



Reconciliation Action Plan - DI WA Pty Ltd

January 2024 - January 2025

REFLECT





Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Whadjuk people of the Noongar Nation as
Traditional Custodians of the land where our studio stands.

We acknowledge and pay respect to all Custodians across Australia, as
well as the Elders past, present and emerging.

First Nations peoples represent the oldest living culture in the world,
and we honour their traditions, customs and custodial practices.

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Image credit (cover page): Walk for Reconciliation, Perth 2023. Participation in a collaborative art project organised by Reconciliation WA. Photography by Ben Moffitt.

Artist Statement

Patrick Garlett-Forrest is a young Nanda Yamatji Whadjuk Baladong Noongar man. Patrick joined DesignInc in 2021 as a under-graduate architect following his employment at companies such as CPB, Hassell, and WSP. He has experience in working across local, national and international projects at varying scales and complexities.

Patrick has recently gained experience with Nguluway DesignInc in Sydney to seek mentorship from Wiradjuri Architect Craig Kerslake. We are pleased to welcome Patrick back to the Perth studio in December 2023.

Patrick regularly contributes to cultural insight into the office environment. He's a valuable member to the team and provides the office high levels of competency in Indigenous design and cultural knowledge.

DI WA Pty Ltd have received approval from Patrick Garlett-Forrest for the rights to use his artworks in our Reflect RAP and can confirm that he has been paid for this license.

Contact

Nic MacCormac
Director
nmaccormac@wa.designinc.com.au

[designinc.com.au](https://www.designinc.com.au)



Artwork by Patrick Garlett-Forrest

CEO Message, Reconciliation Australia



Karen Mundine
Chief Executive Officer -
Reconciliation Australia

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

DesignInc WA 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 DesignInc WA 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 DesignInc WA, welcome to the RAP program, and I look forward to following your reconciliation journey in the years to come.

A message from our Director & RAP Champion



Nic MacCormac
Director DI WA Pty Ltd

I encourage you to consider what reconciliation means to you, and seek clarity on what 'Connection to Country' means for First Nations peoples, so that we can develop, through empathy, a better understanding of the world we live in together and the positive influence we can bring to the future through our work

Before I could properly consider my role as RAP Champion for DesignInc in WA, I first needed to reflect on my own reconciliation origins, only then could I define what reconciliation means to me, and how to create a positive impact within my own sphere of influence. My reconciliation origin story does not begin with the advent of my own life, on the banks of the Swan River, on New Year's Eve, 1976, but rather in the 1950's, with two independent histories which would converge through the union of my parents.

My maternal grandfather was an Italian immigrant, who was stone mason in the town of New Norcia, during the stolen generation. My paternal grandfather was of Irish decent and the grandson of Andrew MacCormac (a recognised artist from the 1860's and 1870's) and for a time, an accountant for Arrernte man Albert Namatjira. Albert's story is one of utmost significance to the contemporary Australian history. His art poetically epitomised 'Connection to Country', which he portrayed through a water colour lens.

Having seen one of his original works with my own eyes, I am inspired by how he was able to transcend his own adversity, through a foreign vernacular, to create an enduring legacy for his people. Sixty-five years after Albert's death, his story to motivate me in my creative endeavours in the footsteps of my own ancestors.

I cannot deny the cultural indifferences from the past and present, nor can I deny the enduring effects of intergenerational trauma suffered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. So I must accept the role I have to play in the pursuit of reconciliation. To that end, I have created an intergenerational

bridge between my family connection to Albert Namatjira and my capacity as our RAP Champion and as a leader of DesignInc WA.

As architects and designers there is much that we still can learn from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the way they engage with each other, and the lands and waters which make up this vast and diverse continent. Recognising the contributions First Nations cultures can make in our profession is a key step in the process of reconciliation.

Over the last few years, through my travels around this vast and diverse land, my understanding and appreciation for First Nations cultures has only deepened. More recently in Uluru, as I was reflecting on the recent loss of my mother and the circumstances which preceded her death, I realised how I had underestimated the importance of spiritual connection, over tangible artefacts and this realisation has strengthened my resolve to improve on the performance of our predecessors, for the benefit of future generations.

My aim is to inspire you to maintain carriage of your responsibilities of reconciliation in the workplace, in our profession and the wider community. As we continue this journey of reconciliation together, I encourage you to consider what reconciliation means to you, and what 'Connection to Country' means for First Nations people, so that we can develop, through empathy, a better understanding of the world we live in and the positive influence we can achieve through our work.

Our Business

About us

DesignInc is an association of independent architectural practices with offices in Perth, Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne, and Sydney. The group is a powerful union of design talent, professional expertise, and multidisciplinary skills. Each office is owned and operated with separate governance structures but share a brand, ethos and core service offerings.

DesignInc WA is an architecture and design studio based in Perth on Whajuk Noongar Country. The DesignInc Perth studio focuses on Transport, Defence, Education, Health, and Commercial projects and is led by Director, Nic MacCormac, who has over 24 years in the business of architecture. Our studio values the importance of design narrative in architecture, as well as the importance of creative industries in contemporary culture.

People & Culture

When we began our RAP journey, our team was comprised of 10 Architectural professionals, one of which was Patrick, a young Nanda Yamatji Whadjuk Baladong Noongar man.

Patrick would readily share his knowledge and experiences in his connection to land and cultural practices to inspire us all to strive to implement First Nations principles in the built environment and our office culture. Patrick has now transferred to the Nguluway DesignInc Sydney studio to further build his career and grow his representation within the sector through the guidance of Wiradjuri Architect Craig Kerslake. We take every opportunity to engage with Craig and Patrick on projects wherever possible and we understand Patrick would eventually like to relocate to DesignInc in Perth once he has

developed his skills and education in Sydney.

We currently have no staff who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, however, our Indigenous Employment Policy provides the means by which we can increase employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

In the past, our team has collaborated with First Nations individuals, communities and corporations on projects that protect, interpret and share their stories, cultures and practice with the new users of these sites and facilities. Our project and workplace experiences have strengthened our desire to support both First Nations and non-Indigenous staff in the workplace to reach their collective potential together.

Our Vision

Our vision for reconciliation is to collaborate with Traditional Custodians on projects of significance, allowing appropriate space for truth-telling, acknowledgement, and celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture in the Built Environment.

We will contribute to the development of a genuine Designing from Country process, through exploring our own reconciliation origins, developing an understanding how stories of culture can enrich contemporary architectural practice, and benefit the communities which we serve.

We will also respectfully seek inspiration from the Indigenous Sciences, in particular notions of Sustainability, which have successfully underpinned traditional custodians' connection to country for thousands of years.

We look to achieve our vision in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as well as other like-minded businesses.



We aim to uphold these principles through a range of formal and informal initiatives including partnerships, collaborations on projects, employment and mentorship opportunities, training, events, and workshops

Our RAP

Why we are developing a RAP

We first considered our first RAP almost two years ago through our involvement in the Lakelands Station project (Yaakanup). Delivered under the State Government's Gnarla Bidji strategy. This experience allowed us to examine the cultural context and significant themes of the Bindjareb Noongar people and Pinjarup boodjar (Country). Whilst the Lakelands project explored other more localised themes to the Station precinct, one of the significant themes identified for the broader area was the notion of 'Djilba' – a Binjareb name used to describe the estuary, a word synonymous with 're-birth'.

The idea of re-birth is central to our reconciliation pathway because it symbolizes one of the key elements in our RAP Vision – exploring our own

reconciliation origins. The message from our RAP champion sets an example of how we can strive to achieve positive outcomes for the future by examining the past, including unfavourable and uncomfortable histories. Each member of our RWG has reflected on what reconciliation means to them and how together we can take this opportunity to stimulate a new beginning and achieve reconciliation in a meaningful and personal way.

Reconciliation in is important to our practice because as architects and designers, we operate in the nexus between the natural world and the built environment, and we recognise that there is much we can learn from First Nations people in the work we do in this realm. We acknowledge

First Nations peoples are the most knowledgeable sources for the lands and water upon which we are privileged to work. Our role as designers is consistent with the role of Traditional Owners in that a strong sensibility for sustainability and ecology is valued in our work. As such there is a significant contribution which First Nations cultures can make in our profession through consultation and collaboration.

We also understand the importance of a strong narrative on projects and how stories from culture can inform and enrich design thinking at all scales, from the big picture and the smallest details. By incorporating cultural themes and practices in our designs we can better nurture our environment and community. The deliverables of a RAP such as

developing relationships and networks would open opportunities for us to take part in more exciting projects, underpinned by strong cultural narratives from First Nations people. Reconciliation gives a voice to First Nations peoples which enables us to better represent them and their cultural practices within our projects.

We make a commitment to promote reconciliation through taking practical actions to strengthen relationships and to create opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities in our work and in everyday life.



Performer - Ash Penfold. Photography by Patrick Garlett-Forrest. designnine.com.au

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Current Partnerships and Collaboration

Nguluway DesignInc

Craig Kerslake

Managing Director Nguluway DesignInc

Craig Kerslake is a Wiradjuri Man. He was born in the Illawarra region on Wodi Wodi Dharawal Country, his father was born in Bowral NSW on Gandangara Country, and his grandfather came from Dubbo NSW, Wiradjuri Country. In 2020 Nguluway DesignInc was formed, 51% owned by Craig's company 'Saltwater Studios', and 49% owned by DesignInc Sydney.

Nguluway DesignInc is based on Gadigal land, of the Eora nation, and operates out of the same space as DesignInc Sydney. Nguluway brings together Aboriginal leadership and cultural knowledge with the deep architectural design and delivery expertise of the team at DesignInc Sydney.

Lakelands Train Station

Public Transport Authority (PTA)

DesignInc were awarded the new the Metronet project – Lakelands Station in 2020. Throughout the last two years we have been working within the requirements of the Gnarla Biddi Aboriginal Engagement strategy. On the project we have engaged with the Local and Metronet Noongar Reference Group, the Winjan Aboriginal Corporation, and Noongar artist Seantelle Walsh and local artists Sioux Tempestt from Apparatus on the Public Art scope for the project.

During our work on the Lakelands Stations project with ADCO, we:

- Reviewed the cultural context studies of the Binjarup Noongar Boodja
- Completed Cultural Awareness Training with the Yunga Foundation
- Worked with the local and Metronet Noongar Reference Groups
- Contributed to the facilitation of the Public Art process
- Conceived of an aligned vision for new Lakelands/Yaakanup Train Station
- Implemented Indigenous Design narratives into the built environment

APPARATUS

APPARATUS offers a range of Cultural Services particularly suited to local councils and community organisations. They can assist and coordinate with developing cultural plans that build on the existing capacity and draw out the aspirations, values and needs of the community.

Seantelle Walsh

Seantelle is an emerging Noongar Artist, born and raised in Boorloo, Perth (Whadjuk country). Her mother's paternal heritage has connection to the Perenjori Ballardong area, and her mother's maternal ancestry connects with the Wilman Tribe from Gnaala Kala Boodja region.



Photography by Suzy Pickles



Above: Artists Sioux Tempestt and Seantelle Walsh with Mia Burley, Apparatus. Djinanginy kaartdijin, Yaakanup 'Seeing and Understanding Place of Long Neck Turtle', Lakelands Station 2023. Photography by Frances Andrijich.

Our RAP Working Group (RWG)



Whadjuk/Baladong Nyungar,
Nanda Yamitji - RWG Member
Artist / Student of Architecture



RWG Chair
Architect



RWG Secretary
Social Media Coordinator



RWG Member
Graduate of Architecture



RWG Member
Graduate of Architecture



RWG Member
Architectural Technician

Patrick Garlett -Forrest

I have a deep connection to the land of which our Perth studio stands. I continuously represent the strength of my Culture as I push for Indigenous Culture and Protocols to be represented within today's architecture.

I am currently undertaking my studies at The University of Technology Sydney, where I was awarded with a scholarship from the Aurora Foundation to help aid in my journey whilst also committing myself to educating the community on Indigenous arts and Culture.

Despite still undergoing my studies, I have obtained almost 5 years of practical experience within design and construction of the built environment at multiple levels.

My goal is to become one of Australia's Leading Aboriginal architects, designing from Country and helping shape Australia's true identity.

Ben Moffitt

Both on a personal level and professional level, I have become more interested in the cultures of First Nations people and its influences on the world around me. As part of our commitment as a practice to be an ally of First Peoples, our team attended the Walk for Reconciliation in King's Park. I was personally inspired by the dreaming stories and the message that white fellas and black fellas can share a bond with their commitment to the environment.

This is commonly referred to as stewardship in an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's context and 'sustainability' in modern times. As I am from the hills of Perth and grew up using the bush as my backyard, I too feel a strong connection to land. Nowadays, my connection to land has taken on greater meaning and feels like a connection to First Nations cultures, people, and place.

Caroline Caparas-MacCormac

From the time I migrated to Australia as a child in the early 1980s and throughout my childhood, I developed a strong personal interest in human rights activism and social justice. My connection to Australia has predominantly been seen through the eyes of a 'third culture child'; someone who has been raised in a variety of mixed cultures. In this sense, most Australians are 'third culture children'. My curiosity to better understand human experience led me to study Social Sciences at university, as well as gain extensive NGO experience with Amnesty International Australia, on both a state and national level. After becoming a parent, the importance of reconciling Australia's complicated history towards our First Nations communities is now greater than ever. Through education, research, acceptance and inclusion, we can truly unify our country for the next generations.

Mina Markovic

Looking back when I was young and still studying in primary and secondary school, I now recognise there was a lack of acknowledgment for the discrimination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and am wary of the tremendous inconsistencies associated with teaching First Nations perspectives.

As part of my commitment to strengthen my understanding of Australia's dark history and, my assurance to fight for a meaningful change, I believe the first step to reconciliation is listening the voices of those who were wronged, reflect and accept on those wrong doings, and ensure those wrongs are never to be repeated in the unforeseeable future. It's paramount we all stand together and strive for unity.

Jacob Marino

Having grown up in Perth, I was introduced to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures during my secondary school and university experiences. Yet, in retrospect, the exposure I had then pales in comparison to my current understanding. The significance became apparent upon finishing my thesis research paper – a realisation of the need to recognise and embrace First Nations cultures, not solely from an architectural perspective, but as an integral part of daily life.

During my research and through the works of Paul Memmott and Alison Page, I started comprehending the importance of our connection to the land and why we should strengthen this bond by recognising and embracing it, rather than distancing ourselves from it.

Maciek Drewniak

Coming to live and work in Western Australia over a decade ago has been a hell of a ride. Severing connection with my ancestry, disrupting my roots and giving up the land I grew on. A brand new beginning.

Becoming an Australian Citizen was when it dawned on me: we are all just visitors in this ancient land, home to the oldest surviving Peoples on Earth, to whom we owe respect, admiration and gratitude for letting us settle, establish ourselves and do what we do best - create!

Learning about the First Nations cultures of Australia as early as primary school and then getting involved with projects that relied on the involvement of local Elders and artists, helped me begin to understand the importance of connection to the land and culture. I am now aware that such connection can and should be re-established.

Relationships

The core of reconciliation lies in the connection between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. In order to attain reconciliation, within the practice of Architecture, we believe it is essential to earn the trust and respect of our relationships with our fellow collaborators.



Relationships



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	1.1 Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence.	February 2024	RAP Champion
	1.2 Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	February 2024	RWG Member - MD
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	2.1 Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May 2024	RWG Secretary
	2.2 RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May - 3 June 2024	RAP Chair
	2.3 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	RAP Champion RWG Secretary
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	3.1 Continue to communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.	January 2024	RAP Champion
	3.2 Maintain a register of external stakeholders and clients that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	February 2024	RWG Chair
	3.3 Identify additional RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	April 2024	RAP Champion RWG Secretary
	3.4 Initiate strategies, procedures and workshops for engaging employees in reconciliation and our collective RAP goals.	July 2024	RWG Chair
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	4.1 Research and communicate best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	July 2024	RAP Champion RWG Secretary
	4.2 Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	October 2024	RAP Champion

Respect

At DesignInc WA we recognise and appreciate the cultures, rights, and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and we believe it is paramount to advancing all aspects of reconciliation. We understand constructing meaningful relationships relies on respecting their unique ways of life. We acknowledge nurturing a collective sense of national identity necessitates embracing and valuing the rich cultures and heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. We acknowledge the injustices of the past and strive to understand them so ultimately, we can actively work towards preventing their recurrence in the future.





Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	5.1 Develop a strategy for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation.	September 2024	RAP Champion
	5.2 Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	May 2024	RAP Champion RWG Member - JM
	5.3 Investigate ongoing cultural learning opportunities for staff.	February 2024	RWG Member - MM
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	6.1 Continue to develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area.	April 2024	RAP Champion
	6.2 Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgment of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	August 2024	RWG Chair RWG Member - MD
	6.3 Investigate opportunities to embed Designing from Country principles into our organisations work.	December 2024	RAP Champion
7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	7.1 Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.	July 2024	RWG Secretary
	7.2 Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	June 2024	RWG Secretary
	7.3 RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	July 2024	All RWG Members

Opportunities

We are committed to ensuring equal access to various opportunities in life as we believe it is vital for the overall well-being of all individuals, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Unfortunately, significant and unacceptable disparities persist between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the broader Australian population across social, health, education, and economic indicators. We understand that by addressing this national issue, it requires the establishment of respectful relationships as a foundation. We are committed to develop and implement solutions that are culturally appropriate, centered on partnerships, and uphold the distinctive rights and opportunities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Opportunities



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
8. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	8.1 Develop a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation.	September 2024	RAP Champion
	8.2 Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	September 2024	RAP Champion
9. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	9.1 Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	April 2024	RAP Champion
	9.2 Investigate Supply Nation membership.	February 2024	RWG Member - JM

Governance





Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
10. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	10.1 Maintain a RWG to govern RAP implementation.	January 2024	RAP Champion
	10.2 Establish and apply a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	February 2024	RWG Member - MD
	10.3 Maintain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	January 2024	RAP Champion
11. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	11.1 Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	February 2024	RAP Champion
	11.2 Engage senior leaders and other staff in the delivery of RAP commitments.	February 2024	RAP Champion
	11.3 Appoint and maintain a senior leader to champion our RAP internally.	January 2024	RAP Champion
	11.4 Define and maintain appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	March 2024	RWG Member - JM
12. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	12.1 Contact Reconciliation Australia to verify that our primary and secondary contact details are up to date, to ensure we do not miss out on important RAP correspondence.	June Annually	RWG Member - MM
	12.2 Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Survey.	August 2024	RWG Member - MM
	12.3 Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Survey to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September, annually	RWG Member - MM
13. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	July 2024	RAP Champion

Uluru Statement from the Heart

The Uluru Statement proposes the establishment of a First Nations voice in the Australian Constitution, a crucial step towards achieving reconciliation in Australia. DesignInc believes the Voice is a simple, sensible, and positive step in the process of righting the wrongs of the past and building a more equitable Australia.

In July 2023, the practice leaders from DesignInc from across the country gathered in Uluru to discuss several issues relating to our practice. In Uluru we participated in various cultural immersion activities, including the highlight of the trip – the Mala tjukurpa (creation story) of the Mala people – a compelling performance told through the medium of light and sound.

Shortly after our trip, DesignInc committed to publicly supporting The Voice. Despite the outcome of the Referendum, DesignInc upholds the principle of self-determination and is committed to providing opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to gain equity and prosperity. We encourage all Australians to learn more about the Uluru Statement and continue to seek reconciliation with and recognition of First Nations peoples.



DesignInc Directors from Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney meet together at Uluru in July 2023



DesignInc

DI WA PTY LTD
LEVEL 1, 1 HOWARD ST
PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA
6000 AUSTRALIA

+61 8 6369 2400
reception@wa.designinc.com.au
designinc.com.au

We are an association of independent practices with offices in Perth, Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne, and Sydney.

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