

PROTOCOLS TOWARDS RECONCILIATION

Sibling Architecture

What's this about? Where is this coming from?

This is an evolving document that outlines protocols towards reconciliation for an architecture office. Reconciliation is the constitution of friendly relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians through actions that lead to the recognition of self-determination, treaty and/or sovereignty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Commented [T1]: Comment from social media feed: Reconciliation isn't as fitting as Conciliation... There was never a time where friendly relations existed

It was catalysed by reading over various Reconciliation Action Plans of built environment offices, and seeking tangible actions beyond cultural recognition and employment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait people in architecture practices. How can other protocols towards reconciliation filter through various processes of architectural practice?

How do we use it?

The document is set up as a list of protocols. Protocols are not policies, laws or rights. They are neither solutions or a manifesto. Protocols are a framework for lived actions as they act as a form of self-governance. This means that protocols may evolve over time, especially as they interact with other projects, people, protocols and countries. This document also evolves as it is not conclusive.

This document lists four main protocols, highlights their strategic goal in italics, then practical actions in bullet point form that can be considered to implement. These bullet points will expand. They will also have a hierarchy of importance. For example, for the protocol **Reparations** with the goal *providing resources*, a client paying-the-rent could be a priority. However, if this is not achieved, other actions can be considered. This demonstrates the complexity of how protocols, strategies and actions intersect, but how this document can only be understood through action.

Before we get into it.

Let's be clear: This document is not perfect. This document has been created from reading charters, RAPs and other sources listed at the end of this document. No Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultural or built environment professional has been consulted; we have used some documents produced by professionals. The next step is to do this now we have this document to structure the purpose in which we come.

Commented [T2]: Comment from social media feed: "it cannot be started without Aboriginal engagement. That's the whole point. Any work needs to be led by Indigenous partners, friends or collaborators. Anything you write can only be colonist if it does not start with an Aboriginal POV. We do applaud you for putting it out there and leading the profession, but perhaps an acknowledgement that you are missing the key part would better serve the profession"

Protocols

1. Acknowledge

"We acknowledge we are always working on someone else's Country. This means that we work with Country and its Custodians where possible as each Country has its own set of values" (JCBa Architects). An acknowledgment is not only one of Country, but an acknowledgment of sovereignty. Recognising Australia's First peoples and the right to self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is a foundation for equity and fairness.

Acknowledge and support the rights, languages and cultures of Indigenous communities.

Tackle racism and the impact it has on Indigenous people and communities.

- Ask about and engage with client Reconciliation Action Plans where available
- Ask about client consultation with Traditional Owners where possible, particularly with government clients
- Note Country on site plans and documents
- Add acknowledgement on email signature

2. Learn and listen

Listen and learn about the place you are on rather than somewhere far away. Don't go and ask an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person. There are plenty of great books, films and interviews by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. There are also a lot of resources for architects and designers written by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Once you "educate yourself. Then educate other people," as academic Gary Foley said.

Ensure respectful, culturally specific, personal engagement behaviours for effective communication and courteous interaction are practiced.

- Conduct a best practice program of Cultural Awareness as a compulsory program of professional development for all. For example, pay for a cultural competency course similar to that at Monash University (<https://www.monash.edu/indigenous-australians/about-us/cultural-safety>) or run by the VACCA, KHT and other organisations.

Embed Indigenous perspectives and knowledges into projects and practice where appropriate, and when permission is granted.

- Create a library of texts that provide Indigenous perspectives in the office
- Locate resources on the history and lived cultures of the site from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective.

3. Representation and Agency

Increase the participation and support the success of Indigenous architects.

- Investigate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment. This could be further upstream in the form of contributing to a scholarship in higher education (such as the Carey Lyon Scholarship or Droga Indigenous Architecture Scholarship) or use existing programs like Career Trackers.
- Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander architects and designers who are connected with the relevant communities and provide opportunities for them to oversee the creative development and design process.

Investigate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity.

- Review and update procurement policies and procedures to identify and mitigate barriers for procuring goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses
- Establish a list of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and communicate this list to all for procurement purposes.

Ensure the creation of Indigenous representation in design is Indigenous-led.

- Follow the recommendations of The Australian Indigenous Design Charter when working on projects involving the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.

4. Reparations

Growing practice to serve the needs of Indigenous people and communities upholding and respecting traditional knowledge.

- Make partnerships with Indigenous peoples and communities, or simply provide resources (labour, skills, money, pro bono services, return land).

These notes are based on various documents, including: The Australian Indigenous Design Charter, JCBa's website, and various organisational RAPs.

Further readings:

Birch, T. (2005). 'Death is forgotten in victory': colonial landscapes and narratives of emptiness. In J. Lydon & T. Ireland (Eds.), *Object lessons: archaeology and heritage in Australia* (pp. 186-200). Melbourne, Vic.: Australian Scholarly Publishing.

GANSW: Planning Connects 2019: Designing with Country webinar
<https://vimeo.com/341911583>

GANSW: Designing with country document
<https://www.governmentarchitect.nsw.gov.au/resources/ga/media/files/ga/discussion-papers/discussion-paper-designing-with-country-2020-06-02.pdf?la=en>

Land, C (2015). *Decolonizing Solidarity: Dilemmas and Directions for Supporters of Indigenous Struggles*. Zed Books, Melbourne

Porter, L. (2017) Indigenous People and the Miserable Failure of Australian Planning, *Planning Practice & Research*, 32:5, 556-570.

Porter, L. 'From an urban country to urban Country confronting the cult of denial in Australian cities'. *Australian Geographer*. Volume 49, 2018 - Issue 2

Russell, L., 2018, *Worlds collide and contested histories. Colony: Australia 1770-1861/Frontier Wars*. Leahy, C. & Ryan, J. (eds.). Melbourne Victoria: NGV Australia, p. 28-32 5

Internal review of previous projects to provide case studies as an addendum to this document.

Next steps.

- Create timeline
- Add actions
- Engage RAP and/or built environment professionals