

# Reconciliation Action Plan

Reflect

July 2021 - July 2022

**element.**  
the art and science of place



RECONCILIATION  
ACTION PLAN

REFLECT



**Cover artwork by Barbara Bynder.©**

Barbara is a Ballardong Noongar woman. The artwork is a representation of the Derbal Yerrigan and the lake system that was sitting in the Boorlo at time of colonisation.

The red represents the ochre of Noongar people, the blue represents the river and lakes, and the linear work is the land in between. The circle is home.

**element** thanks Barbara for providing this artwork for our first RAP.

The Acknowledgement of Country in Whadjuk Noongar language has been provided to **element** and printed with the permission of Aunty Vivienne Hansen, Whadjuk Elder.

We acknowledge that while Whadjuk Noongar is identified as a single language, there are variations in pronunciation and spelling. **element** uses the spelling Whadjuk Noongar except when referencing an external organisation or source that uses alternative spelling.

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that this document may contain the names and images of people that have passed away. In some communities this may cause sadness, distress or offence.

## Acknowledgement of Country

### **Ngala kaaditjiny Whadjuk moort ngalang karlak Boodja**

We acknowledge the Whadjuk Noongar of the Bibbulmun nation as the Custodians of the land on which our office is located. We acknowledge and respect their enduring culture, their contribution to the life of this city and region and Elders past, and present.



This photograph was taken at element's office in November 2020 during the Welcome to Country by Aunty Vivienne Hansen, Whadjuk Elder (at left) at a celebration marking ten years of our heritage consultancy services. In the background is element's Managing Director Tony Paduano.



**\_OFFICE \_ RECORD \_**

**PERTH.**

September 1852.

This early plan of the Perth townsite shows the lakes system and original river foreshore, now filled in and built over  
 (State Records Office of Western Australia, Cons 3868/2859)

7496  
 50 link reserve old  
**RABBIT PROOF**

**\_15 Nov. 1875\_**

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The City skyline  
(Jamar Cromwell, unsplash)



## Message from the Managing Director

I am proud to present **element's** first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). This is the beginning of a long-term commitment and significant step for our company in contributing to reconciliation in Australia.

**element** began in 1989 as The Planning Group before expanding to TPG Planning, Urban Design and Heritage and growing to the multi-disciplinary company it is today. I joined the company in 1993 and have seen firsthand the importance of reconciliation in the work that we do.

Planning is first and foremost about the land – and finding the best way to live on it, appreciate and enjoy it. Over the years **element** has added to our core business of planning by introducing the supportive disciplines of urban design, heritage, public art, place making, economics, and engagement. These disciplines have enhanced our planning work and introduced a strong emphasis of the importance of people in planning for our future and the legacy that our work creates.

Where else to start when working in the planning industry, when looking at a place, than with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, who have cared for this land for millennia? This realisation is what set **element** on our RAP journey.

Our Board of Directors is committed to reconciliation. It is our responsibility as the largest planning company in Western Australia to ensure that we commit to working within our sphere of influence to drive recognition and acknowledgement of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures.

The RAP identifies clear actions and targets that will strengthen our existing relationships and create respectful new relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and our business partners.

We hope that through our RAP we can move forward together in the spirit of reconciliation. I look forward to sharing this meaningful journey both internally and externally and demonstrating how **element** will be making a difference to our people, communities and partners.



**Tony Paduano**  
Managing Director, element



## Message from Aunty Vivienne Hansen, Whadjuk Noongar Elder

Well done, element for setting a standard of cultural embracement within your company and may you continue this journey of learning, sharing, walking and talking together. It is the only way forward for a better future for all - acknowledging the past while facing the challenges of today's society together.

**Gnung koort djurapin, woolah**  
My heart is happy

Aunty Vivienne Hansen, Whadjuk Elder  
(element)





## Message from Reconciliation Australia CEO

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

**element** joins a network of more than 1,100 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 over 2.3 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 **element** 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 **element**, 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



View towards Goongoongup (Claisebrook)  
(element)

# Our Business

**element** is Western Australia's largest planning advisory firm. We have a workforce of around 55 people, none of whom identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. We have a desire to improve Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employment outcomes within **element** through building relationships and increasing our understanding of First Nations peoples and cultures, through our partnership and consulting opportunities, and through direct employment.

Partnering with First Nations peoples will enhance our business and will lead to better outcomes for the communities in which we work across Western Australia.

**element** has shaped Western Australia for over 30 years, navigating and bringing complex projects to life. Our specialist skills span across the disciplines of statutory and strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, property economics, heritage, urban design, place making, public art management and cultural consulting. Our people are designers, planners, marketers, architects, artists, photographers, sustainable development experts, heritage and engagement advisors.

How many people are privileged enough to be able to walk around a city or community and say, "I helped bring this to life!" Property owner, policy maker, developer or stakeholder– if you're involved in creating places, you have the power to shape lives for the better for generations to come.

It's a thought that's equally awesome and overwhelming. If you build it, will they come? And for how long? Is it the right vision, for the right place? Will it be adaptable to future needs? Is it viable, and will it have lasting commercial value? Will the community, or planning framework, even let you build it in the first place?

**element** is here to bring it all together blending the creative and technical to realise vision and deliver legacy.

## **It's the art and science of place.**

Our office is at 191 St Georges Terrace, Perth in the central business district, located on the traditional lands of the Whadjuk Noongar people of the Bibbulmun nation. Our project work extends to other First Nations across the State of Western Australia, and occasionally interstate and overseas.

We are a wholly WA based and owned company managed by a board of six Directors and an Executive Chair. The operations of the company are overseen by our Managing Director, assisted by the Principals in each of our pillars who operate as team leaders of the associate and consultant staff. Our support staff include administration, finance and human resources.

## Our RAP

Within **element** we have developed an internal RAP team led by our champion and Managing Director, Tony Paduano. Tony is an ambassador and advocate for the RAP and will be our champion for reconciliation both internally and externally. As part of our RAP, we will establish a RAP Working Group (RWG) which will comprise a cross section of members of our staff as well as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander representation.

Our RAP is a strategic document that supports our business plan. It includes practical actions that will drive our contribution to reconciliation both internally and in the communities in which we operate. We are developing our first RAP to:

- express reconciliation in our attitudes and values,
- embed a reconciliation framework in our workplace culture, and
- demonstrate our leadership in the planning industry.

In our Reflect RAP we will define our approach and vision for reconciliation initiatives within our sphere of influence.

## Our journey to date

We recognise the importance and value of acknowledging and celebrating Traditional Owners and Custodians throughout the State for the ongoing process of building strong relationships and enhancing opportunities for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples. As the only integrated planning consultancy with heritage, engagement, art and culture as core inhouse service offerings, we have a long history of collaboration on projects with Traditional Owners and specialist Aboriginal consultants to effectively communicate with communities, and to protect and promote Aboriginal cultures and heritage.

## Projects

We have worked, and continue to work, with a broad range of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander individuals and groups related to both metropolitan and regional projects. Through this experience we have developed an understanding of cultural protocols and processes. We have collaborated with Traditional Owners undertaking specific engagement to shape narrative, strategic direction and project outcomes to build the capacity of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and future generations. We also regularly work with specialist consultants to effectively communicate and facilitate engagement with the appropriate Elders for the place..

Some of our major projects in this space are:



Murujuga field trip, October 2020 (element)

### **Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation Tourism Program**

- Murujuga (Burrup Peninsula) is a place of cultural and mythological significance, holding arguably the world's most significant collections of outdoor art and the largest, oldest known site for petroglyphs. We are providing town planning services to the Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation during the planning and conceptual design phase for the tourism aspirations for the Burrup. We are engaging with the Ngarluma, Yindjibarndi, Yaburara, Mardudhunera and Wong-Goo-Tt-Oo Elders, cultural leaders and community members as part of this project.



Community engagement session in Port Hedland, May 2020 (element)

### Town of Port Hedland Local Planning Strategy and Scheme Review

- This project provided an opportunity for us to be part of shaping the Town of Port Hedland's local planning framework to guide land use planning and development into the future. As part of the process we delivered an engagement strategy for a complex scheme review, which included facilitating engagement sessions with key government and industry stakeholders and Aboriginal community leaders in the Pilbara. Our engagements coalesced leadership, which led to broadly supported outcomes.



The City of Perth was a Prohibited Area for Aboriginal people after 6pm from 1927-1954 (State Records Office of Western Australia, 1D/40)

### 1 The Esplanade (Elizabeth Quay) Interpretation Strategy

- The new headquarters for Chevron Australia in Perth is being built on a site that is associated with the ancient culture and traditions of the Whadjuk people and the location of momentous events in Western Australia's history. Working in collaboration with the Whadjuk Noongar working group, **element** has developed a Heritage Interpretation Strategy that weaves the stories of the place into a cohesive narrative to inform the landscaping, lighting, signage, public art and place activation.



Smoking ceremony on the banks of the Derbal Yerrigan at Walyalup, December 2020. Herbie Bropho (left) and Elder Farley Garlett (element)

### Swan River Crossings Interpretation Strategy

- Main Roads is replacing the Fremantle Bridge by 2025, and we are engaged to provide heritage advice. Taking this as an opportunity to recognise the Whadjuk Noongar cultural connections to Walyalup (Fremantle) and the Derbal Yerrigan (Swan River), we are collaborating with local Elders to record the cultural narratives and propose interpretation strategies for the new design.



1840 water colour of Barmup Strawberry Hill (National Trust of Western Australia, artist unknown)

### Barmup Strawberry Hill Cultural Landscape Management Plan

- The State Registered site and National Trust managed property in Albany is an important place of significance in Menang Noongar culture. We have collaborated with local Elders to understand their aspirations for the landscape. We rewrote the cultural heritage Statement of Significance to include a shared history of the site, and recommended that the Menang Noongar representatives drive land management and revegetation, seeing these as important steps in the reconciliation process in the town.



Sailing on Perth Water (element)

### Perth Water Buneenboro Precinct Plan

- We led the coordination and development of the Perth Water Precinct Plan in collaboration with the Perth Water Vision Group, comprised of the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, City of Perth and other State and local government agencies. We facilitated an innovative community and stakeholder engagement program through face-to-face workshops with government agencies, community groups and the Whadjuk Noongar community, online surveys and a cutting-edge digital ideas mapping tool. Over 2000 unique ideas generated extensive community conversations about Perth Water's future.

### Initiatives

To date our reconciliation journey has centred around developing strategies for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander engagement and employment, which is an integral goal of our Strategic Business Plan. This seeks to ensure that we as a company identify and act upon opportunities to enhance engagement with, and employment for, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples as part of our projects.

Our other internal initiatives to date towards reconciliation are:

- Inclusion of Acknowledgement of Country at the beginning of documents and reports.
- Development of a staff email signature that includes an Acknowledgement of Country.
- Development of a methodology for our heritage projects that aligns with the Noongar six seasons.
- Raising awareness of shared history through interactive internal office communications and presentations.
- Cultural development through external partnerships and project-based alliances.

## RAP Team

By way of providing the appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments, **element** staff members were asked to nominate their interest in developing a RAP team and volunteer their time to research and understand the process. A group of six was established and have met at strategic points in the last nine months. We have to date completed three important actions:

1. The first action was for the RAP team to participate in a webinar delivered by Ingrid Cumming, Whadjuk Noongar woman, and Cultural Advisor on best practice for preparing a RAP. In her presentation, Ingrid expressed the view that the RAP actions 'Relationships ~ Respect ~ Opportunities' has a chronological association. Respect is our past; what we know of the long, continuing cultures of the First Nations. Relationships is the present; our interactions and behaviours. Opportunities is the future; our aims for improvement. This concept of the journey from the past, to the present and into the future resonated with us. We have included the Whadjuk Noongar words for past~ present ~ future that Ingrid shared: *kura ~ yeye ~ boorda* in our RAP to express identification with our reconciliation journey.
2. The next action we considered important was to undertake a staff survey to measure our workplace culture before the RAP was prepared. This will be used as a comparative tool in one year's time to assess the impact of our first RAP on our internal culture. The exercise involved the following actions in December 2020:
  - Defined the content of a staff survey to track, measure and report on RAP commitments. This was developed by engagement and human resources staff members, and approved by the Directors.
  - Shared the staff survey via internal communications and invited participation over a short time period.
3. Finally, the RAP team prepared and presented to the Board of Directors the resources required for RAP implementation, with regards to staff allocation of time, internal events budgets, and other processes and procedures. This was approved by the Board and the draft RAP commenced.



The City from King's Park  
(Larry Haubner, unsplash)





# Governance

| Action   | Deliverable/s  | Responsible for delivery | Expected timeframe |
|--|--|--------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>1. Establish a RAP Working Group (RWG).</b>   | 1.1 Form a RWG that has Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander representation.   | Managing Director        | August 2021        |
|  | 1.2 Draft a Terms of Reference for the RWG.  | Managing Director        | August 2021        |
| <b>2. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.</b> | 2.1 Review resource requirements for RAP implementation.   | Executive Chair          | August 2021        |
|  | 2.2 Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.  | Executive Chair          | August 2021        |
|  | 2.3 Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.   | RWG Chair                | November 2021      |
| <b>3. Report RAP achievements, challenges and learnings internally and externally.</b> | 3.1 Conduct a review of workplace culture and views towards reconciliation via a staff survey before the end of our RAP Reflect expiry date. | RWG Chair                | April 2022         |
|  | 3.2 Report externally by submitting the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.                             | Managing Director        | September 2022     |
| <b>4. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.</b>              | 4.1 Report internally on measurables to inform whether we renew our Reflect RAP or develop an Innovate RAP.                                  | RWG Chair                | May 2022           |
|  | 4.2 Liaise with Reconciliation Australia and register via their website to begin developing our next RAP.                                    | RWG Chair                | May 2022           |



Local bush food; quandong (element)



# Respect ~ Kura ~ Past

| Action   | Deliverable  | Responsibility         | Timeframe      |
|--|--|------------------------|----------------|
| <b>5. Increase understanding, value and recognition through cultural learning.</b> | 5.1 Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.   | RWG Chair              | January 2022   |
|  | 5.2 Develop a business case for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation. | Executive Chair        | February 2022  |
|  | 5.3 Provide opportunities to increase cultural awareness through cultural immersion, language classes, interactive learning, and guest speakers.   | Managing Director      | June 2022      |
|  | 5.4 Review induction program to ensure content includes Acknowledgment of Country and information about the Whadjuk Noongar, on whose land our office is located.                              | HR Manager             | September 2021 |
|  | 5.5 Consider engaging a Noongar consultant to deliver cultural awareness training workshop/s and speak at NRW and/or NAIDOC Week internal event.   | RWG Chair              | March 2022     |
| <b>6. Observe cultural protocols.</b>  | 6.1 Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country.                                     | RWG Chair              | October 2021   |
|  | 6.2 Increase staff's understanding and practice of using inclusive and respectful language.  | Managing Director      | August 2021    |
|  | 6.3 Develop a list with advice from relevant Land Councils of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Elders and Traditional Owners within our sphere of influence.                           | Managing Director      | February 2022  |
|  | 6.4 Ensure an Acknowledgement of Country is included in our website and digital communications (email signatures).   | Administration Manager | July 2021      |
|  | 6.5 Seek approval to add 'Ngala kaaditjiny Whadjuk moort ngalang karlak' to our website and digital communications (email signatures).   | Administration Manager | November 2021  |
|  | 6.6 Encourage staff to include an Acknowledgement of Country at the commencement of internal team meetings by providing Acknowledgement of Country information cards in every meeting room.    | Managing Director      | July 2021      |
|  | 6.7 Consider engaging a Traditional Owner to deliver a Welcome to Country at strategic events within the company.  | Executive Chair        | February 2022  |
| <b>7. Celebrate NAIDOC Week.</b>   | 7.1 Circulate NAIDOC Week resources and materials to our staff.  | Administration Manager | June 2022      |
|  | 7.2 RWG to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.   | RWG Chair              | June 2022      |
|  | 7.3 Encourage and support staff to participate in an external event to recognise and celebrate NAIDOC Week.  | Managing Director      | June 2022      |



Smoking Ceremony, Walyalup, December 2020  
(element)



## Relationships ~ Yeye ~ Present

| Action  | Deliverable   | Responsibility         | Timeframe     |
|---|---|------------------------|---------------|
| <b>8. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.</b> | 8.1 Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.  | Managing Director      | July 2021     |
|   | 8.2 Ensure the RAP is included in the new employee Induction Pack.  | HR Manager             | August 2021   |
|   | 8.3 Develop and implement a plan to inform staff about their responsibilities within our RAP.   | Managing Director      | July 2021     |
|   | 8.4 Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.   | Managing Director      | March 2022    |
|   | 8.5 Identify other like-minded organisations with RAPs that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.  | RWG Chair              | February 2022 |
| <b>9. Establish and strengthen relationships.</b>                 | 9.1 Develop a list with advice from relevant Land Councils of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations that we could approach to connect with on our reconciliation journey. | RWG Chair              | November 2021 |
|   | 9.2 Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.  | RWG Chair              | November 2021 |
| <b>10. Adopt anti-discrimination strategies.</b>                  | 10.1 Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.  | HR Manager             | October 2021  |
|   | 10.2 Conduct a review of policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.   | HR Manager             | December 2021 |
| <b>11. Celebrate National Reconciliation Week (NRW).</b>          | 11.1 Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and materials to our staff.   | Administration Manager | May 2022      |
|   | 11.2 Register an internal NRW event on the Reconciliation Australia website and hold event during NRW.  | Administration Manager | May 2022      |
|   | 11.3 RWG members to participate in an external NRW event.   | RWG Chair              | May 2022      |
|   | 11.4 Encourage and support staff to participate in an external NRW event.   | Managing Director      | May 2022      |



City skyline from the east over Matagarup Bridge  
(element)



# Opportunities ~ Boorda ~ Future

| Action   | Deliverable   | Responsibility         | Timeframe      |
|--|---|------------------------|----------------|
| <b>12. Investigate Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employment.</b>  | 12.1 Develop a business case for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation.   | HR Manager             | March 2022     |
|  | 12.2 Build understanding of current Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities. | HR Manager             | March 2022     |
|  | 12.3 Review and update our Equal Opportunity Policy to ensure best practice.  | HR Manager             | November 2021  |
| <b>13. Support Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait suppliers and businesses.</b> | 13.1 Compile a list of local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander owned businesses that we could use for catering internal events.                        | Administration Manager | September 2021 |
|  | 13.2 Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.   | Managing Director      | April 2022     |
|  | 13.3 Investigate Supply Nation membership.  | Administration Manager | September 2021 |
|  | 13.4 Investigate opportunities to sponsor an external Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander event.   | Administration Manager | April 2022     |
|  | 13.5 Consider commissioning an artwork for display in a public space in our office to support a Noongar artist.   | Associate – Public Art | February 2022  |

The background of the page is an abstract pattern of thick, hand-drawn lines. The lines are primarily red and blue, creating a complex, organic, and somewhat chaotic texture. The lines vary in thickness and direction, forming irregular shapes and patterns that resemble a topographical map or a stylized wood grain. The overall effect is dynamic and visually engaging.

## Contact

Tony Paduano, Managing Director

Element Advisory Pty Ltd  
18th Floor, 191 St Georges Terrace, Perth WA 6000

T: 08 9289 8300 - E: [tony.paduano@elementwa.com.au](mailto:tony.paduano@elementwa.com.au)

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