The ‘country’ within: the challenges for landscape architecture to legitimatise its residency on *terra nullius* 

Darryl Low Choy and David Jones
Acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the landscape where we are meeting & where we research & practice
Outline

How can the Australian landscape architecture profession legitimatise its residency on terra nullius?

• Background to presentation
• International Trends & Best Practice
• Current Responses from the Built Environment Professions
• Proposed 2013 ‘Reform’ agenda
Background
The Aims

To expose students in the Built Environment (BE) professions to Australian Indigenous knowledge and cultural systems and the protocols for engaging with indigenous Australians about their rights, interests, needs and aspirations; and

To address the knowledge and skills required by tertiary students in the BE professions to enhance their comprehension, appreciation and respect for Indigenous protocols and processes.
Re-Casting *terra nullius* blindness: Empowering Indigenous Protocols and Knowledge in Built Environment Education

**Research Team**

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Re-Casting *terra nullius* blindness: Empowering Indigenous Protocols and Knowledge in Built Environment Education

**Project Reference Group**

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*Professor of Indigenous Knowledge Systems, LaTrobe University*  
- *Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council (IHEAC); Co-chair, Victorian Implementation Review of Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody*

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- Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Housing and Urban Research and Planning, University of Adelaide

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*Manager – Metropolitan Heritage Programs, Aboriginal Affairs Victoria*  
- Director, Indigenous Architecture Victoria; • Chair, Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group, Australian Institute of Architects (Victorian Chapter) (2009-2010)

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Objectives

- To provide a comprehensive nationally applicable resource that enables BE tertiary students in the BE professions exposure to, and knowledge of, cultural systems of Indigenous Australians and enhance their skills in applying the appropriate protocols and processes for engaging with Indigenous Australians, especially those that they will require in their prospective professional practice activities;

- To create an endorsed training strategy and curriculum strategy that addresses professional institute accreditation obligations [Australian Institute of Architects (AIA), Planning Institute of Australia (PIA), Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA)]; and

- To facilitate a creative dialogue between BE tertiary education providers and Indigenous communities that enhances mutual objectives and aspirations.
Re-Casting *terra nullius* blindness: Empowering Indigenous Protocols and Knowledge in Built Environment Education

Recent events in Australian history, including recognition of native title by the High Court in *Mabo v the state of Queensland* (no. 2) (1992) 175 CLR 1, have heightened recognition of the rights, interests, needs and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia and internationally. Despite this, little has changed in Australian Built Environment professional (architecture, planning, landscape architecture) education to integrate a better understanding of the need for engagement with indigenous knowledge and cultural systems and relevant protocols, as distinct from cultural competency articulation.

While aspirations of including a better understanding of Indigenous Australian’s knowledge and cultural systems are embodied in the agendas of the relevant professional Institutes, little attempt has been made to realize this objective.

**Partnership:**
- Deakin University Worldly
- Griffith University
- University of Canberra
- University of Western Australia
- Australian Government
- Learning & Teaching

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www.recastingterranullius.weebly.com
Looking after Country: landscape planning across cultures

Professor Darryl Low Choy
Ms Jenny Wadhurst
Ms Taylor Edwards
Mr Darren Burns
Griffith University
| Transforming urban landscapes | ✓ | turning brownfields into greenfields .... reconnecting urban precincts .... scales of transformation .... from the metropolitan to the backyard |
| Transforming attitudes and behaviour | ✓ | communicating landscape values and principles |
| Transforming communities | ✓ | through participation and engagement; capacity building and community development; cultural expressions |
| Transforming practice | ✓ | working in collaboration with other disciplines .... integrated design solutions |
| Transforming education | ✓ | research and new knowledge |
Inputs into this Paper

- Current OLT Grant research
- Past & Ongoing research
- Current Studio projects & teaching
- DLCs 2011 AILA national conference presentation
International Trends & Best Practice
United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
Part 1 Important Themes in the Declaration
Article 1: The Right to self determination
Article 3: The right to free, prior and informed consent

Part 2 Life, Liberty, Culture and Security
Article 8: Assimilation or destruction of culture
Article 10: Forceful removal and relocation

Part 3 Culture, Religion and Language
Article 13: Right to know and use language, histories and oral traditions
Article 18: Participation in decision making
Article 23: Priorities and strategies for development

Part 6 Land and Resources
Article 26: Right to own, use, develop and control traditional land and resources
Article 32: Land and resource development
Current Responses from the Built Environment Professions
AIA has no formal Indigenous or Reconciliation Policy

but ..................
3.3 History and Theory Studies

3.3.1 Awareness and Knowledge

i. An awareness of philosophical, cultural and political movements

ii. **An understanding of the history and theory of Western, non-western, regional and indigenous architecture**

iii. An understanding of the sources of specialist information and expertise, including an understanding of issues of heritage and conservation in the built environment.

3.3.2 Application and Synthesis

i. An ability to utilise speculation, iteration and reflection in critical discourse

ii. **An ability to inform action through knowledge of historical and cultural precedents in architecture**

iii. An ability to define personal values systems and ethical positions.
Education Policies for those involved in Indigenous housing and settlement

- Mandatory curriculum content on Indigenous cultural awareness is to be encouraged in all accredited tertiary architectural, building and planning courses, including on such topics as contact history, discrimination, cultural change, socio-economic implications of poverty and disadvantage and the history of poor housing delivery and its causes over the last 50 years.

- Continuing professional development is necessary for architects involved in housing projects to improve house planning and function, to ensure houses are constructed properly including in rural and remote locations and to understand how to achieve reduced running and maintenance costs.
Planning Institute of Australia (PIA)

No mention of Indigenous matters in PIAs Key overarching Policy: “Planning Matters: Shaping the World Today for Tomorrow”

No National Position Statements on Indigenous matters

No Policy Guidance for Indigenous matters

but ……………..
Protocol

for

Welcome to Country

and

Acknowledgment of Traditional Owners
Planning Institute of Australia
Reconciliation Action Plan for the Period October 2008 to March 2011

Our vision for reconciliation
Our vision for reconciliation is to offer the assistance of the planning profession to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities in fulfilling their needs and aspirations.

The goal of this Reconciliation Action Plan is to turn good intentions into measurable actions that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities to achieve equality in all aspects of life, especially those which sound planning practices can influence.
Planning Institute of Australia
Indigenous Planning Working Group

Improving Planners’ Understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians
and
Recommendations for Reforming Planning Education Curricula for PIA Accreditation

A Discussion Paper
prepared by
PIA’s Indigenous Planning Working Group
21 October 2010
Development and Refinement of this Policy (2011)

In the context of the on-going implementation and refinement of the ‘Accreditation Policy for the Recognition of Australian Planning Qualifications for the Urban and Regional Planning Chapter’, the National Education Committee will examine the Discussion Paper prepared by the PIA Indigenous Planning Working Group titled Improving Planners’ Understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and Recommendations for Reforming Planning Education Curricula for PIA Accreditation (21 October 2010) with a view to further amendment of this Accreditation Policy.
A. Generic Capabilities and Competencies

- operate in a manner that recognises cultural diversity, the need for equity in outcomes and the knowledge of and implementation of high ethical standards.

B. Core Curriculum Competencies

1. Professionalism, Practice and Ethics

1. Knowledge of the diversity of populations served, including indigenous cultures, minority and special needs groups, and different age groups including children and older people, and a capacity to engage meaningfully with diverse groups, including ‘hard to reach’ populations.
AILA have no Indigenous related *Key Landscape Architecture Statements*

No reference to Indigenous knowledge empowerment in its broad *Education Policy* (AILA 2011)

but .................
Australians: This refers to all Australians including the original indigenous inhabitants, their descendants, those that have settled here in colonial and post-colonial times as well as current and future migrants.”
C-24a: History & Theory - Performance Criteria

C-24a: History & Theory: Indigenous people’s cultural and spiritual relationships to country, landscape, and place.
2013 ‘Reform’ agenda ... building on the 2011 ‘Transform” theme

Setting the Reform agenda beyond ‘transformation’

‘Reform our future’
(as a leading, collaborative discipline)
A Foundation to Build on

with respect to Indigenous landscape values

ABOUT THE PRINCIPLES (p4)

“The Australian Landscape Principles articulate an ethical decision-making framework for landscape planning, design and management within the built environment.”

VALUE OUR LANDSCAPE (p4)

“…. every landscape embodies a range of complex, multidimensional and interdependent values - and these values must be comprehensively articulated before they can be accurately assessed …. ”

DESIGN WITH RESPECT (p4)

“All values of landscape deserve respect, and should be given equal consideration when design/intervention is proposed.”
Recommendations for reforming attitudes and behaviour

1. Revise Australian Landscape Principles to acknowledge design and planning with Indigenous communities

2. Develop policy statement on Indigenous landscape values

3. Establish processes and procedures for Indigenous stakeholder engagement
Recommendations for Reforming education

Use the Education Process (Tertiary and CPD) to address:

1. Cultural awareness training
2. Understanding of Traditional Indigenous Knowledge (including intellectual property rights issues)
4. Review / revisit C-24a: History & Theory

Role for BE Schools ?
An Indigenous ‘Reform’ Agenda

Recommended initiatives to support AILAs Reconciliation process:

- Establish an AILA Indigenous Reconciliation Taskforce;
- Indigenous Taskforce to develop a Reconciliation Action Plan (registered with Reconciliation Australia) for profession-wide implementation;
- Educate the profession about the complexities of the Indigenous development context in Australia and how to engage and work with Indigenous Peoples and communities (first initiative: CPD unit for cultural awareness training);
- Promulgate a Policy statement on Indigenous landscape values;
- Engage with Indigenous People and people working with Indigenous people to exchange knowledge and to transfer planning and design skills, processes and techniques to the Indigenous context.
An Indigenous ‘Reform’ Agenda

Recommended AILA initiatives to support Reconciliation (cont):

• Revise AILAs Education Policy to include specific Indigenous related issues;

• Develop Ethics Protocols for engagement (and applied research), including: “Welcome to Country” and “Acknowledgement of Country” protocols;

• Promote suite of effective engagement tools;

• Establish pathways to support Indigenous students to become Landscape Architects;

• Support and encourage Indigenous students and graduates – continue to build their capacity (eg mutual mentoring programs); and

• Encourage Indigenous partnerships and involvement in practice and all design competitions.
Towards An Indigenous ‘Reform’ Agenda

An opportunity provided by the OLT project: “Re-Casting *terra nullius* blindness: *Empowering Indigenous Protocols and Knowledge in Built Environment Education*” ..... This project can:

• Provide a researched platform to inform national policy re-appraisal and CPD framework;

• Address Reconciliation Action Plan imperatives;

• Bring AILA into alignment with university education expectations, learning outcomes, and directions;

• Bring AIA, AILA & PIA Indigenous policy and initiatives into alignment; and

• Provide a comprehensive national appraisal of university provision and engagement.
Thank You