

Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan

June 2025 – June 2027



We at ARM Architecture acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country upon which we live and work, throughout Australia.

Our Melbourne workplace is located on Country of the Wurundjeri peoples of the Eastern Kulin Nation.

Our Sydney workplace is located on Country of the Gadigal peoples of the Eora Nation.

Our Adelaide workplace is located on Country of the Kaurna peoples.

Our Brisbane workplace is located on Country of the Turrbal peoples of the Yugambeh Nation.

Our Gold Coast workplace is located on the Country of the Yugambeh peoples.

Our Perth workplace is located on Country of the Whadjuk Noongar peoples of the Noongar Nation.

We at ARM acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders peoples and we pay our respects to Elders, past and present. We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and relationship to the land.

We are committed to our reconciliation journey.

ABOUT OUR COVER IMAGE

This photo was taken at the Welcome to Country ceremony and official opening of the Munarra Centre for Regional Excellence (MCRE) on Yorta Yorta Country in Shepparton, Victoria. The MCRE is an Indigenous-led, world-class education, sporting, and public gathering space that honours the world's oldest living culture. As a result of a genuine co-design process, the Centre's design, guided by ARM Architecture, reflects a deep commitment to the Yorta Yorta community, with spaces thoughtfully crafted to support education, sporting activities, and the transmission of First Peoples' knowledge.

Pictured are the Wulumbarra Dancers performing at the opening of the MCRE. In Yorta Yorta language, Wulumburra means 'Communal Fire'. Wulumburra's vision is to develop just that. A sense of fire to energise and connect community to be both empowered, and grow in a way which honours all the sacredness of which we descend from.¹

Follow Wulumbarra Dancers via their Instagram @wulumbarra

Photo: Jesse Judd

1. "Wulumbarra," Facebook, accessed 10 December 2024, <https://www.facebook.com/wulumbarra/>.

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Reconciliation Australia

CEO Statement



Reconciliation Australia commends ARM Architecture on the formal endorsement of its inaugural Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

Commencing an Innovate RAP is a crucial and rewarding period in an organisation's reconciliation journey. It is a time to build strong foundations and relationships, ensuring sustainable, thoughtful, and impactful RAP outcomes into the future.

Since 2006, RAPs have provided a framework for organisations to leverage their structures and diverse spheres of influence to support the national reconciliation movement.

This Innovate RAP is both an opportunity and an invitation for ARM Architecture to expand its understanding of its core strengths and deepen its relationship with its community, staff, and stakeholders.

By investigating and understanding the integral role it plays across its sphere of influence, ARM Architecture will create dynamic reconciliation outcomes, supported by and aligned with its business objectives.

An Innovate RAP is the time to strengthen and develop the connections that form the lifeblood of all RAP commitments. The RAP program's framework of *relationships, respect, and opportunities* emphasises not only the importance of fostering consultation and collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, but also empowering and enabling staff to contribute to this process, as well.

With close to 3 million people now either working or studying in an organisation with a RAP, the program's potential for impact is greater than ever. ARM Architecture is part of a strong network of more than 3,000 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have taken goodwill and intention, and transformed it into action.

Implementing an Innovate RAP signals ARM Architecture's readiness to develop and strengthen relationships, engage staff and stakeholders in reconciliation, and pilot innovative strategies to ensure effective outcomes.

Getting these steps right will ensure the sustainability of future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives, and provide meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

Congratulations ARM Architecture on your Innovate RAP and I look forward to following your ongoing reconciliation journey.

Karen Mundine
Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia

ARM Architecture

Our Vision for Reconciliation



Our vision is for an architectural landscape that embodies authentic cultural leadership through collaboration.

We amplify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices and champion self-determination, ensuring genuine representation in all we create.

As we reflect on the conclusion of our 2023–2024 Reflect RAP, it is clear that this journey has been instrumental in formalising our commitment to reconciliation and embedding it more deeply into our practice. The Reflect RAP has provided us with invaluable lessons and insights, setting a strong foundation for the next stage of our reconciliation journey.

Through the relationships we have cultivated with First Nations artists, consultants, and cultural practitioners, we have witnessed the transformative power of collaboration and cultural leadership. These partnerships have not only enriched our projects but have also highlighted the broader opportunities to amplify First Nations voices across our industry and the wider community.

Our approach to reconciliation has evolved over time, both alongside and in dialogue with our peers. However, we are proud to have sustained a long and consistent interest in this critical area. From the design of the National Museum of Australia, which opened in 2001 and famously featured the word *sorry* inscribed in the building—later concealed at the insistence of the government at the time—to today, where we have just completed the Munarra Centre for Regional Excellence on Yorta Yorta Country in Shepparton, we have continued to engage deeply with themes of reconciliation. The Munarra Centre represents a landmark moment for ARM, being the first truly Indigenous-led, self-determination project we have been part of. These projects, among others, have taught us that reconciliation is not a static concept but an evolving practice that requires humility, listening, and action.

As we embark on our 2025–2027 Innovate RAP, we are reminded of the pressing need for a greater presence of First Nations architects in Australia. By fostering culturally

intuitive and co-design-led approaches, we hope to contribute to a more inclusive and representative built environment, one that honours the depth and diversity of First Nations cultures.

True reconciliation demands consultation and respect. We must continue making every effort to ensure conceptual ideas are authentic representations of culture. This requires offering opportunities for artistic expression, education, and genuine engagement with community, challenging the narratives that have shaped our built environment and reflecting on the enduring impacts of colonialism.

The profound insights we gain from working collaboratively with First Nations peoples remind us of the critical role of art, storytelling, and community in design. As architects, we have a responsibility to deepen our understanding of these traditions and to share these learnings with the broader community.

There remains a yearning for more meaningful and representative expressions of First Nations cultures in Australian architecture. Recent progress is encouraging, but it must be sustained through ongoing education, reflection, and action. How can we better align our practice with the principles of reconciliation, and how can we ensure these principles inspire others?

For ARM, reconciliation has been a journey spanning over 30 years, and it continues to shape our practice. The Uluru Statement from the Heart reminds us of the importance of inclusion, respect for Country, and recognition of First Nations sovereignty — a sovereignty that has never been ceded.

It is our collective responsibility to create spaces that celebrate and communicate the richness of First Nations cultures. Our 2025–2027 Innovate RAP is an opportunity to deepen this commitment, fostering inclusive architecture that honours the past, enriches the present, and inspires the future.

Jesse Judd
Director
ARM Architecture



About ARM Architecture

ARM is a unique architecture, urban design and interior design practice, with an international reputation for creative ingenuity.

ARM Architecture is a globally recognised design practice with completed projects all over Australia. Our team works from our studios in Naarm (Melbourne), Warrane (Sydney), Tarntanya (Adelaide), Meanjin (Brisbane), and Boorloo (Perth).

We have an international reputation for designing significant public buildings—such as galleries, museums, libraries, and arts centres—as well as urban precincts that push the boundaries of architectural and urban thought. We immerse ourselves in the unique context of each project—its site history, both recent and distant, its environment, social fabric, and cultural significance. Through deep listening, collaboration, consultation, and co-design, we engage with communities and stakeholders to ensure these narratives shape our design work in meaningful and authentic ways.

We have a reputation for scholarship and creativity and have demonstrated proven design leadership in delivering innovative, iconic and ambitious projects across Australia.

In 2016, ARM's founding directors—Howard Raggatt, Ian McDougall, and the late Stephen Ashton—were awarded the Gold Medal, the Australian Institute of Architects' highest accolade for excellence in architectural design.

Over more than 30 years, our work has been recognised with over 100 architecture awards and is defined by the following hallmarks:

- In-depth research
- Genuine lateral thinking
- Unique, outside-the-box outcomes
- Authentic consultation and collaboration with clients
- Delivery on time and within budget
- Satisfied clients

ARM is a mid-sized architectural firm with around fifty employees, spread across offices in Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia, Queensland and Western Australia. As of June 2025, ARM has no employees who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

Employment Aspirations

We are committed to promoting and advancing employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This aspiration is not new; it was central to our 2023–2024 Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan, and we now aim to build upon it through our 2025–2027 Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan.

While we acknowledge that we have not increased the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in the past year, we remain steadfast in our commitment to creating meaningful opportunities and fostering an inclusive workplace. We recognise that achieving this goal requires sustained effort, and we are determined to deepen our engagement and refine our strategies to drive better outcomes.

Currently, the number of First Nations registered architects in Australia is limited. ARM understands that affirmative action is essential for cultivating a diverse workforce—one that brings a breadth of experiences and perspectives to keep the profession attuned and relevant to the communities it serves.

We recognise the importance of active Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices in architecture and hope that our reconciliation journey will inspire and empower more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to pursue careers in architecture and design. Through our 2025–2027 Innovate RAP, we aim to strengthen and expand these efforts, ensuring our actions translate into tangible progress.

Our ongoing and evolving affirmative action strategies are outlined further in both the Relationships and Opportunities sections of this RAP.



Image: An artist workshop at Rumbalara Football Netball Club, facilitated by Kaiela Arts and Spacecraft Studios, brought together students from the Academy of Sport, Health and Education, Yorta Yorta elders, community members, and designers from ARM and Bush Projects. Participants contributed items from their homes on Yorta Yorta Country—such as plants, bark, wood, stone, and ochre—which were used to create prints and artworks for the interior design of the Munarra Centre for Regional Excellence. Lyn Thorpe from Kaiela Arts (left) is pictured with Sarah Hicks from Bush Projects (centre) and Tom Jones from ARM Architecture (right). Photo courtesy Spacecraft Studio.



Our RAP

WHY IS ARM DEVELOPING A RAP?

Our architecture is defined by context, stories, and an understanding of the importance of memory and place. Public spaces are inherently political, and as architects designing large civic buildings, we see our work as a platform for starting and continuing vital conversations. Reconciliation is essential to this vision, and through our RAP, we aim to embed this commitment more deeply into our practice.

Our 2025–2027 Innovate RAP builds upon the foundation of our 2023–2024 Reflect RAP, formalising and advancing our reconciliation journey. It reflects our ongoing dedication to fostering a workplace culture that values and respects the histories, cultures, and contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. While we recognise there is still significant progress to be made, this RAP represents a critical step in turning our aspirations into tangible outcomes.

SENIOR LEADERSHIP CHAMPIONING THE RAP

Our RAP is championed by Jenny Watson, Principal and RAP Champion, who provides leadership and direction in embedding reconciliation principles throughout ARM. Jenny brings a genuine passion to this task, with recent experience working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders on the design of the Geelong Art Centre Stage 3.

ARM'S RAP WORKING GROUP

Our RAP Working Group continues to draw on a diverse cross-section of staff across seniority levels and locations. This approach ensures broad representation and collaboration. Current members include:

- **Jesse Judd** / Director (Naarm – Melbourne)
- **Jenny Watson** / Principal and RAP Champion (Naarm – Melbourne)
- **Mark Raggatt**, Director (Warrane – Sydney)
- **Philippe Naudin** / Principal (Tarntanya – Adelaide)
- **Aaron Poupard** / Principal (Yugambah Country – Gold Coast)
- **Ricky Ricardo** / Communications Manager (Naarm – Melbourne)
- **Dr Scott Alterator**, Director, Indigenous Education Futures, School of Education, La Trobe University (Naarm – Melbourne)

The group includes one Aboriginal member, Dr Scott Alterator, a proud Kamilaroi and Gandangarra man who provides invaluable cultural insights and guidance to ARM's RAP Working Group. Dr Scott Alterator joins RAP Working Group meetings twice a year.

How We Work

BEFORE THE CO-DESIGN PROCESS

For many of our projects, the Co-Design process begins before ARM Architecture is engaged. Our client has already built relationships and established a Traditional Owner advisory team specific to the local Country and purpose of the project. "Advisory team" refers to the group of First Nations people providing advice to our client, to ARM Architecture, and to the rest of the project team in relation to a specific project. The advisory team may be made up of different groups detailed in the next paragraph.

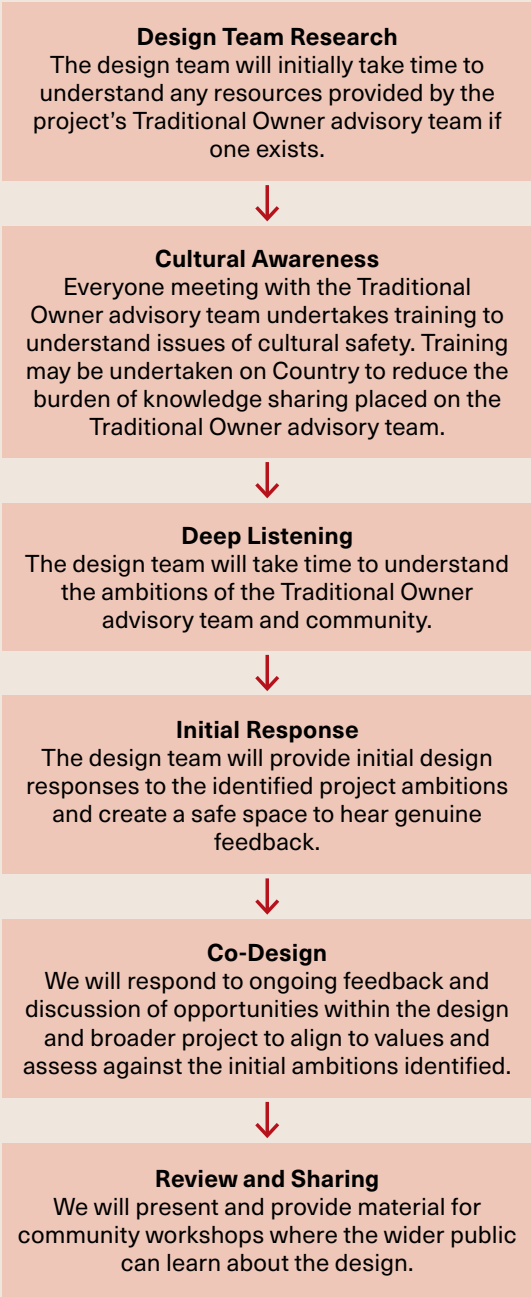
For some projects, our client may be keen to undertake a Co-Design process, but not have established relationships or processes in place. Our first step for this kind of project is to guide our client to relevant resources to understand the Co-Design process, such as the NSW Government Architect's *Connecting With Country Framework*. The membership of an advisory team could include Traditional Custodians, people from surrounding groups, and people who have moved to the area since colonisation. While we can sometimes assist by making introductions to relevant people with whom we have existing relationships, we also advise our clients to engage the services of a cultural advisor with relevant local experience to assist with identifying membership.

For some projects, a Co-Design process is not practical or appropriate. This may be because of insufficient budget, time, and/or client investment to ensure the process would be meaningful and the participants appropriately compensated for their time, effort and intellectual property. In this instance, we look for other ways that the architecture project can care for Country, such as understanding and supporting the local environment and biodiversity, and integrating sustainability measures.

The steps below outline our typical co-design approach. Whilst this is our starting point, we tailor each project to suit the preferences and expectations of the people who we work with.



Our Co-Design Process



Our Reconciliation Journey

Since establishing our RAP Working Group in 2017 and committing to the Uluru Statement from the Heart, ARM has undertaken a range of Reconciliation initiatives. Through our 2023–2024 Reflect RAP, we formalised many of these efforts, deepening our understanding of Reconciliation and its significance to our work.

KEY LEARNINGS FROM OUR REFLECT RAP INCLUDE

- The importance of formal frameworks to drive accountability and measure progress.
- The value of genuine partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and advisors to ensure meaningful engagement and authentic design outcomes.
- The need to further invest in cultural competence across our team to create a workplace that actively supports reconciliation.

Despite these efforts, we acknowledge that our employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have not increased over the past year. This is a critical area for improvement, and we are determined to address it through targeted actions in our 2025–2027 Innovate RAP. However, as a small business, we recognise that our greatest impact on employment outcomes lies in our consulting work as architects, where we enable the engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, craftspeople, advisers, contractors, and suppliers on our projects. This has been an ongoing focus for us and remains a priority we are committed to strengthening in the future.

LOOKING AHEAD

Our Innovate RAP aims to build on the groundwork of our Reflect RAP by focusing on expanding partnerships, creating new opportunities for First Nations employment, and embedding Reconciliation principles more deeply into our practice. We hope this RAP will continue to guide us on our Reconciliation journey, helping us achieve lasting and meaningful change.

Co-Creation: Approach and Case Studies

Our co-creation approach is fluid and adaptable, tailored to each project's unique characteristics and objectives.

We learn from each process we undertake and allow it to evolve with each new opportunity. The foundation of our approach is the understanding that true collaboration requires the development of a relationship based on trust and genuine intent. We utilise a co-creation process to establish a narrative that captures stories and allows them to be shared, celebrated and interwoven with place identity.



Six New Schools in Melbourne's West

The following case study demonstrates the First Nations-led design approach that we developed while designing a bundle of new primary schools for the Victorian School Building Authority (VSBA).

The six schools included in the VSBA New Schools 2023 Bundle A are located in the fast-growing western suburbs of Melbourne. The neighbourhoods are in their formative stages and in need of more civic infrastructure. The population comprises of mostly recent immigrants and young families. In this context, the schools can be an important part of the community, providing additional infrastructure and much-needed gathering places for people to build new social connections. The schools can help build a sense of place for the communities around them.

Australia's First Peoples and cultures were an obvious reference point for introducing a sense of place for the schools, located around the thresholds of Bunurong, Wurundjeri and Wadawurrung lands. ARM turned to Barry Gilson, Wadawurrung Elder, historian, artist and educator. Barry undertook conversations with representatives of each Country the schools were to be present upon and sought permission to speak collectively on their behalf.

From there, Barry developed five themes to represent each school:

- Aquaculture
- Astrology
- Songlines
- Cultivating
- Habitat

ARM then worked with Barry Gilson and Spacecraft Studio to select five Aboriginal artists with strong ties to the represented lands. Spacecraft Studio provided studio space and technical assistance and support to translate each artists' work into a useful mode to be applied across each project. This \$80,000 collaboration was funded out of ARM's fee on the bundle.

Barry then developed oral briefs for each artist consisting of storytelling and poetry. These oral briefs were recorded, which have now been passed on to each of the schools.

Each artist was able to access Spacecraft Studio's making space, despite COVID restrictions. This got them out of isolation and into a creative space where they could explore with dedicated support.

In order to provide the artists with the time and space to complete their work, we made provision for the integration of their work across a range of applications in each school, including:

- Facade panels
- Window treatments
- Acoustic ceiling tiles
- Carpet tiles
- Graphic wall panels

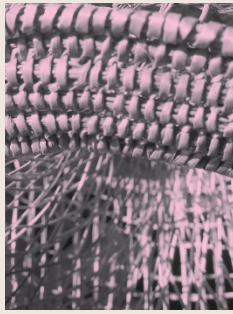
In addition to this, each school is able to benefit from:

- Barry Gilson's songline and poetry recordings
- Access to Barry as an 'Elder in residence'
- Access to each artist as artists/Elders in residence
- A portfolio of work from the artists that can be displayed throughout the school
- A meaningful basis for the new principals of each school to build their school's visual and values-based identity. It is more than possible that the artists' work, as translated by Spacecraft, can be applied to uniforms, book bags and other applications in future.



Holyoake Parade Primary School: Cultivating – She-oak, Murnong and Clematis stories.

Artist: Kait James, Wadawurrung woman.



Lollipop Creek Primary School: Aquaculture – Werribee River system, woven nets and eel traps.

Artist: Tammy Gilson, Wadawurrung woman.



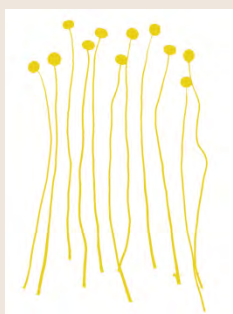
Riverdale East Primary School: Astrology – the day and night sky, astrology and Bunjil.

Artist: Marlene Gilson, Wadawurrung woman.



Nearnung Primary School and Warringa Park School: Songlines – You Yangs to Wilsons Prom.

Artist: Mitch Mahoney, Boon Wurrung man.



Rockbank Murray Road Primary: Habitat – Management and conservation.

Artist: Paolo Balla, Wemba Wemba and Gunditjmara woman.

CASE STUDY

The Munarra Centre for Regional Excellence

2024 saw the opening of the Munarra Centre for Regional Excellence, a project ARM is incredibly proud to have played a key part in.

The Munarra Centre for Regional Excellence is a world-class education, sporting, and public gathering space that honours the world's oldest living culture. Located on Yorta Yorta Country in Shepparton, Victoria, the centre stands as a beacon of cultural pride and community empowerment.

This project is particularly significant as it is regarded as a world-leading example of Indigenous self-determination. While ARM served as the lead design consultant, the design process was genuinely Indigenous-led, resulting from a meaningful and collaborative co-design approach.

Through our involvement, we gained invaluable lessons about the importance of listening, cultural respect, and the transformative potential of Indigenous leadership in design. These learnings continue to inform and enrich our approach to all projects, reinforcing our commitment to co-design and cultural authenticity.

The project comprises two parts: an upgraded Rumbalara Football and Netball Club to the north and a new community and academic building to the south. The new building, resembling the Aboriginal flag from above, features a central circular courtyard, a veranda

for indoor/outdoor learning, and a firepit, all developed in close collaboration with stakeholders. The design also incorporates the Nanyak Wall, a photographic representation of the community's history, which extends into the landscape and connects to the northern site. The northern site includes an upgraded Rumbalara Football and Netball Club, with new netball facilities, renovated clubrooms, and a unifying canopy that reflects the colours of the Rumbalara logo, reinforcing community identity.

Munarra Limited, an all-First Peoples board, oversaw the project and now manages the operations of the building. The project was delivered by the Department of Premier and Cabinet, First Peoples State Relations, Victorian School Building Authority (VSBA), and supported by a financial contribution from the University of Melbourne.

The Centre was built by Indigenous-owned company TVN On-Country. The project is the largest ever awarded by the Victorian state government to a First Nations owned and operated company and created twelve new jobs.

The Munarra Centre for Regional Excellence represents the resilience and future aspirations of the Yorta Yorta people and will continue to be a place of learning, cultural celebration, and community gathering for years to come.



Above: Munarra Centre for Regional Excellence. Photo: Peter Bennetts.

The Centre was built by Indigenous-owned company TVN On-Country. The project is the largest ever awarded by the Victorian state government to a First Nations owned and operated company and created twelve new jobs.



Image: Wulumbarra Dancers perform at the opening of the Munarra Centre for Regional Excellence, Yorta Yorta Country, Shepparton, 2024.
Photo: Jesse Judd.





“The Munarra Centre for Regional Excellence and the Rumbalara Football Netball Club are so unique they are nation leading. I am excited and optimistic about this investment’s potential to deliver the future to Yorta Yorta and other First Nations including the people of south-eastern Australia.”

Uncle Paul Briggs OAM,
Deputy Chair of Munarra Ltd

CASE STUDY

Geelong Art Centre Stage 3

The Geelong Arts Centre Stage 3 redevelopment demonstrates the transformative potential of co-design with Traditional Owners in creating architecture that respects and reflects culture.

ARM Architecture worked closely with the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (WTOAC) to embed the cultural narratives of Djilang (Geelong), Wadawurrung Country, into the building's design. This was both a significant learning experience and an important milestone in ARM's reconciliation journey.

The client's desire to include First Nations perspectives provided an opportunity to develop a clear strategy for meaningful engagement. ARM proposed a process to identify opportunities for artists, established an Expression of Interest (EOI) framework, and wrote the EOI brief. Collaborating directly with the artists, we worked to ensure their contributions were seamlessly integrated into the building's design, creating a cohesive and meaningful connection between architecture and culture.

Central to this process was an ongoing partnership with WTOAC representatives, including Elder Corrina Eccles. Early workshops focused on listening and understanding, resulting in a narrative framework inspired by Wadawurrung creation stories. These narratives shaped the building's four thematic levels – Ochre Country, Moonah Forest Country, Sky Country, and Night Sky – ensuring every design element honoured Wadawurrung culture and place.

First Nations artists, including Wadawurrung artist Kait James, Gunditjmara Keerray Woorroong artist Tarryn Love, Worimi artist Gerard Black, and Ngarrindjeri Gunditjmara artist Mick Ryan, made significant contributions. Their works transformed the centre, from façade panels to an immersive soundscape, bringing Wadawurrung stories to life.

This project highlighted the importance of shared authorship and deep engagement in achieving authentic outcomes.



From left to right: Kait James, Tarryn Love, Mick Ryan, Gerard Black and Kiri Tawhai. Photo: Tiny Empire Collective.



Top: Artwork by Kait James. Bottom: Artwork by Gerard Black. Photos: John Gollings.



Photo: Peter Foster.

“It's deeply meaningful to see my culture and heritage embraced and celebrated at Geelong Arts Centre. This opportunity not only allows me to share my artistic vision but also serves as a powerful statement of recognition for my art and its significance in contemporary society. Seeing my work finished and displayed at scale, and knowing that it will inspire and resonate with the community and visitors for generations to come, is really special.”

Tarryn Love,
Gunditjmara Keerray Woorrong artist



Original artwork by Tarryn Love.



Photo: Peter Foster.

“Creating this work has provided me with a platform to further embrace and share my culture. I’m excited for visitors to Geelong Arts Centre to get up close and personal with the work, fall in love with the eel, and the stories of my culture.”

Gerard Black,
Worimi artist



Photo: Peter Foster.

“With this work, I have aimed to transport listeners to the heart of the Moonah Forest. I hope that as people walk through the Geelong Arts Centre foyer and hear this soundscape, they’ll feel a meaningful connection to nature and to my culture.”

Mick Ryan,
Ngarrindjeri Gunditjmara artist

Learning Ecologies

A reflection on ARM's event for National Reconciliation Week and Melbourne Design Week 2024

On the occasion of both Melbourne Design Week and National Reconciliation Week, ARM Architecture was proud to host a panel discussion and tour at the North Melbourne Primary School Molesworth Street Campus. This event explored the intersection of design and reconciliation in educational environments.

The discussion, titled "Learning Ecologies," delved into the evolving research that shapes the design of contemporary learning environments. Key topics included the importance of creating connections to Country in primary school design, the use of narrative, colour, and pattern to establish a sense of place and identity, and the challenges of achieving a high-performance landscape with diverse play modes on a constrained urban site.

Panel members:

- **Jesse Judd**, Director, ARM Architecture (moderator)
- **Dr Scott Alterator (Kamilaroi)**, Director, Indigenous Education Futures, School of Education, La Trobe University
- **Matthew Hamilton**, Director, Bush Projects
- **Andrea Wilson**, Principal, ARM Architecture

The design of North Melbourne Primary School Molesworth Street Campus is distinguished by its strong Connection to Country overlay. This approach informs the naming, wayfinding, and character of each of the five levels of the school. To ensure that this was done in a way that primary-school children could understand and value, ARM Architecture collaborated closely with N'arweet Dr Carolyn Briggs AM, a senior Boonwurrung Elder and Founder of the Boonwurrung Foundation. Aunty Carolyn shared her profound knowledge of Boonwurrung Country, language, and culture, enriching the project with a deeper understanding and connection to the land and each other for present and future generations.



Above and opposite: "Learning Ecologies" panel discussion at North Melbourne Primary School. Photos: Ricky Ricardo.



Elders, Advisors & Collaborators

ARM has had the honour and privilege of working with several knowledgeable and dedicated Traditional Owners. We are grateful to listen to and learn from passionate and dedicated advocates. Many of our partners are nationally-recognised leaders with senior positions within their respective community and language group(s).

We have worked with First Nations peoples across Australia on a number of different projects. Our partners span from work experience students, such as young Yaglu peoples from the Manapan Academy (providing community members with training in carpentry and joinery), to senior individuals who oversee governance and management at some of Australia's most distinguished institutions.



N'ARWEET DR CAROLYN BRIGGS

Senior Boon Wurrung Elder N'arweet Dr Carolyn Briggs AM is the chairperson and founder of the Boon Wurrung Foundation. A descendant of the First Peoples of Melbourne, the Yaluk-ut Weelam clan of the Boon Wurrung, she is the great-granddaughter of Louisa Briggs, a Boon Wurrung woman born near Melbourne in the 1830s.

ARM has worked closely with Elder N'arweet Dr Carolyn Briggs AM on several projects. These include RMIT OurPlace, a 10,000m² office fitout for RMIT administration staff with an interior design that is locally relevant, exploring the meaning of the site and of place.



DOREEN GARVEY-WANDIN

Doreen Garvey-Wandin is a Senior Wurundjeri-Wandoo Elder with an ancestral blood line connection to Wurundjeri Ulabul, the line of the 'Ngurungaeta' (Headman) and Senior Custodians of what is now known as Melbourne and the Yarra Valley.

The Barak Building, designed by ARM features a 32-storey image of the face of William Barak. During the design process, we consulted closely with Doreen Garvey-Wandin and her kin, as well as the Wurundjeri Land Council and the wider Wurundjeri community throughout the design process. We are thrilled that our collaboration was able to produce a project that dedicated a permanent nod to a Wurundjeri leader of the past to inspire future leaders who live and work on Wurundjeri land.



DR DAWN CASEY

Dr Dawn Casey is a Tagalaka Traditional Owner from North Queensland. She has held a number of key executive positions in the Public Sector and has been awarded three Honorary Doctorates, as well as a long list of high profile, national awards.

When ARM designed the National Museum of Australia (2001), we worked closely with then NMA Director, Dr Dawn Casey, who has been recognised nationally and internationally for her work bringing Indigenous culture into the spotlight and public eye. During this time we also designed NMA's neighbour, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies – Australia's leading centre of research into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture.



PAUL BRIGGS OAM

Paul Briggs OAM is a Yorta Yorta man with a wealth of experience across a vast range of sectors in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community development. In addition to being the founding Chairman of the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO), Paul is a member of the Northern Victorian Aboriginal Partnerships Committee and a founding member of the Koori Economic Employment and the Training Agency Committee.

ARM collaborated with Paul Briggs on the Munarra Centre for Regional Excellence Project.



CORINNA ECCLES

Corinna Eccles is a proud Wadawurrung Traditional Owner and a respected leader in the Geelong community. In 2024, she was honoured with the Cultural and Recreation Leader Award at the Future Geelong Leadership Awards, recognising her outstanding contributions and dedication to cultural preservation, community engagement, and leadership.

ARM had the pleasure of working with Corinna during the Geelong Arts Centre project. Corinna and the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation were essential co-designers. Together we were able to incorporate traditional stories of Country into the design of the Centre.



SHANNON BEST AND HAGUE BEST

Shannon (pictured above) and Hague Best are brothers and Kombumerri Traditional Owners of the Gold Coast. They are sons of Ysola Best and author of the book on the history of the Traditional Owners of the Gold Coast: the Kombumerri (Salt Water Peoples).

ARM continues to work closely with Shannon and Hague at HOTA (Home of the Arts) precinct, ahead of the upcoming work on the new theatre building. Together we developed a framework for the inclusion of First Nation themes and stories into the landscape and building.

Shannon and Hague have extensive knowledge and experience across all aspects of Cultural Heritage on the Gold Coast.



COREY TURNER

Corey Turner and Aboriginal Urban Design (AUD) centre Kurna voices in their work, blending cultural knowledge with innovative design. Through genuine co-design processes, they create spaces that celebrate Kurna heritage and leave a legacy of pride and self-determination.

ARM Architecture partnered with Corey Turner's team at Aboriginal Urban Design (AUD) to embed Kurna culture and connection to Country into the Flinders Medical Centre project. Through co-design workshops, the design responded to the landscape's stories and forms, creating a space that honours Kurna heritage while serving the community.



BARRY GILSON

Barry Gilson is a Wadawurrung Historian, Artist and Educator. Barry has a particular interest in reviving Wadawurrung language and passing on cultural knowledge through oral tradition, storytelling and performance. Barry has received commissions to perform from a wide range of cultural institutions.

Please see the Six New Schools in Melbourne's West case study in this RAP for more information.

Relationships

Strong relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are central to ARM's work—driving deeper connections, honest engagement, and designs that reflect shared stories and futures.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	Meet with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations to develop guiding principles for future engagement.	September 2025	Director
	Develop and implement an engagement plan to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations and develop standard project processes and practice guides.	December 2025	Director
	Maintain a register of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders, consultants and suppliers.	July 2025	Principal
Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May, annually 2025-2027	Communications Manager
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May- 3 June, 2025-2027	Principal
	Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May- 3 June, 2025-2027	Director
	Organise at least one NRW event each year.	27 May- 3 June, 2025-2027	Communications Manager
	Publish follow up reflections and learnings from our NRW event via our website and social media channels.	June 2025-2027	Communications Manager
	Register all our NRW events on Reconciliation Australia's NRW website.	May 2025-2027	Communications Manager

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Develop and implement a staff engagement strategy to raise awareness of reconciliation across our workforce.	August annually	Communications Manager
	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation publicly.	August annually	Communications Manager
	Explore opportunities to positively influence our external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes.	September, 2025	Director
	Join and maintain participation with Reconciliation Australia's Architecture RING (RAP Industry Network Group).	June 2025	Principal
	Continue to collaborate with RAP organisations and other like-minded organisations to develop innovative approaches to advance reconciliation.	June 2025-2027	RAP Champion
Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Implement strategies to engage our team members in reconciliation through presentations, surveys and events.	July 2025	RAP Champion
	Review, update and communicate ARM's anti-discrimination policy to all staff.	October 2025	COO
	Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to consult on our anti-discrimination policy.	October 2025	COO
	Educate senior leaders on the effects of racism.	July 2025	RAP Champion
Continue to collaborate with Traditional Owners on projects to explore how First Nations cultures can be embedded into our design work.	Advocate to clients the value of collaborating with Traditional Owners and embedding Design with Country principles into our projects.	June 2025-2027	Director
	Identify opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander collaboration on all our projects.	June 2025-2027	Director
	Share learnings to build expertise within our practice on best-practice collaboration and co-design.	March, September, Annually	RAP Champion

Respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, and knowledge is vital to ARM's design approach—deepening understanding, sparking learning, and celebrating the richness of Country in every project we create.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation through an internal survey to understand knowledge levels and identify areas for improvement.	September 2025	RAP Champion
	Consult local Traditional Owners and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to inform our cultural learning strategy.	September 2025	RAP Champion
	Develop, implement, and communicate a cultural learning strategy document for our staff.	September 2025	RAP Champion
	Provide opportunities for RAP Working Group members, HR managers and other key leadership staff to participate in formal and structured cultural learning.	June 2025-2027	COO
	Maintain a library of relevant resources and information on our Integrated Management System.	August 2025	RAP Champion
	Organise talks within our Speaker Series that focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and rights.	June 2025-2027	Communications Manager
	Organise 'Lunch & Learn' sessions to share insights with our team on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander co-design and engagement processes we've participated in.	June 2025-2027	RAP Champion

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	July annually	Communications Manager
	Develop, implement and communicate a cultural protocol document, including protocols for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country.	July annually	Communications Manager
	Invite a local Traditional Owner or Custodian to provide a Welcome to Country or other appropriate cultural protocol at significant events each year, such as the Ashton Address.	August 2025	Communications Manager
	Include an Acknowledgement of Country or other appropriate protocols at the commencement of important meetings.	June 2025	RAP Champion
	Display an Acknowledgement of Country plaque in each of our studios.	July 2025	Communications Manager
Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	First week in July, 2025-2027	RAP Champion
	Review HR policies and procedures to remove barriers to staff participating in NAIDOC Week.	May Annually	Director
	Promote and encourage participation in external NAIDOC events to all staff.	First week in July, 2025-2027	Director
Advocate for Designing with Country on our projects	Undertake research into best practice in Designing with Country, including reflecting on past projects.	June-September, 2025	RAP Champion
	Build understanding of the Australian Indigenous Design Charter as a key guide document to inform opportunities for genuine and respectful project processes and outcomes.	September, 2025	RAP Champion
	Develop and implement a framework for Designing with Country on projects.	January 2026	RAP Champion
	Inform our existing and potential clients about our unique approach to Designing with Country.	February 2026	Communications Manager

Opportunities

Creating opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is key to ARM's commitment to a more equitable design industry—supporting employment, collaboration, and access while amplifying voices that shape our built environment.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention, and professional development.	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	June-September 2025	COO
	Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to consult on our recruitment, retention and professional development strategy.	October 2025	COO
	Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development strategy.	February 2026	COO
	Advertise job vacancies to effectively reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.	February 2026	COO
	Review HR and recruitment procedures and policies to remove barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in our workplace.	December 2025	COO
Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement strategy.	November 2025	Principal
	Investigate Supply Nation membership.	November 2025	Principal
	Develop and communicate opportunities for procurement of goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to staff.	November 2025	Principal
	Review and update procurement practices to remove barriers to procuring goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.	November 2025	Principal
	Develop commercial relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses.	November 2025	Principal

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	Maintain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	Bi-annually, June + December, 2025-2027	Director
	Review and maintain the Terms of Reference for the RWG.	June 2025- 2027	RAP Champion
	Maintain representation from each studio across the country to support the RAP Working Group in an operational capacity.	June 2025- 2027	RAP Champion
	Meet at least four times per year to drive and monitor RAP implementation.	June, September, December, March. 2025-2027	RAP Champion
Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	July 2025	Principal
	Engage our senior leaders and other staff in the delivery of RAP commitments.	July 2025	Principal
	Define and maintain appropriate systems to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	July 2025	Principal
	Appoint and maintain an internal RAP Champion from senior management.	July 2025	Principal
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	Communications Manager
	Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Survey.	1 August annually	Communications Manager
	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Survey to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September, annually	Communications Manager
	Report RAP progress to all staff and senior leaders quarterly, to drive accountability and measure progress.	June, September, December, March. 2025-2027	RAP Champion
	Publicly report our RAP achievements, challenges and learnings, annually.	December 2025-2027	Communications Manager
	Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer.	March 2026	Communications Manager
	Submit a traffic light report to Reconciliation Australia at the conclusion of this RAP.	June 2027	Communications Manager
Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	January 2027	RAP Champion

Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan

June 2025 – June 2027

For any questions about this RAP, contact:

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DISCLAIMER

We recognise that the terminology we use to refer to place names continues to be affected by colonisation.

We recognise that the names that First Nations peoples gave to places contain important ecological, environmental and cultural histories of Country, and support using precise and appropriate terminology.

