

Building on Country

Our journey working together for communities



A MESSAGE FROM OUR Head of Indigenous Affairs

Welcome to the first edition of *Building on Country*.

We have created this publication as a dedicated space to share the stories, partnerships and outcomes that contribute to reconciliation. It's also an opportunity for us to continue to learn, while recognising and celebrating the rich cultures, knowledge and communities that guide our journey.

At Laing O'Rourke, reconciliation is not a standalone initiative; it is embedded in how we think, work, and build, because we know that action is what drives meaningful progress. Across our projects, we work alongside First Nations Peoples within our organisation and in the communities where we operate, creating more equitable pathways in employment, training and procurement, while ensuring culture is respected and reflected through education, design, placemaking and storytelling.

Published twice a year, this newsletter will bring together perspectives from across our business and network. It will help us highlight the value we see in long-term collaboration, while creating space to deepen understanding and continue learning together. We are proud of what we are achieving together, and look forward to sharing articles on art and culture, learning and development, opportunities and pathways, and procurement.

Importantly, *Building on Country* is also an invitation. We encourage our supply chain partners, stakeholders and partners to share stories, insights and experiences where our collaboration has strengthened relationships, built capability and delivered positive outcomes for communities. These shared stories help demonstrate the collective impact we can achieve.

As Head of Indigenous Affairs at Laing O'Rourke, I am incredibly proud of the progress being made across the business, in partnership with clients, partners and our supply chain. I remain committed to ensuring we continue to listen deeply, with intent and respect, as we learn, improve and move forward together. Reconciliation is a shared responsibility, and through genuine partnership and reciprocity, we can create lasting impact and legacy.

Thank you for being part of this journey.

Mark Beetson (Kabi Kabi/Wiradjuri)
Head of Indigenous Affairs
Laing O'Rourke



Laing O'Rourke acknowledges and understands that no matter where we are across this nation, we are living and working on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lands. We pay our respects to Elders, past and present, and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

We value and respect the rich traditions, storytelling, diverse culture and the deep connections they have to Country. The local knowledge held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples is critical to the sustainability and health of the land, and we are committed to building a brighter future together.



ART & CULTURE

Burbuga Mura – ‘Rising Path’

Building on Country includes design elements from an artwork by award-winning Aboriginal artist of the Wonaruah Nation of the Hunter Region, Saretta Fielding.

In 2020, Saretta created a mural that tells the story of Laing O'Rourke's journey in Australia and celebrates the unique culture of our First Nations Peoples, paying respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples past, present and future.

The mural uses traditional symbolism set against a backdrop of Country to tell our collective story:

- The pathway represents our journey.
- Symbols along the path represent Elders, families and children and the strong connection to family that Laing O'Rourke Australia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples share.
- Charcoal building blocks depict the years since R. O'Rourke and Son began operation
- The gathering circle in red charcoal and yellow visually represents our people.
- Blue water imagery represents Laing O'Rourke's journey across the seas to Sydney Harbour and the connection between our Australian and European Hubs.

The mural reflects our commitment to advancing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, businesses and communities through the values of Reconciliation: relationships, respect, opportunities.

The original artwork is in the foyer of our head office in Cammeraygal (North Sydney), and replicas and elements of the artwork can be found across all our offices, depots and project sites across the nation.

You can learn more about Saretta's artwork, included in our [Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan](#).



LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

First Nations men's Yidaki workshop



Image: Lance Hammond, Travis Baxter, Rialele Leelan, Darryl Smith, Kale Harrison, Bobby King, Alex Williamson, Ryan Henaway, Luke Ryan, Shane Knight, Ganga Giri, Troy Barba.

Recently at our Eastern Freeway Upgrades – Burke Road to Tram Road project in Naarm (Melbourne), renowned musician and cultural teacher Ganga Giri facilitated a men's-only Yidaki (didgeridoo) making workshop.

Team members from Laing O'Rourke and supply chain partners Wamarra and A2B Personnel participated in the workshop that focused on creating a culturally safe workplace by fostering connection through storytelling traditions, while deepening participants' understanding of the cultural significance of the Yidaki, as they created and personalised their own instruments.

Of the workshop, **Kavan Isaac**, Head of People, Capability and Inclusion, said *“Creating opportunities for connection and engagement among our First Nations workforce is a meaningful objective. By fostering culturally safe environments, we are supporting ongoing engagement and more sustainable, long-term employment outcomes.”*

Engagements like this have contributed to current participation outcomes, with 225 First Nations employees having worked on the project.

Therese Dalakian, Senior Social Inclusion & Aboriginal Engagement Advisor, said, *“I'm proud to stand as a woman on EBTA, alongside the strength, knowledge, and culture shared in the First Nations men's workshop. I'm proud of the work I do and role within this space. It's an honour to be part of a community that uplifts, respects tradition, and supports one another.”*



OPPORTUNITIES & PATHWAYS

Leading the way with Indigenous rigging trainee partnership



Image: Our trainees (Sam Hodge, Zach Kerridge, Kallum Ugle, Kevin O'Sullivan, Kahli McCosker and Trejhane Ugle)

The Fremantle Bridges Alliance, a consortium comprising Laing O'Rourke, WSP, Arup and Main Roads is breaking new ground with one of the first Indigenous-focused rigging traineeship pathways in Australia's construction sector, on the Swan River Crossings project in Walyalup (Fremantle) Western Australia.

Four of the five new rigging trainees on the project are local Noongar Peoples, and all trainees are progressing exceptionally well, with four completing their studies in May, and the fifth (who joined the cohort later from a labouring pathway), advancing strongly.

Jason Curtis, Alliance Director, said the program has delivered benefits well beyond its training outcomes.

"This cohort has brought an incredible energy to site. Their enthusiasm and willingness to learn has had a really positive impact on the whole crew."

You can see the pride they take in their work, and the program is delivering real capability for the industry, while also strengthening our project culture."

Laing O'Rourke is proud to be supporting meaningful skilled pathways for local Indigenous Peoples during the delivery of the project.

PROCUREMENT

Partnerships with purpose: Kulbardi

Even in a digital world, everyday items like notebooks and pens still play a role in how we work - and who we support.

Through our partnership with Kulbardi, a majority Indigenous-owned office supplies business, Laing O'Rourke and Select Plant Hire (a Laing O'Rourke subsidiary) have contributed over \$49,000 to Kulbardi's foundation, The Bibbulmun Fund, in the past five years through everyday procurement.

The Bibbulmun Fund supports Aboriginal community-led initiatives nationally, across education, entrepreneurship such as scholarships, work-ready programs, literacy and numeracy initiatives, culture and language reclamation, youth diversion programs, and elder camps – contributing to lasting impact.

Kulbardi Founder, Kim Collard, commented, *"As the Founder and Executive Chairman of Kulbardi and the Bibbulmun Fund I have always maintained that our business would not be where it is if were not for the support of our long-standing partners and customers like Laing O'Rourke. We know this relationship will continue long into the future and I want everyone within Laing O'Rourke to know that part of the proceeds of every sale contribute to giving back to our Aboriginal community projects nationally."*

The outcome is a reminder of the power of purposeful procurement, and the positive impact it has on Indigenous businesses and communities across Australia. We are pleased to offer continued support in this meaningful way.



Image: Kulbardi team members at a recent industry forum.



PROCUREMENT

Connect. Gather. Grow Strengthening business engagement



Image: Laing O'Rourke and Select Plant Hire personnel at a Connect. Gather. Grow event (Lauren Wilson, Ryan Sims, Mathew Lovegrove, Amanda Inman and Michelle Jakeway)

Laing O'Rourke's commitment to meaningful partnerships with Indigenous businesses continues to grow through *Connect. Gather. Grow.*, a program launched in 2023 to create structured, relationship-driven pathways for Indigenous businesses in Western Australia.

The program was launched with the objective of bringing together Indigenous businesses and Laing O'Rourke teams several times a year, creating a consistent forum to learn, collaborate and prepare for upcoming project opportunities.

Each session is tailored to deepen the understanding of our processes, pre-qualification requirements and future work pipeline, ensuring businesses are well positioned to participate and grow.

The impact has been significant. Since its inception, *Connect. Gather. Grow.* has supported more than sixty Indigenous businesses, supporting them to build capability, strengthen networks and engage directly with our Western Australian project teams. The response from participants and clients alike has been overwhelmingly positive, with many recognising the program as a model for fostering genuine, long-term partnerships.

As a result of the program's success, planning is underway to expand *Connect. Gather. Grow.* into additional states, aligning with our ambition to generate more than \$800 million in social impact by 2030 across our Australian operations.

This next phase also reflects a clear and ongoing reconciliation commitment: creating opportunities that empower Indigenous businesses, strengthen industry relationships and contribute to a more inclusive and sustainable future for all.

Further information on upcoming sessions is available via the [Laing O'Rourke website](#).

GET IN TOUCH

We're keen to connect and collaborate as we continue our reconciliation journey.

For updates, follow our social channels – [LinkedIn](#) and [Instagram](#) - or visit the [Indigenous Affairs page](#) on our website.

These platforms provide regular updates throughout the year, complementing the two editions of *Building on Country* that will be published each year.

If you haven't already done so, please register your interest in working with us via the [Supply Chain Partner page](#) on our website.

