

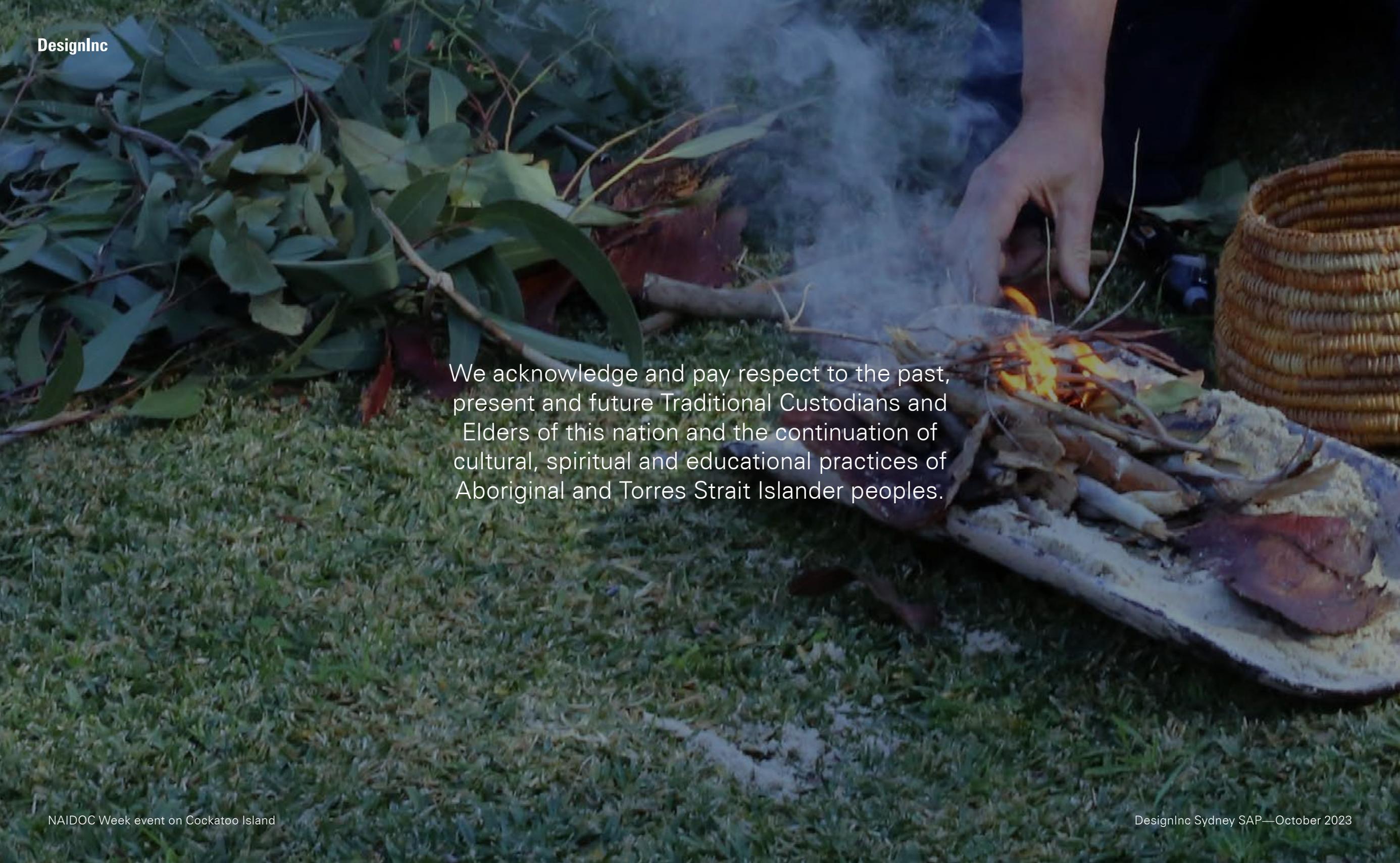
**DesignInc**

Architecture  
Urban Design  
Interiors  
Landscape  
[designinc.com.au](http://designinc.com.au)

# Sustainability Action Plan

Sydney Studio

October 2023



We acknowledge and pay respect to the past, present and future Traditional Custodians and Elders of this nation and the continuation of cultural, spiritual and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Our SAP

# This is the first DesignInc Sydney Sustainability Action Plan (SAP)

Our first SAP follows the goals and recommendations of the Architects Declare 'Review' SAP. Upon successful completion of the goals in this plan, we will move to the next step.

## Step 1—Review SAP

A firm who have signed on to the Architects Declare pledge but whose work or practices are not consistently meeting the goals of the movement. Your SAP should clearly articulate how you will begin to change your office culture to better align all work and business operations with the Architects Declare Principles.

**We are here**

## Step 2—Extend SAP

A firm who whose business operations and projects consistently align with the majority of the architects declare principles but who do not have a formalised process of engagement or consistent approach that captures all aspects of the business. Your SAP should celebrate your successes but define a clear path to holistic action across the business including your vision of sustainability and how it aligns with the Architects Declare Principles.

## Step 3—Amplify SAP

A firm well versed in sustainability and a leader in the field in terms of projects and advocacy. Your SAP should be about innovation and how your actions can be amplified further to influence others and grow the community.

## Step 4—Shine / Regenerate SAP

A firm that has been a recognised leader in advocacy and action on Architects Declare principles and sustainability more broadly. Your SAP will take your thought leadership beyond the profession and your clients, how will your work impact beyond just the built realm? Your SAP should seek to create connections beyond client and other practitioners into collaborators and government. It should aim at being a truly regenerative practice. You will be looking to develop your SAP into a RegAP (Regeneration Action Plan) and take the next steps forward!

Our SAP

# At DesignInc Sydney, we recognise we have a responsibility to care for people and the planet.

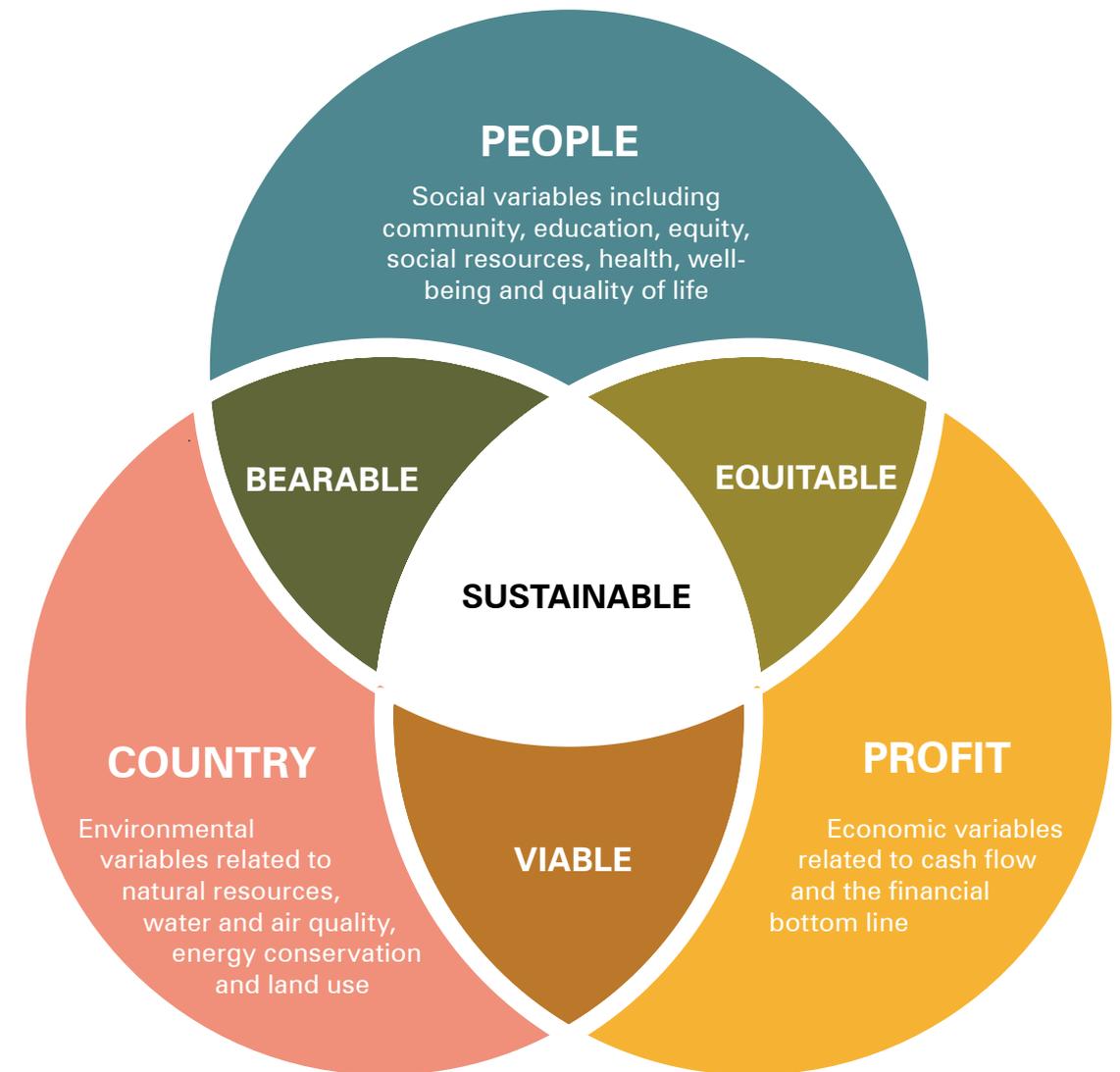
In establishing our first Sustainability Action Plan (SAP), we aim to understand our current impacts across our business and our projects, and take steps to improve them.

**Our Commitment**—We commit to reviewing our work and business operations to understand how we can improve our behaviours to achieve Net Zero greenhouse gas emissions in the built environment.

**Design Practice**—The built environment accounts for approximately 40% of carbon emissions globally. As designers we recognise we have a key role to play and responsibility to improve the sustainability credentials of the projects we design.

**Business Operations**—As a business with over 110 people, we also have a responsibility to ensure the day to day operations of our business are sustainable. This includes our energy consumption, our waste and water.

**Education, Outreach + Advocacy**—We recognise that our organisation can play a key role in advocating for change among our team, our community of clients, contractors and collaborators, the broader design and construction industry, as well as society in general.



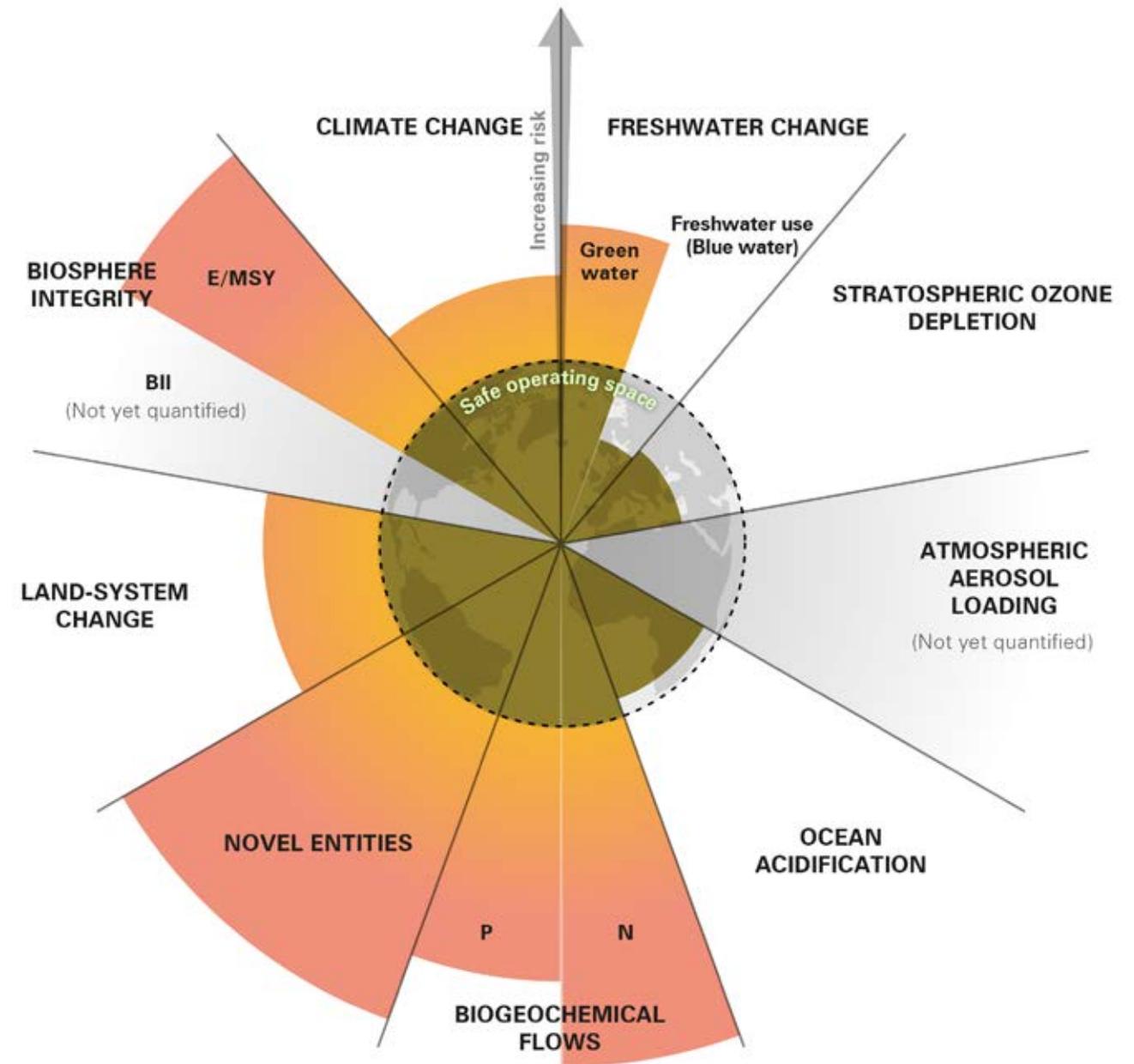
Our SAP

# Scientists overwhelmingly concur that human activity is transgressing the safe operating space of a number of the Earth's nine planetary boundaries.

Australia is a signatory to the Paris Agreement and the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), The SDGs 'provide a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future'.<sup>1</sup>

The SDGs are designed to reduce inequality across the globe, supporting communities everywhere to have access to opportunities and health, while ensuring our collective human behaviours don't exceed the Earth's planetary boundaries. These include greenhouse gas emissions and other atmospheric conditions, water, biodiversity and land use. In 2023, we are over half way through the timeframe for reaching the 2015-2030 SDGs, and most goals are way off target.

1. United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/>



Azote for Stockholm Resilience Centre, based on analysis in Wang-Erlandsson et al 2022.

Section 1:

# Our Commitment

Our Vision and Mission

## We will mindfully cultivate a design practice that cares for Country and people.

We will listen and collaborate – designing from Country will be part of every project we deliver to better shape our lives and the environment

**Environmental sustainability (Country)**—means that we are living within the means of our natural resources: as a practice we want to contribute to a better future within the built environment

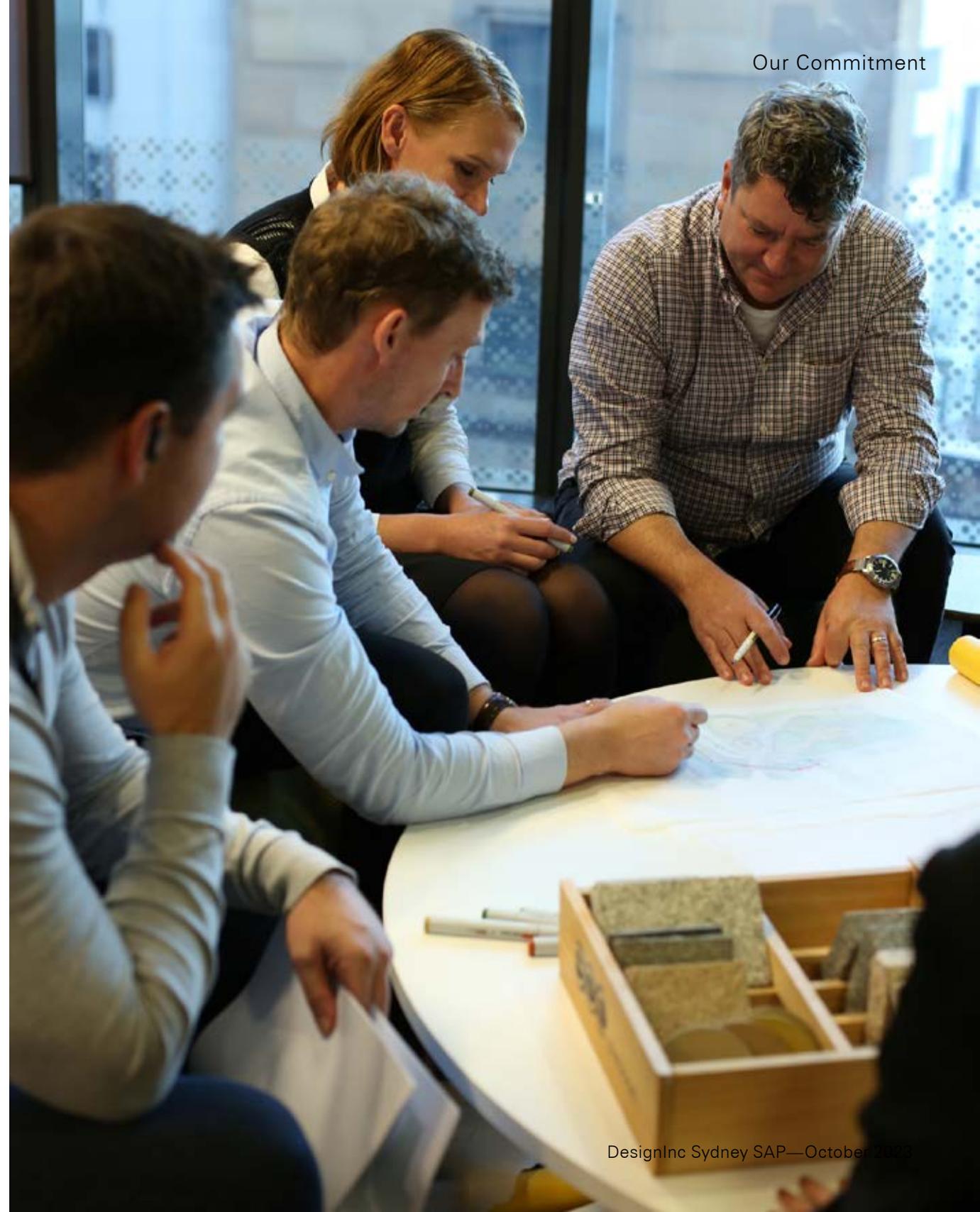
**Economic sustainability (Profit)**—requires that a business uses its resources efficiently and responsibly so that it can operate in a sustainable manner to consistently produce an operational profit: we aim to prioritise local and indigenous resources to achieve this goal

**Social sustainability (People)**—is the ability of society, or any social system, to persistently achieve a good social well-being: our operations focus on the physical, mental and social well-being of our staff and broader communities

Our SAP Framework

## **We have established a Sustainability Working Group and published this 'review' SAP as the first step.**

- We are currently obtaining Carbon Neutral Certification as an organisation and service (from start of 2021FY).
- We have undertaken a carbon audit and calculated our carbon emissions.
- An independent audit and validation of the data is currently underway.
- We will then submit to Climate Active for Certification before end of 2023.
- We will review and update our SAP annually.



## Current Practices

## Our current sustainable practices—economic, social and environmental.

We understand that a sustainable future can only be achieved when environmental protection, social equity and economic profitability coexist without one area taking over any of the others.

### Architects Declare

We are signed up to Architects Declare.

Australian Architects Declare is part of an international network of architectural practices committed to addressing the climate and biodiversity emergency. Architects Declare is an industry recognised initiative, and many signatories are using the simplicity and clarity of the declaration as a catalyst to drive effective change within their organisations; many are also using it as a tool to demonstrate their commitment to combating climate change in discussion with clients and collaborators.



### Green Building Council of Australia

We are members of the Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA).

The GBCA is the nation's authority on sustainable buildings, communities and cities. Their mission is to accelerate the transformation of Australia's built environment into one that is healthy, liveable, productive, resilient and sustainable.



### Environmental Management System

- We are certified as compliant with AS/NZS ISO 14001:2016 Environmental Management Systems (EMS) Requirements.
- Our EMS Policy is a documented statement of commitment communicated to all staff.
- Our EMS Policy incorporates an Environmentally Sustainable Design Process and Framework.



Current Practices

# Reconciliation with First Australians

The majority of our team have participated in cultural sharing experiences, discussions, ceremonies and workshops over the last 12 months, increasing their cultural literacy and ability to confidently and appropriately engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

## Nguluway DesignInc

In 2020, Nguluway—led by Wiradjuri architect, Craig Kerlake—joined with DesignInc Sydney to form Nguluway DesignInc. This unique partnership brings First Nations leadership and cultural knowledge together with the architectural expertise of the DesignInc team. Nguluway DesignInc is Supply Nation certified and NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce registered.



## Aboriginal Architecture Scholarship

DesignInc Sydney funds a scholarship for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander student studying architecture at Western Sydney University. Valued at \$150,000 over five years, the scholarship provides \$30,000 annually for living expenses, as well as opportunities for mentorship and employment while studying, and a guaranteed role at DesignInc upon graduating. The first recipient of our scholarship is in his third year of study at Western Sydney University.



## Reconciliation Action Plan

Our first Innovate RAP 2022–2024 is currently in the process of being implemented. Through our RAP, we commit to a range of practical actions to strengthen relationships, create mutual respect and improve the opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities. These include an Indigenous / Sustainable Procurement Strategy and a Designing from Country Methodology.



Current Practices

## Diversity + Inclusion

**We actively foster diversity and inclusion across our organisation.**

We participate in the Champions of Change program, and a high proportion of our leadership team are women, including at director level. Our progressive Parental Leave Policy goes beyond legislated requirements and our 'Flex@DI' program embeds flexible work options across the organisation.

We mark significant events such as NAIDOC Week, National Reconciliation Week, Harmony Day, International Women's Day, MS Gong Ride, and International Week of Deaf People with internal events, public events, excursions and workshops.

## Health + Well-being

**Our comprehensive Health and Well-being Program aims to raise awareness and provide access to information and support, improving health outcomes for individuals and creating a workplace environment that makes healthy choices the easy choice.**

Our Employee Assistance Program provides access to resources and confidential short-term counselling for all staff to assist with financial, legal, physical, and mental health issues.

We provide two Be at Your Best Days of leave per year for all staff that can be taken to support their mental health and remain at their best

We participate in events and initiatives such as RUOK? Day, Mental Health Month and White Ribbon Games Night. By participating in these events, we raise awareness and create an environment where people facing these challenges can feel supported.

We regularly work with Black Dog Institute to run workshops for our staff. These workshops help identify warning signs of

mental ill-health, understand what support is available, and learn techniques to improve well-being

To show our commitment to improving the mental health of our workplace we have introduced a Mental Health Champion program. Champions have attended Mental Health First Aid courses to support colleagues in time of need and spread the word on the value of a mentally healthy workplace

All permanent staff are covered by income protection insurance through Steadfast Life on commencement of service, providing monthly income and

superannuation benefits should they not be able to attend work due to illness or injury.

Steadfast Life also provides life insurance to all staff on commencement of service to provide financial support to their family due to their death or total permanent disability

All staff have access to virtual expert health care through 360 Health for themselves and their family regarding medical advice, mental health review or general queries, and nutrition consultation and advice



Section 2:

# Design Practice



Design Practice

## **The experiences of the people inhabiting our projects is core to our design process.**

We think about every project in terms of sustainability and seek design solutions that are good for people and good for the planet.

We champion an integrated approach to sustainable architecture, interiors, landscape and urban design with a focus on the creation of quality environments which reconcile natural, social, cultural and economic forces.

Current Practices

# Sustainable Design

- We use an Environmentally Sustainable Design Process and Framework for our projects.
- We use a Designing from Country Methodology to incorporate Indigenous narratives that can help nurture improved relationships between people and nature and achieve long-term sustainability, a sense of belonging and responsibility for caring for Country.
- We use a Design Journal to document our principles and design development including sustainability initiatives that are explored and adopted.
- We undertake Design Reviews that include assessment of the proposed sustainability initiatives.
- Some projects are certified through Green Star or ISCA Ratings.
- Many of our projects include:
  - adaptive reuse of buildings and/or materials;
  - accessible multi-modal public transport promoting sustainable cities and infrastructure;
  - heritage interpretation elements which resonate with context and stories of place to make a positive contribution and add layers of meaning for the community;
  - water sensitive urban design;
  - materials and planting to minimise urban heat island effects; and / or
  - Indigenous planting to provide habitats and encourage biodiversity.





## Awards

## Recent Sustainability Awards

- 2023—Finalist, Excellence in Social & Community Infrastructure, UDIA—Gajuga Park, McCarthy Reserve and Brighton Memorial Fields
- 2023—Shortlisted, Excellence in Sustainability, The Urban Developer—PHIVE
- 2023—Commendation, Sustainability, AIA (NSW)—PHIVE
- 2022—Finalist, Social & Community Infrastructure Category, UDIA NSW—Ultimo Public School
- 2022—Commendation, Built Projects—City and Regional Scale, Urban Design Awards (NSW)—Byron Bay Transport Interchange
- 2022—Shortlisted, Well Connected Communities with Quality Local Environments, NSW Government Premier's Award—Byron Bay Transport Interchange
- 2022—Winner, Clean Technology Award, Banksia Foundation National Sustainability Awards—Como Station
- 2022—Winner, Successful Places, TfNSW—Como Station
- 2022—Outstanding Achievement, Design, Infrastructure Sustainability Council—Rooty Hill Station and Commuter Carpark
- 2019—Commendation, Landscape and Biophilia, Sustainability Awards—Manly Vale Carpark (with Junglefy)

## Proposed Processes

## Evaluate New Projects

We will evaluate all new projects against the aspiration to contribute positively to mitigating climate breakdown, and encourage our clients to adopt this approach. This includes:

- discussing and agreeing on sustainability objectives with clients;
- including a Sustainability Initiatives Checklist for projects; and
- tracking sustainability initiatives and assessing them at Design Reviews.

## Lifecycle Analysis

We will develop the ability to include life cycle costing, whole life carbon modelling and post occupancy evaluation as part of our scope of work, to reduce both embodied and operational resource use. This includes:

- having tools to undertake Life Cycle Assessments (LCAs);
- providing LCAs to clients to consider reduction strategies; and
- setting targets, evaluating, reporting and improving.

## Reduce Construction Waste

We will collaborate with engineers, contractors and clients to further reduce construction waste by:

- considering DfMA opportunities, standardisation and kit-of-parts approach;
- considering circular economy principles and reused materials; and
- designing for deconstruction, reclamation and reuse.

## Reduce Carbon

We will accelerate the shift to low embodied carbon materials in all our work and minimise wasteful use of resources in architecture and urban planning, both in quantum and in detail. This includes:

- having tools to measure embodied carbon in our designs;
- building an in-house sustainable materials database;
- selecting durable materials with longer life cycles;
- selecting materials with high amounts of recycled content;
- selecting Low Carbon and Bio-Materials;
- analysing embodied carbon in design options to enable informed decisions; and
- undertaking carbon reduction checkpoints in Design Reviews.

## Update our ESD Framework

We will update our Environmentally Sustainable Design Process and Framework to incorporate the outcomes of these initiatives and updated guidance on considerations of:

- passive design;
- energy efficiency;
- water use;
- life cycle carbon footprint;
- materials and waste;
- design life; and
- health, well-being and nature.

**Proposed sustainable design processes currently being implemented as part of our SAP**

Section 3:

# Business Operations

**We believe that our business is responsible for promoting sustainability and improving relationships between people and nature to create more resilient societies.**

We aim to make a positive difference to the health and happiness of people's lives through our operations and the quality of every environment we create. We are developing and will implement an emissions reduction strategy to minimise our carbon footprint and ensure we only purchase unavoidable offsets in future. We will measure and publish our success and how we compare to Net Zero timelines.



Proposed Processes

# Proposed Emissions Reduction Strategies currently being implemented as part of our SAP

## Enhance Electricity Use

- Switch to 100% accredited green power
- Ensure all appliances and lights are energy efficient
- Power off all equipment when not in use

## Reduce Fuel Use

- Promote use of company Opal cards and public transport
- Avoid flying where possible, offset flights, don't fly business class
- Use GoGet hybrid or EVs when available
- Use Uber Green when available

## Reduce Waste

- Improve waste management
- Give staff keep cups
- Minimise printing
- Purchase recycled paper
- Don't use printed business cards

## Use Economic Forces

- Use Carbon Neutral suppliers where practical
- Purchase meaningful offsets aligned with our Vision

Section 4:

# Education, Outreach + Advocacy

Education, Outreach + Advocacy

# Through communicating and implementing our Vision we believe we can make a positive change by emphasising the importance of integrating nature, place and community.

Our passion, curiosity and love of learning will enable us to undertake this evolving journey by embracing change and responding to new challenges. We will use our extensive network to share knowledge and raise awareness to help embed and celebrate sustainable relationships with the natural and built environment.



## Proposed Initiatives

## Undertake Research + Share Knowledge

- We will undertake research and share knowledge by attending seminars, workshops and presentations to stay abreast of emerging technology and best practices
- We will provide CPD and training workshops for staff to improve their understanding and implementation of sustainable design practices
- We will promote the actions that our organisation is undertaking and the impactful actions individual employees can undertake to reduce their carbon footprint such as:
  - installing solar panels at home;
  - switching to a renewable energy plan;
  - switching superannuation and other financial investments to ethical funds;
- living car free / walk, cycle or use public transport as much as possible;
- switching to an electric or hybrid car;
- minimising food waste;
- composting all organic waste at home;
- switching to a sustainable diet;
- buying in bulk and avoiding packaging;
- powering off all devices (rather than leaving on standby);
- avoiding flying; and
- drying clothes on line and not using a dryer.

## Raise Awareness

We will raise awareness of the climate and biodiversity emergencies by:

- communicating and implementing our Vision;
- hosting RAP events; and
- hosting sustainability calendar events.

## Advocate to Clients + Supply Chains

We will advocate for action amongst our clients and supply chains by:

- encouraging clients to consider upfront carbon, embodied carbon and Life Cycle Assessments;
- enabling clients to be take responsibility for upfront and ongoing project carbon;
- encouraging suppliers to publish Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs);
- identifying and prioritising products and materials with EPDs;
- checking if suppliers and subcontractors are Carbon Neutral Certified;
- favouring Carbon Neutral suppliers and subcontractors;
- suggesting clients use 100% accredited green power;
- implementing our Sustainable and Indigenous Procurement Strategy; and
- leading by example, updating and publishing our SAP.

## **Sydney**

Our Sydney studio is on Gadigal land.

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