



***REFLECT***

# RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

01.08.2023 - 01.08.2024

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RECONCILIATION  
ACTION PLAN

REFLECT

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Cumulus respectfully acknowledges the First Peoples of Australia, their Elders past, present, and emerging, who were and are the keepers of their cultural and spiritual knowledge and traditions, and the Custodians of the lands on which we live and work.

*(previous)* Dove Lake Shelter  
Image by Angie Blair (Feb 2023)



## Reconciliation Australia CEO Statement

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

Cumulus Studio joins a network of more than 2,200 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 Cumulus Studio 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 Cumulus Studio, 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





## About the Artwork

“The artwork I have created for Cumulus is inspired by local Country, our community connections and the layers of knowledge we hold and share collectively in order to sustain our cultural practices. The line work represents our journey and the journey of Cumulus Studio in navigating community, culture and cultural protocol.

The circular motifs represent the community, coming together to learn and share collectively; it is also reminiscent of the natural flow and connectedness of Country and all things belonging to Country, including us, the people.

The colour palette is inspired by the colour palette in use for the Reconciliation Plan and lends itself to the natural earthy tones of Lutruwita/Tasmania.”

### **Caleb Nichols-Mansell**

Artist/Founder

Blackspace Creative Arts and Cultural Hub

*(previous)* Dove Lake Shelter  
Image by Angie Blair (Feb 2023)



## About the Artist

Caleb Nichols-Mansell is an early career mixed media artist and the Founder of Blackspace Creative Arts and Cultural Hub. He is a proud Tasmanian Aboriginal man with deep connections to Country, community, culture, and spirit which all inform his practice and process as an artist and leader.

Currently living on the north-west coast of Tasmania with his partner, Caleb was born and raised in Launceston with his large and extended family. Caleb went to school first at Mowbray Heights Primary and then later at Brooks High School. After this he completed his first year of post-secondary education at Newstead College before moving on to the University of Tasmania where he studied and later worked for several years.

Caleb has an extensive portfolio in graphic design and digital art and has been commissioned by a number of leading institutes and organisations both within the state and nationally. Stepping outside of his comfort zone, he is beginning to experiment with large scale festival and public art installations as well as site responsive works which will be developed over the coming year.

Delving into and shining light on the politics of identity, land, and cultural heritage his artwork aims to generate conversation and evoke deep thinking whilst providing viewers with an intimate look at what it means to be a Tasmanian Aboriginal man in modern day Tasmania.





## Our Business

We are an architecture and interior design studio with offices in Tarndanya (Adelaide, Kaurna Country), Nipaluna (Hobart, South East Nation Country), Naarm (Melbourne, Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung Country), Warrane (Sydney Cove, Gadigal Country of the Eora Nation), and in the convergence of the Leterrermairrener, Panniher & Tyerrenotepanner peoples of the Stoney Creek Nation (Launceston).

Established in 2011, our studio was formed out of the idea that collective vision leads to richer, more diverse and interesting experiences — an approach reflected in the collaborative nature of our designs and their considered connection to place. That's why, regardless of the type of project, location, or size, we actively involve our clients, stakeholders, and the communities connected to our designs.

Through the open conversations that ground our practice, we seek to create clever and enduring architecture that positively impacts our communities while echoing our values of inclusivity, respect, consideration, empathy, and playfulness. Alongside our practice's core approach, we proactively explore opportunities for social, cultural, and environmentally sustainable design.

We are a diverse studio employing 45 architects, designers, and administrative support members from around Australia and other parts of the world. Although we don't have any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander team members currently, this first part of our reconciliation journey will help us explore ways to provide meaningful and sustainable opportunities for First Nations People — whether that be at our studio, programs that we support, or directly through our work.

*(previous)* Dove Lake Shelter  
Image by Angie Blair (Feb 2023)

*(next)* Cradle Mountain Visitor Centre  
Image Samuel Shelly (Feb 2023)

# VIII

## A billion years of rocks



Rocks from all but one geological period of the last billion years are present in the Tasmannian Belt, a world heritage area.

This extraordinary landscape has been faulted and folded, then eroded and shaped by moving ice through repeated glaciations.

Aboriginal people used rocks in the Charles River to make cutlery and tools. Geological features were major landmarks and boundaries, and the source of stories.

# IX

## Continually evolving, outstanding ecosystems



The Tasmannian Belt, a world heritage area, contains some of the last remnants of temperate rainforests in the world. It is home to plants and animals with ancestors up to 200 million years old.

Here, natural processes continue, much the same as they have for thousands of years – with human impacts minimal.

Aboriginal people's connections to this continually evolving land is as ancient as the forest trees. They refer to trees as their old people, sharing different species as their ancestors.

# X

## A sanctuary for the special ones



Unique and diverse habitats provide sanctuary for globally rare plants, animals and animals that occur nowhere else in the world.

This park is a refuge for these special ones. Aboriginal knowledge of the ancient valley once enabled all plants and animals to flourish. Their survival relies on the spiritual, emotional and physical connection Aboriginal people have with country.



## Our RAP

As architects and designers, we know that all the projects we undertake are situated on Country and, in many ways, have lasting impacts on not only the land, but also on the communities that continue to have a deep cultural connection to these places.

always was ...



## Why?

We know that to truly work together in collaborative partnerships we must first ensure everybody at the table feels valued, acknowledged, equal, respected, and seen.

Our studio began its journey in Tasmania, a state that for many decades systematically supported the extinction myth and denied Tasmanian Aboriginal people a voice, a blood line, a right and a history.

*(previous)* Dove Lake Shelter  
Image by Kylee Scott (Feb 2023)

*(right)* Dove Lake Shelter  
Image by Angie Blair (Jan 2023)





## What?

Our RAP journey started as a process of recognition, an understanding that as a practice we must make a commitment to implementing a framework that thwarts the denial of the past and systematically supports, promotes, and reconciles to bring together, enable and foster collaboration in its truest sense.

We feel the spaces we help build have an opportunity to maintain, repair, celebrate and empower Country and culture, and give a voice to many communities that continue to be left in the periphery of our society.

Our Cultural Team, which includes staff from different levels and positions within our studio, supports and monitors the implementation of our RAP.



## ***How?***

The team's diverse perspectives and experiences allow a cross-disciplinary and multi-layered approach to our reconciliation work. Alongside the RAP's implementation, this dedicated team organises internal knowledge sharing sessions through presentations, invited guests, and external training events for our whole studio.

As a studio, this RAP will complement the steps we are already taking in this space and, through our design work, help us diversify the narrative of Australia's built environment to inherently reflect and acknowledge cultural traditional knowledge, ideas, and Country.

As part of our RAP's implementation, we have reflected upon each pillar outlined in the second part of this document. This reflection is a guide for our journey, a reference point which we can look back to and build on.

This RAP is led by Cumulus Associate / Architect *Elizabeth Walsh* and Designer *Jess Murphy*.



Our RAP Working Group consists of:

**Elizabeth Walsh**

Associate/ Architect

**Jess Murphy**

Designer

**Olivia Potter**

Designer

**Danielle Pacella**

Architect / Sustainability Lead

**Xinyi Wang**

Architect

**Kylee Scott**

Director/ Architect

**Camilo Mejia**

Writer





## Our Partnerships and Current Activities

Our studio is working to both strengthen and continue to develop meaningful partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Our commitment to supporting pathways to truth, healing, and reconciliation is both a core organisation goal as well as, for many, a deeply personal endeavour. Our current partnerships are a combination of corporate, community and individual entities. We hope our RAP journey will enable us to broaden and build up existing connections as well as seed new opportunities.

### Corporate Connections & partnerships

Please refer to our sphere of influence diagram attached to this action plan to see our current connection and partnerships in blue and our desired in green.

*(previous)* Riverstone  
Image by Anjie Blair (Nov 2022)

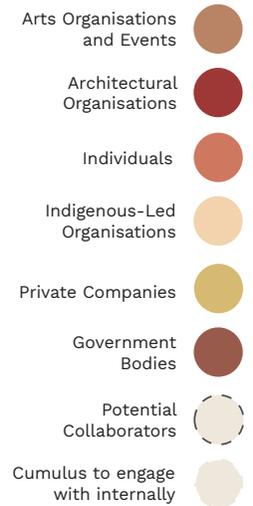
## High Influence High Interest

Highly influential Individuals and organisations and are highly interested in engaging with First Nations people



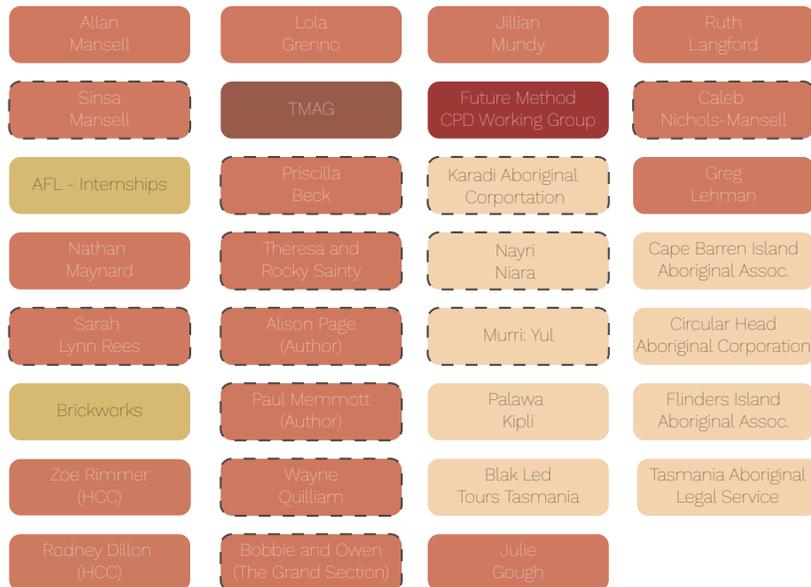
## High Influence Low Interest

Highly influential Individuals and organisations and are less interested in engaging with First Nations people



## Low Influence High Interest

Individuals and organisations with less influence and are highly interested in engaging with First Nations people



## Low Influence Low Interest

Individuals and organisations with less influence and are less interested in engaging with First Nations people



## Sphere of Influence

This diagram seeks to:

1. Identify the 'influence' and 'interest' of internal and external stakeholders at individual, organisational, community and societal levels within the contexts in which we practice to inform our strategic approach to engaging with First Nations groups





Relationships



Respect



Opportunities



Governance



## Relationships

Relationships are a long road that is paved with actions, not words. Relationships in this space require time\*, time to pause, time to really hear what is being said, time to reflect and time to move forward in unison.

At Cumulus we are starting with professional relationships, slowly strengthening a network of individuals and organisations to consult, inform, challenge, and broaden our practice and project outcomes alike.

Our intention as a studio is to contribute meaningfully to the built environment, to create enduring architecture and experiences that reflect and connect to Country. Such an intention is not possible without building long term relationships with First Nations peoples, practitioners, and organisations.

At Cumulus accountability is at the core of our practice culture — we want to be held to account because with accountability comes trust.

*\* A fellow designer and Palawa woman (Sarah Lynn Rees) said once, when referencing relationship building with Tasmanian Aboriginal Peoples, "travel at the speed of trust."*

# Relationships

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	1. Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence	August 2023	Designer
	2. Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	August 2023	Architect/Associate
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW)	1. Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May 2024	Designer
	2. RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May - 3 June 2024	Designer
	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	Designer

# Relationships

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	1. Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.	August 2023	Writer
	2. Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	August 2024	Designer
	3. Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	June 2024	Designer
4. Promote positive race relations through antidiscrimination strategies.	1. Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and antidiscrimination	August 2023	Architect/Associate
	2. Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing antidiscrimination provisions, and future needs.	August 2023	Architect/Associate



## Respect

Through deep respect for one another, there is space for meaningful, authentic relationships to unfurl and grow.

At Cumulus we nurture the practice of respect: beyond welcoming everyone to the table, we listen, empathise, and give each other time. As a studio, we are committed to taking the time to learn First Nations stories of those who have always been here. We are committed to hearing and coming to understand the truth of past events.

In this first Reflect stage, we understand that respect offers pathways to gifts of reciprocity. Through listening deeply, reflectively, and curiously, we are entrusted with new ideas, responsibilities, and knowledge. Active consideration and encouragement of each other's ideas nurtures trust, fostering richer shared outcomes.

It is our hope that through actively respecting and engaging with First Nations Peoples Cumulus will begin to know and better appreciate the complexity and wisdom of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples knowledge, cultures and stories. It will help us contribute to a built environment that is inclusive, one that acknowledges Country and cultures.

# 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.	1. Develop a business case for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation.	August 2023	Architect/Associate
	2. Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	August 2023	Architect/Associate and Designer
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	1. Develop an understanding of the local Custodians or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area.	October 2023	Designer
	2. Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	August 2023	Designer

# Respect

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	1. Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.	June 2024	Designer
	2. Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	June 2024	Designer
	3. RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	July 2024	Designer



## Opportunities

Architecture and design is collaborative. Each day, we approach projects with optimism and playfulness, connecting with others in pursuit of rich and vibrant outcomes. We know a project's 'brains trust' holds endless opportunities.

At Cumulus we are always striving for better; we are curious and critical thinkers; we work outside of the box seeking to enrich the lives of people and places.

We know that engaging with diverse people and perspectives opens a project to new possibilities. Through co-designing with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Knowledge Holders, we seek to open dialogues towards more meaningful engagement with Country and acknowledge the profound need to better care for it.

Each day, we design and build on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples lands and embrace the opportunity to create change through our work.

By critically examining the employment and collaboration opportunities for First Nations Peoples at our studio, we intend to meaningfully contribute and make connections to create a future that is equitable, allied, and abundant for all people and places

# Opportunities

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
8. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	1. Develop a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation.	June 2024	Architect/Associate
	2. Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	August 2023	Architect/Associate
9. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	1. Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	June 2024	Designer
	2. Investigate Supply Nation membership or similar local alternative.	June 2024	Designer



## Governance

At Cumulus, we understand that our company—like our RAP—must deliver measurable and tangible results. We believe the best way to achieve these results is through creating and facilitating inclusive environments, whereby many minds are welcomed to come together to share knowledge, experience, and expertise to collectively test and shape outcomes.

The English word ‘govern’ is derived from the Latin: ‘to steer or to rule’. Cumulus consciously and actively turns from these origins, taking a broader and more inclusive approach to traditional praxes of leadership and governance.

Rather than focus on the dominant action of steering or forcing a singular approach in a top down direction, we are interested in the vast and ongoing opportunities presented by flat and circular governance and leadership structures—structures which do not finish at a point with a single person but are equal, cyclical and ongoing; structures which speak to and prioritise the journey, the experience and the process rather than the destination; structures which celebrate diverse perspectives and a practice culture committed to walking together rather than rushing ahead.

# Governance

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
10. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	1. Maintain a RWG to govern RAP implementation.	August 2023	Architect/Associate and Designer
	2. Draft a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	December 2023	Architect/Associate and Designer
	3. Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	June 2024	Architect/Associate
11. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	1. Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	August 2023	Architect/Associate and Designer
	2. Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	August 2023	Architect/Associate
	3. Appoint a senior leader to champion our RAP internally.	August 2023	Architect/Associate and Designer

# Governance

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
	4. Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	December 2023	Architect/Associate and Designer
12. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	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 2024	Designer
	2. Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire.	August 2024	Designer
	3. Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September 2024	Designer
13. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	1. Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	May 2024	Designer



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