



Arts Access Australia

Submission to the National Arts and Disability Strategy Review, November 2018

Preamble

Arts Access Australia is the national peak body for arts and disability in Australia. We engage over 2000 members to share our mission to advance equality for Australians with disability as artists, arts workers, participants and audience members.

Created by an alliance of leading arts and disability organisations, AAA acknowledges the significant role the arts and disability sector has in progressing quality inclusive arts practice; creating pathways to employment, professional practice and leadership; as well as creating a place in community where people with disability can connect, create and thrive.

The majority of AAA members are individual artists with disability who are forging a professional career in the arts or making art through creative community connections. We value all types of participation in the arts and we are committed to promoting the value of the arts for people with disability for employment, enterprise, social inclusion, cultural identity, health and wellbeing outcomes.

We are also committed to breaking down the barriers to participation in the arts. Evidence suggests that people with disability face significant disadvantage in the arts in Australia. Last year the 'Making Art Work' report released by the Australia Council for the Arts revealed that artists with disability are less likely to find a professional career in the arts than artists without disability, and when they do find employment they can expect to earn less than half the income of other artists for their creative work.

Artists with disability are calling for 'real money' and 'real jobs', and this above all must be a priority for the national arts and disability strategy.

Following are the key priorities that we view are important for inclusion in a renewed national arts and disability strategy. While we cannot claim to represent the views and opinion of the arts and disability sector, these priorities have been informed by listening to the collective voice of artists with disability and the organisations that support them from across Australia.

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1. Measurement

- The NADS must have measurable targets, monitoring and evaluation. A strategy without measurement is deemed by 'the sector' as pointless.
- Disability access must be planned for, and Disability Action Plans must be a condition of all government funded arts organisations, programs and projects. These plans must be monitored for progress.
- Evaluation must include mixed research methods, both quantitative and qualitative. Narrative based research methods, such as digital story telling could be considered to promote the voice of artists with disability.
- The value of arts and disability is not clearly demonstrated, and investment into a large-scale collective impact or social impact research study in partnership with a major university could also be considered.

2. Funding

- Dedicated funds for access must be included in all arts budgets. Starting with the federal arts budget and carried down through all levels of funding, state, organisational and project grants.
- Access must be itemised via a separate access budget and reporting line, with the NADS setting reasonable targets for allocation of funds to access.

3. Employment Outcomes

- The NADS must set employment targets for artists with disability in all State and Territory Government Arts Departments as well as government funded major arts organisations and festivals. Employment must focus on management and leadership positions to redress income disparity.
- Suggested strategies are access and inclusion positions in all State and Territory Government Arts Departments to implement the NADS and coordinate access programs and initiatives. Priority must be given to recruit people with disability in these positions.
- Intern positions for artists with disability in all State and Territory Government Arts Departments as well as government funded major arts organisations and festivals, could also be considered.

4. Participation & Professional Practice

- Dedicated funding grants for emerging and professional artists with disability must be increased. The focus should be on investing in significant projects that support artists to develop their unique practice, and modelled on international best practice, such as the Arts Council of England, who only consider projects of £50,000 and above for funding.
- Artists with disability need more opportunities to showcase their work, and face barriers to accessing mainstream arts networks and spaces. The NADS must set targets for presentation of artists with disability in the annual program of all government funded major arts organisations and festivals to encourage them to broaden their networks and actively seek and commission the work of artists with disability.

- The NADS must acknowledge the important role that specialist arts and disability programs and services play in progressing quality inclusive arts practice and facilitating pathways to mainstream arts programs, and consider the significant impact that the introduction of the NDIS is having on these programs.

5. Arts & the NDIS

- The shift from block to individualised funding models is having a significant impact on programs and services that support artists with disability. Although there are some success stories a number of gaps and challenges have emerged, that must be addressed by the NADS.
- The NADS must address how artists and creatives with disability who are not eligible for the NDIS will be supported to participate in the arts. Of the 1.3 million people with disability in Australia only 0.5 million will be eligible for the NDIS; and there is a real concern that many people will not be able to access supported arts programs.
- The NADS must also include strategies to ensure that people who do qualify for the NDIS are supported to participate in arts and culture when and with whom they choose. Stories from the field suggests that many people are struggling to have art included in their NDIS plans.
- Most importantly strategies must ensure that artists are supported to achieve professional careers, enterprise and employment outcomes in the arts. Currently art is categorised as therapy or recreation in the NDIS.

6. Audience Development

- People with disability still face significant barriers to participation in arts and cultural activities, basic physical access is still a barrier in some venues and online ticketing and seat allocation often discriminate. Although there are examples of innovation in inclusive programming, Auslan, audio description, tactile tours and relaxed performances; these programs are provided on an ad-hoc basis.
- The NADS must set targets and national standards for access to the arts, the National Disability Index is a possible starting point to benchmark these standards <https://www.and.org.au/pages/access-inclusion-index.html>
- The NADS must also direct funding towards disability-led initiatives that raise the profile and showcase the work of artists with disability, such as the national Meeting Place event, Other Film Festival, Arts Activated and Undercover festival. Preference must be given to disability-led initiatives.
- Preference must also be given to programs that extend opportunities to regional locations. Meeting Place for example, offers a flexible and transferrable model of arts activation, providing regional artists with the unique opportunity to showcase their work on a national and international platform. This year Meeting Place was held in Alice Springs, other regional towns such as Launceston and Cairns could benefit from this opportunity <https://artsaccessaustralia.org/and-thats-a-wrap-meeting-place-2018-leaves-the-stage-but-not-our-hearts/>

7. Leadership

- The NADs must direct funding to leadership and professional development programs for artists with disability. Preference must be given to disability-led initiatives such as Meeting Place, which is recognised as the leading forum for arts and disability in Australia and internationally.
- The NADS must consider a new leadership program for artists and arts workers with disability. Despite the success of the Sync Leadership Program, the program has not continued. Once again preference must be given to investing in disability-led initiatives.
- For artists with disability to lead change, they must occupy positions of influence, on Boards, advisory groups and peer assessment teams. There are currently not enough peer assessors with disability on national funding grant rounds, and the numbers must be increased.
- More importantly, artists with disability need stable employment within arts organisations, paid positions that provide opportunity for leadership such as the access and inclusion positions as outlined in item 3 on page 2.

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