Cover Sheet:

The Australian Indigenous Design Charter:

A ten-step best practice protocol document essential for design educators and practitioners

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Abstract

The Australian Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design (the Charter), published in 2016, offers ten step best practice protocols for use of indigenous knowledge in commercial communication design. The aim of the Charter is to improve and maintain high ethical standards of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' representation in commercial communication design and recognize and acknowledge the value of Australia's first nations traditional knowledge. The Charter offers a system of accountability for commercial design practice beyond measures of excellence or impact. The authors of this paper, also the authors Australian Indigenous Design Charter, attest the Charter provides content that urgently needs to be addressed in tertiary design education. Incorporating this document into teaching practice will, in turn, lead to significant changes in the communication design profession as Australia's design practitioners build best practice protocols into every day working processes.

Introduction

The Australian Indigenous Design Charter – Communication Design (the Charter) offers ten step best practice protocols for use of indigenous knowledge in commercial communication design (Kennedy and Kelly, 2016). It is a comprehensive document, identifying sensibilities and ontologies associated with sharing indigenous knowledge including respectful exchange, open thinking, deep listening and a genuine commitment to learning. In a pragmatic attempt to start a conversation, the Charter is presented as an updatable, open document that does not claim to provide the answers to appropriate indigenous representation. Instead it outlines the processes required for designers to represent indigenous culture in a respectful and ethical manner and offers a system of accountability for commercial design practice beyond measures of excellence or impact.

The aim of the Charter is to improve and maintain high ethical standards with the representation of 'Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' in commercial communication design and to recognize and acknowledge the value of

Australia's first nations traditional knowledge. The establishment of cultural protocols and engagement processes for communication designers represents an important step towards understanding, respecting and representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander views. It encourages culturally appropriate working practices that value cultural diversity and enrich a continually evolving Australian identity. The protocols included in the Charter recognise the diverse cultures and traditions that make up Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Australia.

The Charter attests indigenous stakeholders must be active participants in the design process of relevant projects. The document has been tailored specifically for the communication design profession, and expands on the research findings of Kennedy's PhD thesis titled: Designing with Indigenous Knowledge: Policy and protocols for respectful and authentic cross-cultural representation in communication design practice (2015). As acknowledged in the references of Kennedy's thesis, the Charter also builds on foundations set by existing protocol documents and writings with an aligned purpose such as Oxfam's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Protocols document (Oxfam, 2015) and the work of intellectual property lawyer Terri Janke (1999, 2002, 2007, 2009).

The Australian Indigenous Design Charter – Communication Design was produced as the inaugural project of an Indigenous Design Alliance established between Deakin University, School of Communication and Creative Arts (SCCA) and Institute of Koorie Education (IKE), Indigenous Architecture and Design Victoria (IADV) and the Design Institute of Australia (DIA). The above-mentioned parties signed an Indigenous Design Memorandum of Understanding at the Koorie Heritage Trust, Federation Square, Melbourne on 25 May 2016. On 30 August 2016, the first draft of the document (Kennedy and Kelly, 2016) was published by the Design Institute of Australia in the practice notes section of its website. The DIA has a comprehensive reference set of practice notes, which act as a resource to assist designers in their professional practice. Including the Charter added Australian Indigenous design practice protocols to a repository of practice notes covering contracts, tendering, administration, the legal business environment, fees, salaries and intellectual property.

The authors of this paper attest the Charter provides a value that needs to be addressed in tertiary design education that will lead to significant changes to professional design practice. The document, freely available, serves as an essential

tool to design educators and their students, promoting a conversation that is currently lacking in design education. The authors argue that the Charter should be essential reading for all emerging design practitioners, serving as the foundation of learning appropriate and ethical engagement with indigenous knowledge and to be used as a means of encouraging a connection with our indigenous communities. The aim is, over time, to lead designers to a point where the principles presented in the Charter are embedded in professional practice in Australia.

Previous policies

The Charter has been created in a response to a call to action by the Australian government, design associations and design practitioners as we deal with new attitudes to national identity and the role of indigenous representation. This paradigm shift has already started as the Australian nation moves from understanding Australia as a young, colonial country, to a country that is home to the world's oldest continuous living cultures. The Charter has been created to help facilitate this change as designers are increasingly called on to include indigenous cultural representation in their work.

The Commonwealth Government in Australia acknowledges the need to represent indigenous people appropriately and to formally recognise their history, culture and contributions. 'Ever so gradually, we are learning how to see Australia through Aboriginal eyes, beginning to recognise the wisdom obtained in their epic story' (Watson & Keating, 1992, p.6). Yet the processes under which we all must adhere to achieve these outcomes have been debated and deliberated for many years.

The following gives a brief overview of several government attempts to provide a framework for the respectful recognition of indigenous knowledge. An Issues Paper, Stopping the Rip-Offs: Intellectual Property Protection for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples[1] sought submissions from interested parties to identify the

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[1] The Issues Paper, Stopping the Rip-Offs: Intellectual Property Protection for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples was jointly released by the Minister for Justice, the Hon. Duncan Kerr, the Minister for Communications and the Arts, the Hon. Michael Lee, and the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, the Hon. Robert Tickner, on 27 October 1994. This paper was the first paper since the 1981 Report of the Working Party on the Protection of Aboriginal Folklore. Protection of Aboriginal Folklore paper was created to look at the limits of copyright protection for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultural expression and identify areas of reform.

inadequacies of current intellectual property laws when applied to indigenous arts and culture. It also pursued recommendations on how these inadequacies might be overcome, however, it was not until fourteen years later, in 2008, The Rudd Labour government created a national think-tank on Australia's future, with the final report: 'Responding to The Australian 2020 Summit'. The document recommended the establishment of a National Indigenous Knowledge Centre which would support the education of Australians in the history and understanding of indigenous culture and affairs across Australia (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013, p.175). The Australian Government's intention was to develop a policy framework to respect and protect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through education.

Prior to the Federal Government's 2008 report, the New South Wales state government made attempts to address the issue of indigenous identity and use of iconography in the area of education. In 2006, the Board of Studies NSW published Protecting Australian Indigenous Art: ownership, copyright and marketing issues for NSW schools. This was followed by a second publication in 2007, an educational resource titled: Affirmations of Identity: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Visual Artists Resource Kit. These documents aimed to provide information to teachers and students about appropriation, misappropriation, intellectual property and copyright in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander visual arts, placing a particular emphasis on permissions required for reproduction of Aboriginal art forms. They highlighted the need for Aboriginal peoples to be able to control images and styles that are integral to community identity and meaning, emphasising the need for Aboriginal people to have the right to control their own identity.

In further policy developments, launched in March 2013, and seemingly stifled by a change of government in that same year, the Australian Governments' created a national Creative Australia policy. In this document, the promotion of traditional cultural expressions was identified as highly important. Included in the list of five goals was a clearly defined need to "recognise, respect and celebrate the centrality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures to the uniqueness of Australian identity" (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013, p.6). The policy clearly highlighted the need to encourage the cultural expression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders:

> "This central role shapes and reinforces Australia's unique national cultural identity as home to one of the world's oldest living cultures which are also

creating some of the most dynamic and inspiring contemporary art work"
(Commonwealth of Australia, 2013, p.28).

Although the intent of the Government policies is the same as that of the Australian Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design, they do not provide the steps to achieve the outcomes they present. They communicate the essential need to protect and recognize the central role of indigenous knowledge in Australian identity, promote inclusion, stress protection of indigenous knowledge and insinuate more can be done to safe-guard indigenous culture, however do not provide the guidelines for the process.

In addition, the design profession has recognized the need to consider communities and in 2003 Design Victoria (the Victorian State Government's design promotion entity) revised their design policy to include specific reference to community. Their 2009 report: 'Five Years On, Victoria's Design Sector 2003-2008', made the following observation: 'The most frequently mentioned social benefit of design projects was 'Benefits to local communities', in terms of greater cohesion, communication or participation' (Victorian State Government, 2008, p. 61). The chapter titled 'Design for Social Benefit' stated: 'Design is vital in dealing with many of the challenges that modern societies face in the 21st Century such as empowering communities.' (Victorian State Government, 2008, p.113). This document, like most design policy reports focuses on the tangible, economic benefits of innovation through design. Although it connects design to community, it falls short between making a connection with design and the cultural identity of Victoria, including design's role in the representation of multiculturalism and indigenous culture.

Of significance to the Australian Design environment, the Australian Design Alliance (ADA) Launch Event Report officially documents the establishment of the Australian Design Alliance at a meeting which took place at the Sydney Opera House on 3 September, 2010 (ADA 2010). It is an important document in the context of this research in that it represents the start of an industry push to develop a national design policy for Australia. The report suggests that such a policy would provide the national leadership, direction and voice that is currently lacking at a Federal Government level. The report includes the transcripts of speeches, which took place on the day, themed around a range of headings. His Excellency, Michael Bryce, AM, AE in his insightful speech made the point that design can help form national identity:

National identities have been shaped by the reputation of countries with high sensitivity indicators of design. In some cases, like Sweden and Finland, reputation for sensible aesthetic design solutions has come from a history of craftsmanship and use of indigenous material (Bryce, 2010).

Testing the Australian Indigenous Design Charter

Designers, now, are generally more aware of their responsibility to deal with issues surrounding cultural identity. An increased global focus and understanding of design research in areas of design anthropology and human centred design have encouraged more designers to consider this space. However, not yet debated is the role communication designers have to respect and protect indigenous knowledge and the steps they need take to ensure ethical and appropriate consultation protocols have been followed.
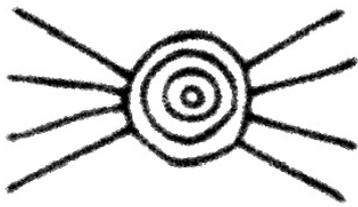
Design education provides the key to unlock these steps. The world is currently experiencing an increase of higher degree design student enrolments. The expectation is that these graduates will possess specialist expertise including a greater appreciation and understanding of co-creation methodologies and engagement processes required to tackle these complex problems (Gouillart & Hallet 2105). The Australian Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design offers the foundation for the debate on how to achieve these objectives and the university environment and tertiary education provides the perfect platform to analyse, evaluate and test the process presented in the Charter. Not only do students have the opportunity to work with this real-world problem addressing an Australian social issue, they can provide a direct contribution to the development of a best practice protocol for use when they become professional practitioners.

As a demonstration of the success of introducing the Charter to teaching, in 2016 the Kardinia Park Stadium Trust invited Deakin University to undertake a design research project to create a brand mark for the newly formed entity. Chaired by former Australian State Premier of Victoria, Steve Bracks the board of trustees requested a design that represented community, stability and excitement.

The Deakin University design team was made up of alumni, students and academic researchers and the Charter was followed through the design process. Referencing point 4 of the Charter, as with all practice based design research at Deakin, the

question was asked: Is there an indigenous story to tell in this project? The client advised they did not know but were happy for the designers to investigate. It did not take long to find out that *kardinia* means *morning sun* or *rising sun* in the local Wadawurrung language. This discovery immediately provided a metaphor of a new dawn and new beginning. The final design, chosen by the Trust, was created by alumni student Todd Murphy. In this design, Murphy cleverly linked the symbolism of a rising sun with the iconic visual elements of the Kardinia Park stadium lights.

However, emerged from the process was a design created in collaboration by student designer Amy McKay and indigenous mentor Corrina O'Toole, academic from the Deakin University Institute of Koorie Education. This design came close to being selected, however was not successful. The process behind this design turned out to be an interesting case study for the testing and ongoing research of the Australian Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design.

Figure 8: Wadawurrung cultural symbol for *meeting place*

While researching a solution McKay discovered a Wadawurrung cultural symbol for *meeting place* that inspired her. At this point Amy was asked to put her design on hold while an appropriate way forward was investigated. The Wadawurrung community owned this symbol so it required a different process of development, which fortunately the client was happy for us to pursue. The next step was to contact Deakin Universities Institute for Koorie Education to see if they could introduce us to the appropriate Wadawurrung representative. O'Toole (Wadawurrung Woman) was identified as the right person and after a detailed conversation and community consultation O'Toole agreed to work with McKay to produce an effective solution involving the contemporary interpretation of traditional culture.

Figure 9: Kardinia Park Stadium Trust logo (2016). Co-designed by Amy McKay (Deakin University student) and Corrina O'Toole (Wadawurrung Woman)

Working in collaboration, McKay and O'Toole were able to maintain the cultural integrity of the meeting place narrative in a design that communicated on multiple levels. The important aspect of the Kardinia Park Stadium Trust case study is that it demonstrates what can happen if designers asks one simple question of every brief they undertake, "Is there an indigenous story within this project?" This led to an extensive and rewarding collaborative process to create a unique design solution, proving an effective test for the Australian Indigenous Design Charter.

Conclusion

This paper demonstrates the need for a document such as the Australian Indigenous Design Charter: Communication Design. It is an essential tool for the teaching of ethical and responsible design practice and offers a process for collaborative engagement with indigenous knowledge. It is for this reason we call upon the design educators of Australia to consider their role in the transformation of Australian culture by teaching appropriate and ethical ways to engage with cultural communities. We seek a commitment from each university to embed this document into their discussions and promote a new moral code of conduct specific to the Australian context.

It is now understood by designers and their clients that it is not professional to ignore the appropriate, collaborative and respectful ways of engaging cultural knowledge, and it is not a difficult space when provided the tools for navigation. Our collective responsibility is to demonstrate to our fellow Australians (indigenous -non-indigenous) and to the world that we know how to ethically work with the diversity of culture in communication design practices. Over time we hope the Charter becomes obsolete and the teachings are a natural part of the tertiary education.

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