

Submission to the National Arts and Disability Strategy consultation 2018 – Inclusion Australia

Inclusion Australia is the recognised national peak body with the single focus on intellectual disability. Our actions and priorities centre on issues that affect the lives of people with intellectual disability and their families.

Inclusion Australia's mission is to work to make the Australian community one in which people with intellectual disability are involved and accepted as equal participating members.

We do this by:

- listening to people with intellectual disability and their families
- promoting and upholding the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- developing and promoting creative policies and practices
- speaking to politicians, public servants, business and community leaders about the lives of people with intellectual disability and their right to have equality of opportunity

Inclusion Australia (NCID), formerly The National Council on Intellectual Disability was created in 1971 by parents and friends in an endeavour to improve the quality of life of people with intellectual disability and to fill the need for national unity and information.

In addition to having people with intellectual disability on our Board, Inclusion Australia receives policy advice from Our Voice; a committee of inclusion Australia's Board which is exclusively people with intellectual disability.

The National Disability Strategy

Framed within the National Disability Strategy, access to, and engagement with artistic and creative endeavours for people with intellectual disability embraces five of the six policy areas and so plays a significant role in the nation realising the goals of the strategy in ensuring people with disability are able to maximise their potential and participate as equal citizens in Australian society.

Inclusive and accessible communities—the physical environment including public transport; parks, buildings and housing; digital information and communications technologies; civic life including social, sporting, recreational and cultural life.

The principle speaks to the heart of the National Disability Arts Strategy whereby PWID require support to enable them to access social and culturally appropriate opportunities to build their networks within their communities. Community and Cultural development principles need to underpin the extensive and necessary work to shift perceptions and educate the wider mainstream community.

Personal and community support—inclusion and participation in the community, person-centred care and support provided by specialist disability services and mainstream services; informal care and support.

The impact of PWID being supported to engage, share their lived experiences and educate the wider community with the right support has been exemplified in the work carried out by Inclusion Australia within their ILC Mainstream and Me project delivery. Initiatives within the ILC Delivery need to be revisited and mechanisms to provide the opportunity for longer funding periods is required to begin to effect more widespread and lasting change in the mainstream.

Work undertaken with Monash Gallery of Arts for example reaped significant benefits with the possibility of future collaborations arising. Monash's Stephanie Richter's comments are indicative of the impact of the work.

'The combined experience of adapting activity, and spending the day with the participants, who were discussing their lived experience of disability, provided a practical and impactful insight into inclusive programming.'

Campaigns designed to promote the adoption of Accessibility Action Plans across the arts sector (and beyond) together with consideration of quality providers, who embrace PWID as drivers of the adoption of Accessibility Action Plans are necessary to begin to effect more widespread change, acceptance and understanding of our community and our needs.

Learning and skills—early childhood education and care, schools, further education, vocational education; transitions from education to employment; life-long learning.

Life-long learning opportunities in the arts are available to those in the mainstream - PWID require the right support to continue their learning journey throughout the whole of their lives and engagement and more widespread information and support within the mainstream is required to ensure they can look forward to accessing avenues that they have previously been unable to attain.

Health and wellbeing—health services, health promotion and the interaction between health and disability systems; wellbeing and enjoyment of life.

There is a growing evidence base regarding the value of arts/health interface and the impact upon the well-being of those who are given access to quality programs. PWID represent a diverse group of people and greater understanding of their needs and potential outcomes, as does the dissemination of information regarding their capacity to engage in meaningful artistic endeavours.

Economic security—jobs, business opportunities, financial independence, adequate income support for those not able to work, and housing.

The creative and artistic capacity of PWID is still widely misunderstood and devalued. There are a growing number of Creative Practitioners who are creating economic opportunities resulting in economic growth

Where PWID are supported to create sole trader businesses, social enterprises or for profit ventures, a flow on of economic growth ensues. Job creation within support mechanism provided by being able to access the right support via the NDIS is a by-product of business in the creative industries.

Examples of innovative, creative projects creating economic benefit include:

- Back to Back Theatre
- Restless Dance Company
- Tutti
- Bus Stop Films
- Cheeky Dogs
- Laser Beak Man

[Access Arts Australia and the NDIS Working Group](#)

We have been following the work being carried out by the Access Arts Australia NDIS Working Group (AAA NDIS WG) via one of our Board Member's representation with the group since its inception in 2014.

We applaud AAA's leadership and advocacy on behalf of artists with a disability and encourage further dialogue with the Department of Communication and the Arts. The discussions thus far have been productive and have fostered greater understanding of the landscape within which artists with disability, arts organisations and service providers are currently navigating.

So too we strongly encourage dialogue with the NDIS to facilitate a more in depth understanding of the ways in which NDIS participants access and can benefit from engagement opportunities within the arts. The ways in which artists with disability engage within the arts are diverse. Our community may access the arts for therapeutic support, community engagement, ongoing learning opportunities, capacity building or forging creative and artistic career paths.

This submission supports the concerns raised and approaches suggested by the AAA NDIS WG in AAA's Emerging Issues Paper. These include the apparent lack of engagement across government, specifically the interface between the NDIS and the National Arts Disability Strategy. This has resulted in a lack of understanding within the NDIS regarding how PWD wish to engage with the arts and the supports that are required for PWD to reach their artistic and creative goals. The arts are not

identified in the NDIS resulting in an absence of frameworks or strategies to guide personnel when a participant presents with artistic or creative goals.

Moreover with regard to employment and the pursuit of independent artistic practice, feedback indicates a lack of understanding regarding supports needed to attain and retain a pathway with the potential of deriving an income.

Involving artists with disability in ongoing dialogue across government is essential to building a knowledge base derived from lived experience. Enhanced dialogue and exchange, will provide opportunities to create additional tools for those charged with assisting in the planning process and employment pathways.

As an exemplar, we refer to a tool developed by Arts Access Victoria available at:

<https://www.artsaccess.com.au/art-and-you-guide/>

This tool, Art and You, was supported by the Victorian Government through the Department of Health and Human Services and Creative Victoria.

Likewise, the following tools exemplify collaboration and the creation of user-led tools:

ArtForm – art planning for NDIS for youth 16-27 yr olds

<https://www.artsaccess.com.au/art-form-a-workbook-for-young-people/>

Artfinder – a resource for searching all abilities art programs in Victoria (national resource is currently in progress)

<https://www.artsaccess.com.au/artfinder/>

We urge consideration of similar endeavours to embrace People with Intellectual Disability and suggest that members of our community be involved in the creation and crafting of a guide for participants, non- participants, NDIS staff and service providers.

Access to the NDIS and ILC Grants

We urge greater dialogue between the States and Commonwealth regarding how the arts within disability will continue to be supported. We have seen organisations “falling between the cracks” where there has been a distinct lack of understanding regarding funding and supports for arts organisations working with PWID as the NDIS rolls out across the country.

Where organisations have been supported by the State in the past, and have had to make changes to their business models under the NDIS enabling participants to access the NDIS for supports, significant financial pressures have ensued. We cite The Restless Dance Company’s experience whereby the State withdrew financial support from the organisation as the perception was the organisation would access income via participants’ accessing the NDIS.

A lack of understanding has become apparent, whereby small not for profit arts based organisations operate within tight financial constraints and are dependent upon state funding to continue.

Where PWID qualify as participants, the available supports within the pricing guide, will not necessarily adequately support the true costs of delivery. Where PWID have previously been able to access state based funding and are assessed as ineligible for the NDIS, gaps in service and support have emerged. The state and territory based funding arrangements to support arts engagement for PWID have varied considerably and it is unclear how the NDIS will adequately support PWID as transition continues across the country.

We suggest a showcase of what can be achieved in the realms of artistic practice and employment outcomes based on some of the outstanding outcomes that have been achieved in Australia where there has been a willingness to embrace creativity and provide sufficient and appropriate support to develop individuals' talent.

We concur with AAA that “there is a lack of understanding amongst NDIS planners and Support Coordinators of professional pathways in the Arts and what constitutes quality arts practice from participation, emerging, professional and career pathways.”

The research and evidence collated across Australia regarding Arts with Disability reflects the situation many of our community members face in their day to day lives.

- Low expectations regarding capacity to create and participate in meaningful ways with the arts
- A lack of understanding regarding the value of the arts for those living with intellectual disability
- Poor understanding of what constitutes quality supports within the realms of creative practice and potential employment pathways.

Inclusion Australia is also concerned for those citizens who will not qualify as NDIS Participants. Many citizens who have met with difficulties in obtaining access to the NDIS for a myriad of reasons approach our agencies. The ILC programs which may potentially offer some scope for including those citizens left without any support outside their disability support pension, are competitive and are for the most part, at this point in time, only being allocated for 12 months duration.

We strongly urge a longer term vision in structuring and providing grants for creative programs that provide the foundation for addressing the complexities in supporting our community members in acquiring new skills and maintaining their engagement and ongoing learning.

This approach has the potential to reap economic outcomes wherein artists are supported to move beyond learning and recreational goals and aspire to income generation within their creative practice.

In terms of running programs and projects that can effect real learning and opportunity, particularly those living with learning and developmental challenges, these opportunities, if obtained by current services, do not provide scope for long term planning and goal setting for those citizens left out in the cold.

[Accessibility Action Plans – one mechanism for moving forward](#)

We advocate for a national target for all arts organisations in Australia to have an Accessibility Action Plan and a planned, supported approach to achieve this target which would include disability confidence training.

We have seen evidence of the power of PWID to inspire cultural change when they are supported to engage with the mainstream. Including PWID to deliver disability confidence workshops and to co create Accessibility Action Plans will ensure the growth of a sustained voice of change in the mainstream.

The Arts and Intellectual Disability as Cultural Artefacts

Ultimately, at this point in history, choice and control, one of the founding principles of the NDIS, is an essential starting point when PWID are either making decisions within the NDIS as participants, or as citizens.

There are many examples spanning the last 30 years of PWD creating artefacts reflecting their lived experience and the different ways they engage in their lives. These cultural products are unique.

A balanced approach needs to be sought when we speak of engagement with the mainstream. Our community's voice is unique and the choice to engage in mainstream arts practices and/or to work within community in creating unique artefacts, be they visual art, performance based art, or hybrid art forms yet to be realised, the choice of where to practise and with whom needs to remain as a principle for the delivery of appropriate support.

Our ever evolving creative landscape, shaped by lived experience has, by historical necessity, been led by many people without disability who have been drawn to our community and their potentiality. As we work towards cultural change and acknowledging the value and capacity of PWID in the mainstream and those with PWID are able to access the appropriate support, we look forward to a future where PWID will increasingly be seen in leadership positions.