

Architecture for
people and planet

Reflect.

Reconciliation Action Plan

January 2024 - July 2025



RECONCILIATION
ACTION PLAN

REFLECT

Foreground
architecture

Always was, always will be.

Foreground Architecture acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country upon which we live and work throughout Australia.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present and celebrate the continuing connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to Country. We commit to continuous learning and recognition of their cultures in our practice.

Statement from CEO of Reconciliation Australia.

Inaugural Reflect RAP

Reconciliation Australia welcomes Foreground Architecture to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

Foreground Architecture joins a network of more than 2,500 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 Foreground Architecture 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 Foreground Architecture, 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

Our business.

Foreground Architecture is a design practice offering architecture, interior design and project management services. Established in 1973, we operate from our single office in Carlton on the lands of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the East Kulin Nation.

Celebrating our 50th year in 2023, Foreground Architecture has a history of delivering socially progressive and commercially astute architecture for ever-changing community needs. Working collaboratively with clients and consultants nationwide, we pursue the idea that uplifting, activating spaces should be accessible to all. For people and planet to thrive, we design inclusive, responsible and transformative built solutions across education, justice, commercial and civic, residential, and seniors living sector projects for clients in the private sector, and for State Government departments and agencies.

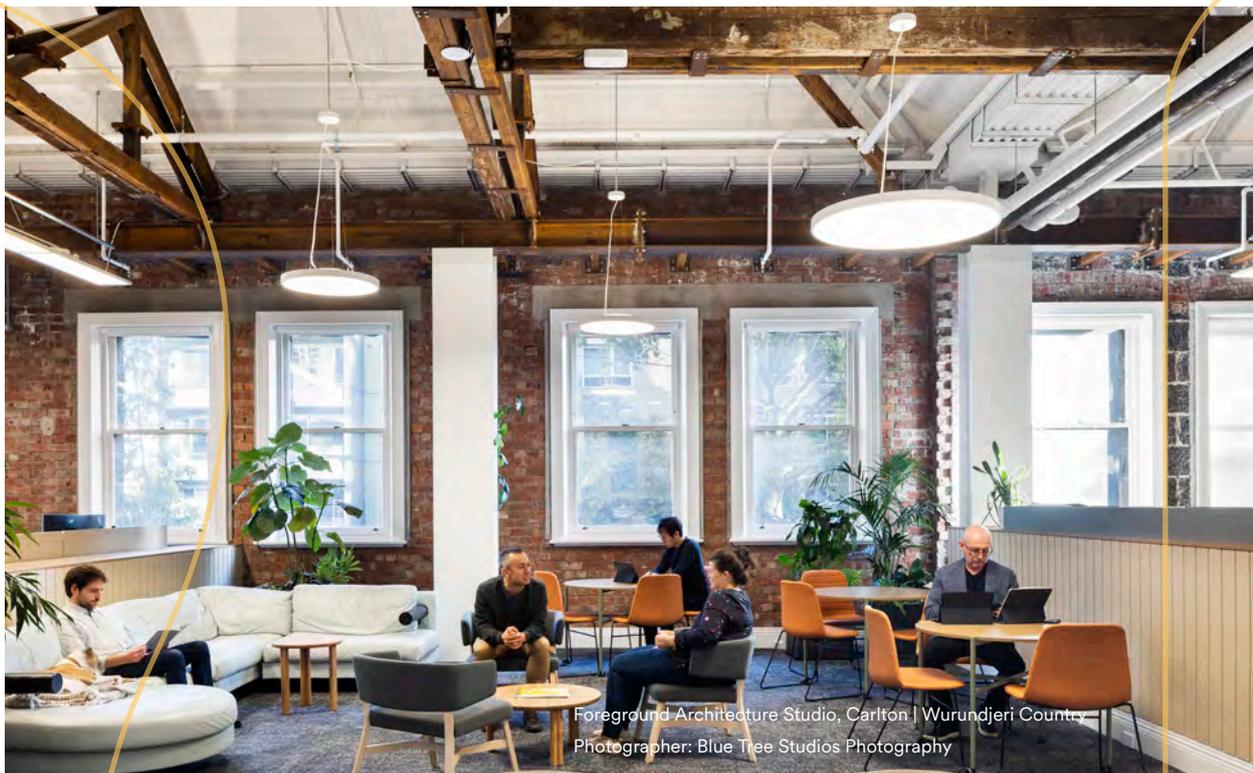
Led by Directors Greg Anson, Riordan Gough and Daniel Coomber, Foreground Architecture creates architecture that balances our company values of humanity, ideas, collaboration and economy.

As of 2023, Foreground Architecture employs 36 staff working primarily from our single office in Carlton on the lands of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the East Kulin Nation, and remotely from their homes and various project sites throughout Eastern Australia.

Reflecting our commitment to flexibility, our staff live throughout Victoria, with a concentration in metropolitan Melbourne and Greater Geelong regions. In line with our Flexible Work Policies, we have supported to work remotely intermittently from other Australian cities, and overseas from locations including Singapore and New Zealand.

As a 100% Victorian owned, staffed and operated business, most of our current and completed projects are in Victoria with a high concentration of projects throughout regional Victoria. The practice has also completed projects in Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and Tasmania. We strive to support local communities and economies through our work, including engaging with sustainable, social and disability enterprises through our operations and projects.

While we take pride in and celebrate the multiculturalism of our team, at present Foreground Architecture does not currently employ any Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff. By formalising our reconciliation journey through our first Reflect RAP, we aim to develop our cultural understanding to shape how we approach design and our operations.



Our RAP.

Schools should inspire curiosity, homes should support connection and capability, and justice facilities should unlock our most humane potential.

We believe a building is never experienced in isolation. On arrival, visitors bring their own lived experience and any hopes and expectations for ease of use and belonging. Our designs first address the geographical, ecological and social influences of context.

As architects, interior designers and project managers, Foreground Architecture contributes to the quality, form and experience of our built environment. Recognising this responsibility, as an organisation Foreground Architecture is committed to fostering environments that are inclusive, sustainable and socially progressive; including recognition and celebration of First Nations culture, traditions, ownership and continuing connection to Country.

The development of this Reconciliation Action Plan extends from our ‘why’ – For People and Planet. Our designs solve complex social and environmental challenges. To encourage belonging and to address inequity, we strive to fortify community bonds and encourage positive behaviours and thoughtful interactions through better design. In developing our first Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan our goal is to meaningfully and sustainably take positive action to advance reconciliation. Based on the core pillars of relationships, respect and opportunity, the RAP will focus on fostering respect, economic equity and supporting First Nations self-determination.

There is currently a gap in the education system that fails to address the importance of understanding the Country when designing buildings and community infrastructure. To bridge this gap, there is a need to learn, educate, and explore Country to gain a deeper understanding of what it means to design with and for it. This requires building awareness and understanding of the context and the diverse histories of the land, peoples and cultures. By designing with careful consideration of these elements we can ensure that our buildings are respectful, meaningful, and sustainable.

In formally commencing our reconciliation journey, our aim is to educate our team, clients and community to create meaningful design outcomes that recognise First Nations cultures and connections to Country in meaningful ways. We hope to build our awareness of First Nations cultures and histories, and improve our approach to engagement with communities to create positive outcomes for all, through design and buildings that respectfully reflect the cultural and environmental practices of First Nations communities. We will extend this into our business operations to support a culturally safe workplace and foster meaningful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, businesses and consultants, and future employees.

Our approach to developing and implementing our RAP centres on collaboration. We believe for our reconciliation journey to be meaningful; we must engage with our team so that the RAP and the resulting actions reflect our collective journey and commitments to improve our cultural awareness, our understanding of and connection to Country, and relationships with First Nations communities.

Our RAP Champion’s are responsible for demonstrating the commitments of our RAP through tangible actions, internally and externally. Our RAP Champions are Director Daniel Coomber, Associate Director Jessica Hyde, and Interior Designer Alice Miller. Together, in addition to their participation in the RAP Working Group, they will actively contribute to promoting the profile of reconciliation in the practice.

Our RAP Working Group includes staff from all areas of design and operations, and levels within the practice, including Director representation by Daniel Coomber who also serves as one of Foreground’s RAP Champion’s. In establishing our RAP Working Group with support of all company Directors, we called for expressions of interest from our team to form a group that is passionate about reconciliation journey and can bring their unique cultural and personal experiences and points of view to the development and implementation of our commitments.

Our RAP Working Group team includes:

Daniel Coomber (DC) – Director / RAP Champion

James Kazalac (JK) – Associate Director & Senior Architect

Jessica Hyde (JH) – Associate Director / RAP Champion

Neha Miriyal (NM) – Architect

Sejal Bhikha (SB) – Architect

Francesca Sanguinetti (FS) – Architectural Graduate

Ashkhen Manukyan (AM) – Architectural Graduate

Alice Miller (AJM) – Interior Designer / RAP Champion

We recognise as we commence our journey that our work to date on this Reflect RAP are important first steps and that there is much work ahead to realise our goals and create meaningful outcomes. As a working group we have a shared commitment to continuing to build our understanding and involve the whole practice in this journey. In delivering outcomes because of our Reflect RAP we propose considering the framework of race relations, equality and equity, institutional integrity, unity and historical acceptance to direct our activities.

Long committed to designing place-responsive solutions, we are supporting our team in building their understanding and awareness of designing with Country, First Nations histories and design principles to support considered design and project delivery, and culturally safe approaches.

To date our organisational reconciliation journey has been limited. Whilst as individuals' members of our team have taken action to build their understanding and connection to First Nations communities, including study and courses focused on designing for/with Country, and attendance NAIDOC and Reconciliation Week events, until recently our focus was limited to engagement and outcomes initiated in our projects.

Through our projects we have engaged with representatives from Recognised Aboriginal Parties in design and planning processes, and project stakeholder groups including Victorian Aboriginal Education Association (VAEAL) in our Victorian School Building Authority capital works projects.

Since commencing discussions about reconciliation, we have taken several steps including inclusion of an Acknowledgment of Country on our website and key documents, identification and documentation of the Traditional Owner and place names for all projects, support of staff education including attendance at First Nations led industry forums such as Deadly Djurumin Yarns hosted in association with Parlour, and engaging services of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses such as Mabu Mabu.

In forming our committee and commencing this journey, we acknowledge that we have done so to date without the input of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples due to the lack of representation in current team. We note that representation is an issue across the wider profession, and as we move beyond this initial step to implement our Reflect actions, we will foster new relationships within our industry and the wider community to involve Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander representation in our process.

Our partnerships/current activities.

Design creates culture. Culture shapes values. Values determine the future.”

Robert L. Peters
former President International Council of Design (ico-D)

As place makers, Architects are trusted with the opportunity to shape the environment we live in. We believe we have a responsibility to design with the cultural and environmental context as a centring principle for the design process. We believe there is an opportunity in each project to consider culture, country, the built and natural landscape, and language in the design response.

To date, our engagement with reconciliation and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples has mainly been through our design and professional service engagements.

Through our projects we have engaged with representatives from Recognised Aboriginal Parties in design and planning processes, and project stakeholder groups including Victorian Aboriginal Education Association (VAEAI) in our Victorian School Building Authority capital works projects and engaged First Nations artists to develop murals and artworks integrated into our built environments.

We are committed to building upon these relationships to create more meaningful opportunities to develop partnerships and involve First Nations peoples in the design and delivery of our projects.

The Dame Phyllis Frost Centre (DPFC) Aboriginal Healing Unit at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre marks a shift in the treatment and rehabilitation of First Nations women in custody. Designed to trauma-informed care principles, the refurbishment of two existing buildings is focused on providing a safe, hopeful and supportive environment to promote a culturally informed healing space with a sense of connection and community.

The program spaces facilitate an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation to deliver programs and activities to meet the cultural needs of the women. An outdoor yarning circle developed from a specially commissioned artwork by Wurundjeri and Yorta Yorta artist Simone Thomson provides an outdoor healing space and a ceremonial area with a fire pit for smoking ceremonies. The design and delivery involved a stakeholder group including representatives from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in custody at DPFC.

We commissioned Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung artist and Elder Mandy Nicholson to develop a mural for the façade of the new Reservoir Police Station that included motifs representative of Country and welcome. The design also incorporated a forecourt designed to create a welcoming space for police to host community events including NAIDOC events and smoking ceremonies.

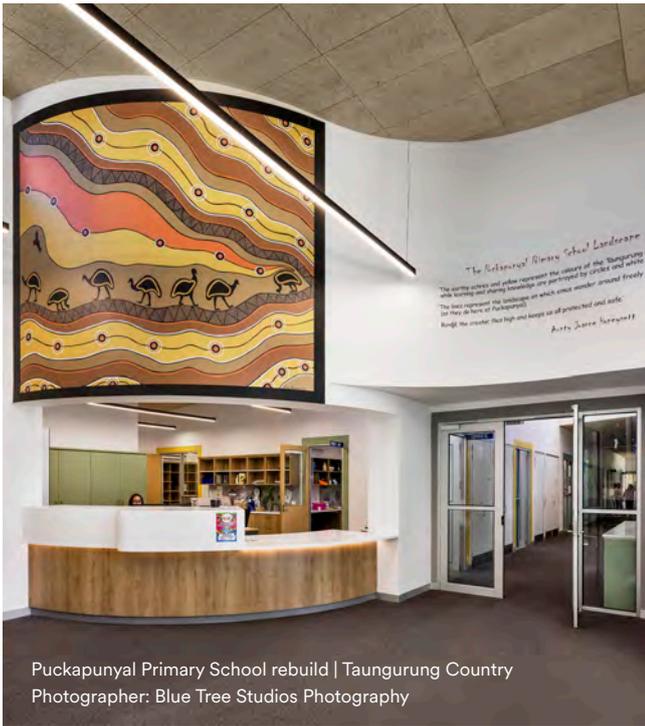
An example from our many engagements with the Victorian School Building Authority, for the Avondale Primary School project our team consulted with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal artists, Foreground has embedded First Nations stories to promote a connection to Country and educate the community, including the representation of the Solomons Ford songline in the interior design and landscape.



Avondale Primary School yarning circle | Wurundjeri Country
Photographer: Andrew Sans Photography



Reservoir Police Station , Reservoir | Wurundjeri Country
Facade featuring artwork by Wurundjeri artist and Traditional Custodian of Naarm, Dr. Mandy Nicholson
Photographer: Blue Tree Studios Photography



Puckapunyal Primary School rebuild | Taungurung Country
 Photographer: Blue Tree Studios Photography

In addition, in 2022 we implemented several new initiatives including the addition of an Acknowledgment of Country on our website and key documents and reports, and the identification and documentation of the Traditional Owners and place names for all projects. Additionally, our company rebrand celebrations in September 2022 were marked by a Welcome to Country by Wurundjeri Elder Uncle Tony Garvey, with catering by Torres Strait Islander owned business Mabu Mabu.

To support awareness development in our team, we have commenced building a resource library for the office and facilitated staff education including attendance at First Nations led industry forums such as Deadly Djurumin Yarns hosted in association with Parlour and Australian Institute of Architecture First Nations Competency Crash Course.

As an outcome of our social and sustainable procurement commitments, we have engaged with organisations including Kinaway and Social Traders to identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses whom we could engage through to support our operations and design services. We continue to investigate opportunities in this area and will aim to foster relationships with consultants and industry professionals as an outcome of our Reflect RAP.



DPFC Aboriginal Healing Unit | Bunurong Country
 Yarning circle artwork by Wurundjeri & Yorta Yorta artist Simone Thomson
 Photographer: Blue Tree Studios Photography

A key goal as we commence our reconciliation journey is to identify initiatives and partnerships that reflect our reconciliation commitments.

We hope that our RAP will serve as a platform for positive change and help facilitate meaningful dialogue and action towards reconciliation. We are committed to working together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to create a future that is inclusive, equitable and prosperous within the field of architecture and interior design.

Our Reflect RAP provides Foreground Architecture with clear and measurable pathways to realise our commitments, which we believe will provide us with the accountability needed to direct our reconciliation journey.



Foreground Brand Launch catered by Mabu Mabu
 Photographer: Blue Tree Studios Photography



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.	June 2024	AM/FS Architectural Graduate
	Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	June 2024	AM/FS Architectural Graduate
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Circulate Reconciliation Australia’s NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May 2024	AM/FS Architectural Graduate & SB, Architect
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May- 3 June 2024	All RAP Working Group members
	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	AJM Interior Designer JH/JK Associate Director
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.	March 2024	DC Director
	Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	June 2024	NM/SB Architects
	Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	June 2024	AM/FS Architectural Graduate
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	March 2024	JH Associate Director
	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	April 2024	JH Associate Director



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, knowledges and rights within our organisation.	April 2024	DC, Director
	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	April 2024	JH Associate Director AJM Interior Designer
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	Develop an understanding of the Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation’s operational area and record on project drawings and documents.	July 2024	AM/FS Architectural Graduates AJM, Interior Designer
	Increase staff’s understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including introducing Acknowledgement of Country protocols for all practice forums and meetings.	March 2024	DC, Director
	Introduce acknowledgment in practice internal and external documents and materials including website, capability statements and project reports	May 2024	All
7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.	June 2024	AM/FS Architectural Graduate
	Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	June 2024	AJM Interior Designer
	RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	First week in July, 2024	JH/JK Associate Director



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.	November 2024	DC Director
	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	June 2024	JH Associate Director
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.	May 2024	AJM, Interior Designer JH, Associate Director
	Investigate Supply Nation membership.	March 2024	JH Associate Director



Governance.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
10. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	Maintain a RWG to govern RAP implementation.	March 2024	JH Associate Director
	Draft a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	April 2024	JH Associate Director
	Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	July 2024	DC Director
11. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	March 2024	DC Director
	Review and update resource needs for RAP implementation	June 2024	JH Associate Director
	Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	May 2024	DC Director, JH, JK Associate Directors
	Appoint a senior leader to champion our RAP internally.	February 2024	DC Director
	Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	March 2024	DC Director & JH Associate Director
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 2024, 2025	JH Associate Director
	Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Survey .	1 August 2024	JH Associate Director
	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Survey to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September 2024	JH Associate Director
13. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia’s website to begin developing our next RAP.	April 2025	JH Associate Director / DC Director

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