

# Response to National Arts and Disability Strategy review

## Definitions as per the Paper:

**Disability:** Disability means all types of disability, and things that make it hard for people to be part of their community. Some people might not say they have a disability (eg. Deaf people)

**Access:** Access is how you are able to take part in arts and cultural activities. It also means how you are able to get to places where arts and cultural activities are.

Queensland Ballet has chosen to address the questions outlined in the Discussion Paper as a way of structuring our response to this valuable review of the National Arts and Disability Strategy and we appreciate the opportunity to be part of the discussion.

## PRACTICE:

### 1. The ways in which QB trains and develops artists with disabilities.

Although QB doesn't directly train and develop artists with disabilities within its existing training programs, engagement with children is something we are very committed to. We recently launched a partnership with Deakin University to develop AllPlay Dance, an engagement program based on the hugely successful AllPlay AFL model to increase involvement in AFL by children with disability. As 1 in 5 children have disability, we would hope that through this new program we may be generating and cultivating artists with disability of the future. The work we're undertaking with AllPlay is ground-breaking, so we would expect to see the sea change not immediately, but over time. Artists of the future!

We do see great opportunity for further employment of artswomen with disability and are planning for that within our workforce planning (see attached document). We do currently employ an artswoman with disability within our wardrobe department and she is an incredibly valued and long-term member of our team. Her disability does not hinder her at all from undertaking her specialist work within our wardrobe team and she brings great value, character, skill and expertise to our wardrobe team.

### 2. Does QB play a role in supporting arts practice, presentations and audience engagement with work by artists with disability?

We do not currently present work by artists with disability however this is not a conscious choice. We would certainly like to seek out and support work by artists with disability and

will commit to seeking advice on how we can actively engage with such artists into the future. We are certainly already undertaking some work in this area to present sensory friendly performances and AUSLAN interpreted events, we are exploring opportunities for audio-described performances.

**3. In what ways do we partner and collaborate with other organisations around disability?**

Earlier this year QB announced an exciting partnership with Deakin University called AllPlay Dance. Following on from the hugely successful AllPlay AFL program that seeks to engage children with disability with AFL, QB and Deakin are aiming to do the same with dance. Bringing together children with disability with elite ballet schools, the programs aims to promote the message that dance is accessible to anyone of any ability. The program is in its fledging stage and will be further developed, alongside a curriculum and research program next year. Through partnerships with Access Arts and AllPlay we are:

- Skilling our community engagement team and Edsquad Teaching Artists
- Writing and developing programs for people with disability
- Engaging researchers and practitioners in projects
- Contributing to research as partner support
- Advocating across education, academic, arts sector and health/community and creative health platforms.

Through this work we are focussed on artists connected to other organisations (Access Arts) and future artists (AllPlay).

**4. How do we facilitate and support people with disability to be leaders in the sector in creative, executive and governance roles?**

This is a new area for us to explore and development around our workforce planning (including a focus on D&I) will hopefully allow us to look into this more.

**5. What do we have or need to support the employment of artists and arts workers with a disability?**

Realistically, QB admits we need more time and investment in this space. Classical ballet is also a difficult artform within which to address this as often we would not be able to accommodate a dancer with a physical disability based on performance seasons and requirements. Even though we don't actively recruit for the employment of people with a disability, ethically as a Company we would be incredibly supportive of anyone with a disability who applied and was successful for a role with QB – particularly on the Business side.

The design of our new building (under construction between 2019-2020) will ensure our facilities are accessible for those visiting the building and those working within. The design of the building has been undertaken with all aspects of accessibility in mind. This will allow us to address the physical restraints we many face in supporting the employment of artists or arts workers with disability.

**6. How have we changed business or what opportunities have we pursued following the roll out of the NDIS?**

Although we cannot point to any concrete changes or opportunities immediately around the NDIS implementation we are having stronger conversations with Access Arts. There is a chance they will be able to prescribe “Dance” and therefore through our collaborators and industry peers we are able to promote and offer dance.

**7. What is our experience in accessing government programs that support the employment of people with disability within the creative and cultural sector?**

We are currently involved with Access Queensland through their Skilling Queenslanders for Work program – while not disability specific this program does target jobseekers that have previously experienced limited job outcomes (re-entry to the workforce, domestic violence victims etc). We are also investigating how we can partner further with Access Queensland with regard to their Disability programs. We would certainly value more programs in this space that we could draw on to increase the employment of people with a disability within Queensland Ballet.

**8. What is our experience in accessing government funding and other funding sources to create work with artists with disability.**

This is not yet something QB has explored in earnest however we would certainly be interested in looking into the opportunities that such a collaboration could present. QB would be very grateful for advice on resources that could assist us in actively seeking out opportunities to create work with artists with disability.

**EXPRESS:**

**1. What steps do we take to make the activities we run more accessible? How do we know they are accessible? Have we ever employed another organisation or consultant to assess and improve our accessibility?**

QB’s engagement team is actively seeking ways to make our activities and programs more accessible to anyone who is interested in participating. An example of this is our weekly Dance for Parkinson’s dance class. This is a class specifically designed for those with Parkinson’s and their carers. Although Parkinson’s Disease is not technically a disability, it could certainly be considered here in terms of a neurological disability caused by the disease that would limit the sufferers in their ability to attend a normal dance class. The class is always scheduled in Studio 1 within our building which has the closest access to our lift enabling ease of access and no need to negotiate stairs. The class can be undertaken seated or standing and is modified on the go as needed. We recently presented our first AUSLAN interpreted Q&A session following one of the performances in our *Bespoke* season. We hope to make this a regular feature of our seasons.

**2. How have we partnered with community or disability advocacy groups to deliver programs or activities?**

We would again point here to our work with AllPlay. Although this partnership is only very new, we are already exploring ways to extend its reach, include applicable research outcomes and ways we can use this program to engage with more advocacy groups.

**3. What actions, knowledge or support do we require to grow our audiences and improve participation rates by people with disability?**

The biggest challenge for QB in this space right now is time as we're relatively new in this area. We've taken our first steps, we're cultivating the field through including D&I in our strategic planning and workforce planning and it's informing our collaborations. We realise this cannot be achieved overnight but we're thrilled to have taken the first steps.

**4. If we do employ people with disability what would we see as the benefits to our organisation? If we don't, what do we see as the barriers?**

We currently don't have any data on this however we are currently developing an HR system that will allow for comprehensive data on all our employees. In the meantime we are planning to undertake an anonymous survey on a few key disability and inclusion areas so that we have a base line.

QB aims to be representative of the community that we serve, foster a creative and inclusive culture.

At present we would anticipate that the age of our building could present a current barrier to employing someone with disability depending on the nature of the disability, this will be addressed in our redevelopment. Also dependant on the nature of a disability we would assess the need for an increase in training and ongoing support of the staff members and their peers.

**5. What is our experience in accessing government funding or other funding sources to increase participation of people with disability in our programs?**

This is not an area in which we have actively sought government or other funding however as we seek to increase our activities in this space we will no doubt seek funding to assist our developments.

**CONNECT:**

**1. What have we done to attract people with disability to our programming. How do we know this has worked?**

Although QB has not undertaken a campaign to specifically attract people with disability to our programming, we do hope that ongoing promotion of the services we are introducing (such as the AuSLAN interpreted Q&A) will see us established as an arts organisation that values the inclusion of those with disability. We would like to engage more with advocacy groups to understand the needs of those with disability more and more to enable us to ensure future decisions in this space are informed and targeted.

**2.**

**3. Are there times we've experience high levels of engagement by people with disability?  
What factors have made this possible?**

Two examples come to mind here and the success of both of these comes down to effective collaborations and partnerships. In 2015 QB hosted a special All Access backstage tour with Access Arts in which their members were treated to a very special All Access tour in which they spoke with key artistic and production staff, toured behind the scenes and backstage and met key dancers involved in one of our seasons. This was an experience tailor made for the group and undertaken after much consultation between QB and Access Arts as to what would work for that specific group. AllPlay is another example of how a QB product can be tailored to fit with a specific group. In this situation QB is the 'ballet' offering within an existing dance program and is tailored to the needs of the participants.

**4. Do we organise any events or programs that seek to improve health and wellbeing and if so, their impact?**

QB runs daily public dance classes that promote health and wellbeing both under the banner of ballet and also general health and fitness. These are accessible to all who would like to join in and range from young dancers (from the age of 3) to specialist Ballet for Seniors classes and Dance for Parkinson's. These classes have been enormously popular – in particular our Ballet for Seniors classes. Following the release of some research (undertaken in partnership with QUT into the benefits of ballets for seniors), QB enjoyed such an increase in demand for these classes that we had to introduce an extra class. From 2019 – 2021, in line with our strategic plan, the community engagement team's work is split over four pillars (Education, Community, Creative Health and Commercialisation) given creative health is a stand alone pillar we would expect to see waves in this space over the next three years.

**5. Do we include access costs in budgets when we apply for government grants or other funding?**

Yes we do, for example we budgeted for the AUSLAN interpreter for our Bespoke season Q&A session as part of our engagement activities.

**6. To what extent are our venues accessible to people with disability?**

Queensland Ballet regularly performs at Queensland Performing Arts Centre (QPAC) and the Brisbane Powerhouse. Both venues are government run and owned and therefore must comply with accessibility laws and requirements. The redevelopment of the home of Queensland Ballet (the Thomas Dixon Centre) from 2019 will include a performance theatre that will comply with the highest accessibility standards.