



**REFLECT**

# RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

MAY 2021 - MAY 2022



RECONCILIATION  
ACTION PLAN

**REFLECT**

**REGIONAL  
DESIGN  
SERVICE**



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DESIGN  
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**MORGANS LOOKOUT  
CONCEPT DESIGN  
WIRADJURI COUNTRY  
WALLA WALLA, NSW**

Concept developed in collaboration with Waradgerie  
(Wiradjuri) Artist Lorraine Connelly-Nortey

# ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY AND TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS

Regional Design Service acknowledges the Traditional Custodians throughout Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lands.

We recognise their ongoing connection to Country, land and waters that were never ceded and pay our respects to Elders, past, present and emerging.

We also acknowledge the Bpangerang, Wiradjuri, Jaitmatang, Yorta Yorta and Waveroo people on whose Country we work and create.

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# REGIONAL DESIGN SERVICE

## A MESSAGE FROM RECONCILIATION AUSTRALIA

Reconciliation Australia welcomes Regional Design Service to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

Regional Design Service joins a network of more than 1,100 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 over 2.3 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 Regional Design Service to deepen its understanding of its sphere of influence and the unique contribution it 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 Regional Design Service, 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



PHOTOGRAPHER - JOSEPH MAYERS

# DIRECTORS INTRODUCTION

Regional Design Service was established in 2017 with the primary focus of delivering meaningful, thought-provoking and sustainable design outcomes for Rural and Regional communities and their inhabitants.

We firmly believe that considered change and quality design enriches community pride and ownership, making for healthier communities. From the outset we have endeavored to connect with and engage with local people; particularly on the public projects we undertake. While we understand the benefits of introducing First Australian voices into this work, we understand that the broader community has to go on their own reconciliation journey to get there.

It is of the highest importance to us that we recognise the culture and values of First Australians and ensure that we contribute to implementing considered and purposeful change within our community and profession.

We are excited about being a part of this meaningful change and look forward to sharing what we learn along the way.



Aaron Nicholls and Phillip Nielsen  
Founding Directors



PHOTOGRAPHER - GEORGIE JAMES

**REGIONAL  
DESIGN  
SERVICE**



**REGIONAL DESIGN  
SERVICE STUDIO  
BPANGERANG COUNTRY  
COROWA, NSW**

PHOTOGRAPHER - GEORGIE JAMES

# OUR BUSINESS

## **We are an Architecture & Design studio situated on Bpangerang Country in Corowa, New South Wales, Australia.**

Our primary focus has always been to deliver meaningful, thought-provoking and sustainable design outcomes for Rural and Regional communities and their inhabitants.

We firmly believe that considered change and quality design enriches community pride and ownership, making for good citizens - consequently we're involved in Government, Community, Commercial, Hospitality and Residential projects.

We're driven to cultivate community awareness of design and how it can enrich all facets of rural and regional life; and are motivated to demonstrate that architecture and design has a crucial place in rural and regional Australia.

We place significant emphasis on understanding the community in which we live and work, and actively engage with a cross-section of community groups via the delivery of events and exhibitions spanning themes including movements in design, to ideas with landscape architecture. We're passionate about education and advocacy, so our events focus on sharing the value, process and context of design. All of our team volunteer in some capacity within their communities.

When it comes to our Design Portfolio we like to challenge the status quo whilst respecting the context of project sites and their unique rural setting. Our experience, professionalism and overall design approach has seen the studio recognised (and awarded) both locally and internationally for its unique thinking and design ambition.

## **Our Team**

Our team has a diverse background in Architecture, Interior Design, Placemaking, Graphic Design and Visual Arts. We have a strong focus on business integrity, industry aptitude and simple professionalism. We deliver an approach which is open-minded and without preconception. Our projects are well considered, rational and sustainable.

Unlike our urban counterparts, we do not see living and working in a Regional or Rural context as a barrier to the enrichment of either our personal or professional lives. In fact our lives are richer due to the professional and personal roles all of our team play in regional communities. Further, it is important to us that our team is as dynamic

and diverse as the communities in which we work. Regional Design Service is an Equal Opportunity Employer and does not discriminate based on race, gender, sexual identity or orientation. Our differences make us better and we are proud that everyone in our team supports greater diversity in the workplace.

## **Our Impact**

We care about regional and rural living and understand the impact that quality and relevant design has on community. This is evident in the outcomes we deliver and the groups with whom we work. At the core of our business is a desire to create a stronger sense of pride and community ownership.

We are proud to undertake pro-bono work with volunteer community groups; partnering with them to deliver great projects and help them gain an understanding on how to secure better funding. Since 2017 our contribution to better project planning has resulted in an additional \$3m+ of grant funding towards small township projects. Our clients understand that by choosing Regional Design Service for their projects is an investment back into the community.

Regional Design Service are advocates for reconciliation and acknowledge the Bpangerang, Wiradjuri, Jaitmatang, Yorta Yorta and Waveroo people on whose Country we work, live, and create.

As a practice we continuously seek to explore and expand First Australians' perspectives, engagement and design thinking on all our projects across residential, commercial, and public works. Since inception, we have endeavored to build relationships with local Elders and communities, and we aim to improve relationships between community members of all cultural backgrounds to establish common ground. This Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) establishes a commitment to structuring what has so far been organic steps by the business towards reconciliation.

## **PARTICULARS**

- Core Business – Architecture and Design
- We currently employ 5 people likely growing to 7 by June 2021
- We currently have no Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.
- Our geographical reach is centred for Corowa, NSW. From this location we deliver projects regionally with projects in Griffith, Wagga Wagga, Albury, Wodonga, Tallangatta, Rutherglen, Wangaratta, Yarrawonga, Mulwala and more.

# REGIONAL DESIGN SERVICE

## OUR RAP

Initial endeavors, within this Reflect RAP, are to bring about a deeper cultural understanding of First Australians to best make a purposeful difference. We also intend to improve our relationships with First Australians with direct connection and close engagement to establish better informed cultural awareness.

Initially we will work to discover and connect with First Australians within our region to further our cultural learning. We will reach out to our existing First Australian contacts, explain the journey we're taking and ask for their advice. As we are a small business, we imagine that our Reconciliation Action Group will be comprised of 2-3 employees and 2-3 external First Australian Advisers who will be compensated for their time and contribution. Our Director Phillip Nielsen will act as our RAP Champion and undertake regular review with the Reconciliation Action Group.

As building designs directly affect all Australians, we aim to, with appropriate consultation, overlay qualities and embed them within our thinking wherever possible. Through recent workshops and conference attendance we learned of "Designing From Country" and aim to introduce this thinking into our design process for all projects. With our enhanced cultural knowledge and connection, it is our aim to determine the most meaningful and effective way in which we can work with First Australians to bridge the gap of inequality.

## OUR PARTNERSHIPS AND CURRENT ACTIVITIES

We are a curious studio and are keenly interested in learning and sharing knowledge gained. Over the course of the last four years, we have facilitated or participated in a diverse range of First Australians' events / activities, including,

- Hosted the exhibition 'Narbong Galang' with works by Wiradjuri artist Lorraine Connelly-Northey in our studio for three months.
- Facilitated three Artist talks for the community with Aunty Lorraine.
- Attended the 2019 NSW Country Division Architecture Conference 'Always was, Always will be' to learn about 'Designing with Country' from First Australian design professionals.
- Attended numerous online workshops throughout 2020 regarding Country, Reconciliation and First Australians to further broaden our understanding of Designing with Country.

Regarding the work we create, we have been fortunate to have an open dialogue and friendship with Aunty Lorraine Connelly-Northey. Lorraine helps steer us in the right direction when we do not know what to do or who to talk to. These open conversations continually help the studio broaden our engagement with communities to think about how they can include First Australian voices in the shaping of their community's collective future.



'Narbong Galang' exhibition opening with LGA representatives. L-R Councillor Norm Wales, Artist Lorraine Connelly-Northey, Phillip Nielsen, Aaron Nicholls, Deputy Mayor Shaun Whitechurch, Mayor Pat Bourke.

**RELATIONSHIPS**



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>1. Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.</b>	Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence.	July 2021	Design Director
	Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	July 2021	Design Director
<b>2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).</b>	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May 2021	Design Director
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May- 3 June, 2021	Design Director and Director of Business
	Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May- 3 June, 2021	Design Director and Director of Business
<b>3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.</b>	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.	May 2021	Design Director and Director of Business
	Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	July 2021	Design Director and Director of Business
	Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	July 2021	Design Director and Director of Business
<b>4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.</b>	Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	October 2021	Design Director, Director of Business and Studio Assistant
	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	October 2021	Design Director, Director of Business and Studio Assistant

# RESPECT



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.</b>	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 2021	Design Director and Director of Business
	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	November 2021	Design Director and Director of Business
	Invite speakers into our organisation to increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.	November 2021	Design Director and Director of Business
<b>6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.</b>	Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area.	May 2021	Design Director and Director of Business
	Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	May 2021	Design Director and Director of Business
<b>7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.</b>	Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.	4th - 11th July 2021	Design Director
	Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	4th - 11th July 2021	Design Director
	RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	4th - 11th July 2021	Design Director

**OPPORTUNITIES**



<b>Action</b>	<b>Deliverable</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
<b>8. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.</b>	Develop a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation.	October 2021	Director of Business
	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	October 2021	Director of Business
	Approach other industry businesses to better understand their path towards improving employment outcomes.	October 2021	Director of Business
<b>9. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.</b>	Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	November 2021	Design Director and Director of Business
	Investigate Supply Nation membership.	November 2021	Design Director and Director of Business
<b>10. Create a transformation strategy to strengthen opportunities for First Australians</b>	Workshop with employees and the Reconciliation Action Group to explore how best we as a practice can bring about meaningful change to strengthen opportunities for First Australians.	November 2021	Design Director and Director of Business
	Following the workshop, summarise key actions to implement within our business and circulate with clients, collaborators and community.	December 2021	Design Director and Director of Business

# GOVERNANCE



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>11. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.</b>	Form a RWG to govern RAP implementation.	August 2021	Design Director
	Draft a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	August 2021	Design Director
	Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	August 2021	Design Director
<b>12. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.</b>	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	August 2021	Design Director
	Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	August 2021	Design Director
	Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	August 2021	Design Director, Studio Assistant
<b>13. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.</b>	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September, 2021	Design Director, Studio Assistant
<b>14. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.</b>	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	February 2022	Design Director, Studio Assistant



## CONTACT DETAILS

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