA 3182

+613 9525 5666 TEL

contact@rbaarchitects.com.au EMAIL
www.rbaarchitects.com.au WEB



COVER IMAGE:

Ngaree Tree, St Kilda
Margaret nicoll, 2024

About the cover image:

The Ngaree ('ceremony') Tree – a giant red gum located in Albert Park Reserve, near our offices – is popularly considered the oldest surviving lifeform in the City of Port Phillip, with an estimated age of up to 800 years old. It holds a deep history as a meeting place for the Yaluk-ut Weelan clan of the Boonwurrung peoples and endures as a powerful symbol of their connection to Country. Local community activism over the 20th century ensured the conservation of this ancient tree, pointing to its emergence as a place of shared cultural value.

CONTENTS



St Kilda was called Euro-Yroke meaning the 'grinding stone place' ... Stone axes were a highly valued tool, universally used by Aboriginal men for cutting bar from trees for housing, canoes and containers and other purpose.

Meyer Eidelson, Yalukit William: The River People of Port Phillip, City of Port Phillip, 2014

Statement from CEO of Reconciliation Australia —

Welcome —

Our Practice and Vision —

Our RAP —

Relationships —

Respect —

Opportunities —

Governance —

Contact details —

STATEMENT FROM CEO OF RECONCILIATION AUSTRALIA

Inaugural Reflect RAP - *Placeholder TBC*

WELCOME

As a company, we remain committed to the moving invitation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart and its call for Voice, Truth, and Treaty.

Director's Introduction and Welcome

This is RBA's first RAP, and I am honoured to endorse it on behalf of the practice. While we have long advocated for the heritage of First Nation peoples and the embedding of respect, sustainability, and a connection to Country in our work, this RAP now allows us to consolidate our thinking and expand our efforts on this vital front.

Our nation has been enriched by diversity. The First Peoples of Australia - who have never ceded sovereignty - are at the core of our ongoing story. As conservators of the historic environment, we have a critical role to play in entrenching truth-telling in heritage practice and progressing collaboration with First Nation peoples.

We are committed to truth-telling about the colonial experience, to revealing and re-calibrating our stories to account for the complexity of First Nation cultures, as well as their experiences of barbarous predations, the denial of justice, and their remarkable ongoing resilience. Our growing realisation that the significant landscapes and buildings we seek to conserve are themselves symbolic of the colonisation process is to us a pressing issue. How we can work towards imbuing new understanding and respect for First Nation peoples and our intertwined pasts represents a crucial question for the firm and field.

RBA is deeply serious about the business of reconciliation and contributing to meaningful change. Our RAP represents a small but important step.



Roger Beeston

Director

OUR PRACTICE AND VISION

RBA is a Melbourne (Naarm) conservation firm established in 1994. Roger Beeston is the founding director, supported by a leadership committee. The staff number fifteen, most of whom are long-term employees. From our offices in St Kilda—located in the boundaries of the Bunurong Land Council—we work across Victoria and, on occasion, interstate and internationally in the built heritage field. Our work routinely intersects with archaeology and Aboriginal heritage.

In this vein, we were privileged in 2005 to consult and collaborate with the First Nations people in developing a conservation management plan for the Bangerang Cultural Centre the first purpose-built and Aboriginal-run example of its type in Australia. A recognition of the often-overlooked presence and primacy of First Peoples in the historic environment underpins our practice and we proactively seek out opportunities to uplift their perspective.

RBA deal with conservation projects of all scales and have developed a niche as honest heritage brokers, working in a frank and solution-orientated way underpinned by sound practice, an embrace of innovation, and dedication to sustain people's connection to distinctive places and landscapes.

We value the diversity of our people and strive to create a respectful, inclusive culture that is sensitive to the needs of all.

At this point in time, we are not aware that any of our staff identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders.

Our vision for reconciliation and a more equitable society is broad and hopeful. At its core is a willingness to listen and allow First Peoples to exercise their agency.

We appreciate the evolutionary dynamics of culture. Celebrating and sustaining our settler and immigrant inheritances now and into the future need not be incompatible with telling the truth about their painful and uncomfortable chapters and valuing Country and the rights of its original custodians. Through our practice, we want to cultivate a community that appreciates the layered, diverse nature of our historic environment and embraces a meaningful dialogue in which we talk to and hear each other.

Image:
Bangerang Cultural Centre
Frederick Romberg, 1980
(Heritage Victoria)



OUR RAP

We prepared our RAP in the wake of the Voice Referendum. The disappointment of its result, combined with a longstanding engagement with the idea of inclusive history/heritage practice and recognition that we work on unceded land, spurred us to set down its vision for transformative societal change. This document is an important 'first step' for RBA that will guide our commitment to making a meaningful contribution to reconciliation.

As architects, historians, conservation specialists, and heritage consultants, we are well-situated within our sphere of influence to effect change, for example, by:

- Recognising the rights and interests of First Nation peoples as the keepers and authority of their culture and heritage and prioritising consultation with relevant Aboriginal stakeholder groups.
- Strengthen informal and formal relationships with First Nation communities and organisations.
- Advocate for reform in practice and legislation to better support and reflect the aspirations of First Nation peoples in conserving and managing their heritage.
- Encourage design work that is cognisant of and responsive to Country and Traditional Owners.
- Comply with the National Standard of Competencies for Architects that requires architects build-up their knowledge of First Nations culture to maintain Registration.
- Expand our understanding of the past by acknowledging and helping to tell First Peoples' stories where appropriate.
- Utilise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suppliers, where possible.
- Continue to ensure our workplace remains a culturally safe and welcoming environment, free from bias and discrimination.

Our RAP has been developed and is being steered by the RAP Working Group (RWG), which includes a director, practice manager, and a range of practitioners from all parts of the firm. Senior heritage consultant Patrick Wilson will be the RAP Champion and drive its implementation. There is a firm-wide acceptance of the RAP and a willingness to internalise its objectives as 'core work'. We recognise that the implementation of our RAP will be a learning process and will require ongoing dedication and the commitment of resources.

Relationships

Our relationship with First Nation peoples will be based on a recognition of their unceded sovereignty and a willingness to listen first. As a practice, we will focus on embracing opportunities to consult with First Nation people where meaningful and cultivate reciprocal relationships.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with First Nations stakeholders and organisations.	Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with First Nations stakeholders and organisations.	September 2024	RWG
	Identify First Nations stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence.		
Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.	September 2024	RWG
	Inform all staff of the RAP, the work of the RWG, the planned activities and outcomes and how all staff can be involved.		
	Launch the RAP to our stakeholders and the broader public through our digital channels.		
	Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.		
Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW)	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	January 2025	RWG
	Ensure RWG members participate in an external NRW event.	27 May – 3 June 2025	
	Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.		
Promote positive race relations through antidiscrimination strategies.	Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	December 2024	Director
	Review HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.		Practice Manager

Respect

We will continue to strive to increase awareness of First Nation's history and culture, particularly within the shared spaces and realities of our built environment. Our focus is on creating and supporting action for positive change, on terms closely informed by the viewpoints of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Increase understanding, value and recognition of First Nations cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	<p>Develop a business case for increasing understanding, appreciation and recognition of First Nations cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation.</p> <p>Review cultural learning needs within our organisation.</p> <p>Select staff to undertake cultural awareness training by a First Nations provider.</p> <p>Continue to build a dedicated First Nation section in the practice library through the sourcing publications and resources. Ensure staff are aware of these materials.</p> <p>Organise the displaying of Acknowledgement of Country plaques in the main reception areas of each of our offices to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which our offices are situated.</p>	March 2025	RWG
Demonstrate respect to First Nations peoples by observing cultural protocols.	<p>Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area.</p> <p>Expand our staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols (e.g. internal videos, SharePoint News).</p>	December 2024	RWG
Build respect for First Nations cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	<p>Raise awareness and share information among our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.</p> <p>Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local areas.</p> <p>Ensure RWG members participate in an external NAIDOC Week event</p> <p>Encourage and support staff to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NAIDOC Week.</p>	June 2025	RWG
Australia Day	<p>Acknowledge the diverse perspectives that surround Australia Day are respected.</p> <p>Allow RBA staff the flexibility to choose to work on Australia Day or substitute a different day for the public holiday.</p>	December 2024	RWG

Opportunities

Opportunities

We will proactively seek out opportunities to engage with First Nations viewpoints in our practice, as well as deepen our understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, histories, and heritage.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Improve employment outcomes by increasing First Nations recruitment, retention and professional development..	Develop a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation.	November 2024	RWG
	Develop a strategy for how RBA can support the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders recruitment in the field of built heritage conservation.		
	As part of employment strategy and commitment a diverse workforce, prepare a business case for recruiting and retaining Indigenous Australian staff.		
	Investigate involvement with CareerTrackers.		
Increase First Nations supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	Develop a list of suppliers for procurement from First Nations owned businesses.	August 2024	RWG
	Update procurement policy to consider including Supply Nation as an identified supplier avenue.		
	Investigate Supply Nation membership.		
Build respect for First Nations cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	Raise awareness and share information among our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.	February 2025	RWG
	Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local areas.		
	Ensure RWG members participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.		
	Encourage and support staff to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NAIDOC Week.		

Governance

Our focus is vesting the responsibility for reconciliation with all areas of RBA. We are committed to achieving our goals through accountability for our actions. We will celebrate our wins and learn from our experiences, helping to ensure our actions are guided by best practices when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Maintain an effective RWG to drive governance of the RAP.	Develop a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	August 2024	RWG
	Maintain the RWG to govern RAP implementation		
Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	August 2024	RWG
	Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.		
	Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.		
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	RWG
	Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire.		
	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.		
Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	July 2025	RWG

CONTACT PATRICK WILSON
Senior Heritage Consultant

RBA ARCHITECTS +
CONSERVATION CONSULTANTS

SUITE 4C
171 FITZROY STREET
ST KILDA VIC 3182

TEL +613 9525 5666

EMAIL patrick@rbaarchitects.com.au
WEB www.rbaarchitects.com.au

Heritage