



Australian Government



EQUITY

The Arts and Disability Associated Plan

An initiative under Australia's Cultural Policy, *Revive*

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Acknowledgement of Country

The **Australian Government** (the Government) acknowledges Australia's First Nations peoples as the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia. The Government recognises and respects their continuing connections to lands, waters and communities and pays respect to Elders past and present, and to all First Nations peoples. The Government recognises the continuation of diverse cultural, spiritual and educational practices.

The Government acknowledges that self-determination is a human right for First Nations peoples. This is enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Government thanks all First Nations people with disability who have generously shared their valuable knowledge and expertise to inform the development of *Equity: the Arts and Disability Associated Plan* (the Plan).

Acknowledgement of People with Disability

The Government acknowledges the lived experience and human rights of all people with disability. Every individual has a different experience of disability and participation in the **arts and cultural sector**.

The Plan was developed in consultation with **artists and arts workers** with disability, and **arts and disability** organisations across Australia. The Government thanks everyone who contributed submissions, attended public forums and participated in workshops, meetings and roundtables on arts and disability policy issues in recent years. The Government also acknowledges the members of the Arts and Disability Associated Plan Co-Design Working Group who contributed their time, professional expertise, and personal experiences of working in the arts and cultural sector, including the screen and digital games sectors, to help develop this Plan. The Government acknowledges and pays respect to the contributions of artists and arts workers with disability to Australia's arts and culture, and is committed to improving **equity**, access and **inclusion** in the arts and cultural sector.

The language of disability

'Language is about respect – language is a choice'

— Co-Design Working Group member

The Government acknowledges that some language that is used to describe people with disability can further entrench **ableism** in our communities.¹ All governments, and the Australian arts and cultural community, can create more safety and inclusion by making time to understand and respect individual preferences.

Artists and arts workers with disability, with a wide range of backgrounds and experiences, assisted the Government in developing the Plan and expressed the view that many people with disability in the arts and cultural sector prefer to use identity-first language to describe themselves. This was also the view of some stakeholders, primarily artists and arts workers, who engaged with Creative Australia on the wide-ranging, and disability-led, Disability Arts Needs Analysis and Audit in 2023–24.²

1 People with Disability Australia (2021), *Language Guide*.

2 The Disability Arts Needs Analysis and Audit engaged over 170 individuals and national arts organisations and peaks on **arts and disability** service needs through targeted focus groups, user surveys and individual interviews, including closed sessions for First Nations peoples and the d/Deaf community. Creative Australia (2024), *Building Strong Foundations: Research on arts and disability needs and opportunities*.

However, language is always evolving and personal choices change over time. Some people may prefer person-first or different language to describe their experiences, or may not identify as a person with disability but rather as part of a cultural group. This Plan recognises that there is no one term that suits everyone.

To reflect and respect the feedback that the Office for the Arts and Creative Australia have received through our stakeholder consultations on different language preferences, the Plan will use identity-first language when referring to d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers, and person-first language when talking about disability for audiences and people in the wider community.

In this Plan, the terms 'd/Deaf and disabled' or 'people with disability' include (but are not restricted to), those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various **barriers**, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.³ This can include **psychosocial disability, neurodivergence** and **chronic health conditions** that result in significant physical, social and economic participation barriers.

In this Plan, the term 'd/Deaf' includes all people with hearing loss or who are **hard of hearing**. They may or may not identify as having disability. Members of the 'uppercase D' Deaf community often identify as having a distinct language (**Auslan**) and culture.

The Government recognises that disability can be visible or non-visible, and that globally, it is estimated that around 80 per cent of disabilities are non-visible.⁴

3 United Nations [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability](#) (2006).

4 Hidden Disabilities Sunflower, '[What is a hidden disability?](#)'

INTERSECTIONALITY

The Government recognises the diversity of people with disability across Australia and understands that, based on their individual lived experiences, they may encounter multiple barriers to access and inclusion in everyday life, including the arts, and that these barriers can interact and overlap to make inequities worse. These can include ableism, racism and other forms of prejudice based on gender, sexuality, age, religion, **cultural and linguistic diversity**, and other kinds of identity. This is known as intersectionality.⁵

59 per cent of d/Deaf and disabled artists are women.⁶ The Government recognises that women with disability, including First Nations women and those from a range of diverse and intersectional backgrounds, are particularly vulnerable to multiple forms of discrimination which can actively limit equity in arts and cultural education, participation, career opportunities and leadership progression.⁷

5 Intersectionality as a term to understand structural inequality in society was first coined by Professor Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw in 1989. Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics', *University of Chicago Legal Forum* Forum.

6 David Throsby and Katya Petetskaya (2024), *Artists as Workers: An Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia*, Creative Australia.

7 Commonwealth of Australia (2024), *Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality*; David Throsby and Katya Petetskaya (2024), *Artists as Workers: An Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia*, Creative Australia.

Other language used in the Plan

For the purpose of this Plan, arts and cultural sub-sectors include, but are not limited to: visual arts and craft, literature, performing arts (including theatre and dance), music (including contemporary and classical), festivals, galleries, libraries, archives and museum institutions and the screen and digital games sectors. There are also cross-cutting activities extending into the fields of First Nations arts and languages, arts and disability, youth arts, regional arts, creative therapies, the work of arts education and training organisations, and the activities of industry development and investment agencies such as Creative Australia and Screen Australia.

The Office for the Arts acknowledges that not all practitioners and workers in Australia's arts and cultural sub-sectors identify with the term 'artist' and 'arts worker'. For example, in Australia's screen and digital games development industries, which play an important and increasingly visible role in improving equity in the arts for people with disability, preferred terminology includes 'screen worker or practitioner', 'digital games maker' or 'digital games developer'. The Office for the Arts also acknowledges there are many different ways the arts and cultural sector is measured and described.

For readability, this Plan will use the broad terms 'artists and arts workers' and 'arts and cultural sector' to also include all arts and cultural sub-sectors, including practitioners, makers and developers working in the Australian screen and digital games industries.

Minister for the Arts' Foreword



Arts and culture belong to everyone and arts and cultural organisations should be representative and inclusive of the communities they serve, including the 5.5 million people with disability in Australia.⁸ The Government is committed to breaking down barriers to participation for both story-tellers and audiences, so the rich diversity of Australia is represented in our national culture, whether it is through sound, visual arts or on our screens, pages and stages.

On 30 January 2023, the Government released *Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place* – Australia's cultural policy for the next five years.⁹ A central element of *Revive* is ensuring there is a place for every story and a story for every place, including for people with disability. *Revive* celebrates the diverse range of stories and experiences within our Australian community and arts and cultural sector.

Artists and arts workers with disability create exceptional, world-class works of art, not to mention compelling products developed for the screen and games sectors. For example, multi-award-winning Victorian theatre company Back to Back Theatre continues to blaze new pathways for artists and arts workers with disability through their thrilling and challenging works.

⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2024), *Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings*.

⁹ Commonwealth of Australia (2023), *Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place – Australia's cultural policy for the next five years*.

This was recently acknowledged internationally with Back to Back Theatre being awarded the Venice Biennale Golden Lion Award for Lifetime Achievement in 2024.

There are a number of extraordinary organisations in the arts and cultural sector that are leading the way in creating equitable and accessible workplaces and experiences for d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers, and audiences with disability.

However, there continue to be barriers in many areas. The Government and the sector have an important role in ensuring that all people have opportunities to thrive and develop to their full potential. Everyone should have a fair chance to take part in Australia's vibrant arts and cultural sector. But for people with disability, equitable access and participation doesn't simply mean access to seats in the audience or audio description. It also means equitable access to stages and studios, workplaces and places of learning.

This Plan is a four year roadmap to lay the foundations for greater equity in cultural and creative life for d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers, and audiences with disability. As a supporting framework for both *Revive* and *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031* (Australia's Disability Strategy),¹⁰ its priorities and actions have been closely informed by consultation with d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers and arts and disability organisations. But it also recognises that structural change cannot happen overnight.

Creative Australia and the Office for the Arts are uniquely placed to work together, in consultation with Screen Australia, to drive sustainable and progressive change through the Plan. The Government also recognises that we will need to partner with people with disability, and the arts and cultural sector to achieve change.

¹⁰ Commonwealth of Australia (2021), *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031*.

Equity: the Arts and Disability Associated Plan

The Plan establishes a paid Implementation Advisory Group made up of people with disability in the arts, screen, digital games and cultural sectors to guide key aspects of implementation. Industries across the arts and cultural sector will also be closely engaged to inform and promote the implementation of activities to improve equity.

The Plan provides a solid foundation to help change the trajectory to provide a brighter spotlight on, and larger canvas for, people with disability from across Australia.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Burke". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Tony" and "Burke" being capitalized and prominent.

The Hon Tony Burke MP
Minister for the Arts

How the Plan was developed

The Plan was announced as an action in *Revive*.¹¹ The Plan was developed, and will be delivered, as a partnership between two of the Government's key arts and cultural investment organisations: the Office for the Arts and Creative Australia. Working together, the Office for the Arts and Creative Australia will build on current funding, governance and policy development, research, and sector outreach activities to implement the actions for the Plan.

Both organisations will also engage with Screen Australia to ensure relevant actions appropriately reflect the needs and priorities of the screen and digital games sector.

OFFICE FOR THE ARTS

The Office for the Arts, which sits within the Australian Government Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts, supports participation in, and access to, Australia's arts and culture by developing and supporting cultural expression. Through analysis, advice and programs, the Office for the Arts aims to make cultural experiences better for everyone, including the creative workforce.

¹¹ Commonwealth of Australia (2023), *Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place – Australia's cultural policy for the next five years*.

Through the Office for the Arts, the Government provides core operational funding for, and governance oversight of, a range of significant and influential arts organisations, including:

- the eight Arts Training Organisations which help build the capacity and capability of the creative workforce¹²
- the nine National Collecting Institutions which safekeep and provide access to Australian content, collections and cultural heritage.¹³

CREATIVE AUSTRALIA

Creative Australia is the Government's principal arts investment and advisory body. It has a key focus on investing in artists, including by providing grants and awards for individuals and organisations to foster the careers of Australian artists; as well as through investment partnerships with arts and cultural organisations; research and advocacy.

12 The Arts Training Organisations are: Australian Ballet School, Australian Film Television and Radio School, Australian National Academy of Music, Australian Youth Orchestra, Flying Fruit Fly Circus, National Aboriginal and Islander Skills Development Association (NAISDA) Dance College, National Institute of Circus Arts, and National Institute of Dramatic Art.

13 The National Collecting Institutions are: Australian National Maritime Museum, Bundanon Trust, Museum of Australian Democracy (Old Parliament House), National Archives of Australia, National Film and Sound Archive, National Gallery of Australia, National Library of Australia, National Museum of Australia, and National Portrait Gallery of Australia.

The Plan will benefit from, and build on, Creative Australia's expanded functions and responsibilities established under *Revive*, and the new bodies that have been created will be critical to the effective delivery of actions under the Plan, particularly the First Nations Board and Creative Workplaces.

SCREEN AUSTRALIA

Screen Australia is the Government's primary agency for providing direct support to Australian film, television, documentary, and digital games creators. Screen Australia invests in domestic screen development and production, in addition to providing funding support for business and skills development and training for screen practitioners and businesses. However, its remit does not include international film and television productions, the broader Australian screen sector, or the film distribution sector (i.e. cinemas).

The Plan's priorities and actions build on stakeholder engagement and sustained advocacy for change over a number of years, including:

- an extensive public submissions process, and the advice of an arts and disability working group comprised of practising d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers, to inform the renewal of the *National Arts and Disability Strategy* in 2018

Equity: the Arts and Disability Associated Plan

- submissions from d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers, audience members with disability and arts and disability organisations to the public consultation to develop *Revive* in 2022.

The Office for the Arts undertook targeted consultation in 2023 to confirm the priorities and needs of d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers and audiences with disability, including through:

- consultation with arts and disability advocates and advocacy organisations
- facilitated stakeholder focus groups with d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers and audience members with disability, as well as representatives of disability advocacy organisations.

A core message from this stakeholder consultation was that d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers wanted to be involved in co-designing the Plan and its actions, and deeply engaged with the Plan's implementation. In response, the Office for the Arts convened a diverse group of practising d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers from across Australia and with experience across the arts, screen and digital games sectors, to participate in six disability-led and facilitated co-design workshops. The co-design workshops were held online from November 2023 to January 2024 to develop the framework for the Plan; its priority action areas; and practical investment options to deliver the Plan.

While there were diverse views on funding priorities and implementation approaches, the key message from the Co-Design Working Group was that the Plan needs to focus on actions to deliver equity for people with disability in the arts and cultural sector. This starts with recognising and supporting the outstanding contributions of people with disability to the sector, including in the screen and digital games sectors. It also requires an acknowledgement that the Government and the wider sector will need to play a critical role in achieving progress towards equity.

In March 2024, the Office for the Arts also shared the key findings and outcomes of these consultation processes with the Australia's Disability Strategy Advisory Council to seek their advice on key considerations for the Government in supporting people with disability to participate equitably in cultural and creative life.

Creative Australia's Arts and Disability Needs Analysis and Audit

In mid-2023, Creative Australia commissioned an Arts and Disability Needs Analysis and Audit to provide key insights into the critical service needs in the arts and disability sector in Australia. This project set out to develop a clear understanding of the needs and services that are currently available, and those which may be missing, at a national level. All art forms, including the screen industry, were represented in the development of the Needs Analysis and Audit and its findings also informed the development of the Plan. These findings were published in summary in May 2024 as *Building strong foundations: Research on arts and disability needs and opportunities*.¹⁴

¹⁴ Creative Australia (2024), *Building strong foundations: Research on arts and disability needs and opportunities*.

Executive Summary

There are many thriving and resilient d/Deaf and disabled artists, arts workers, screen practitioners, and games developers and disability-led organisations creating ground-breaking art in Australia. However, barriers are still deeply ingrained throughout communities and social and economic life. This is why the Government committed to deliver an Arts and Disability Associated Plan in *Revive*.

A core principle of *Revive* is that Australian arts and cultural organisations should have representation and leadership that is reflective of contemporary Australia, including for the 5.5 million people, or 21.4 per cent of the population, who have disability.¹⁵ This Plan is a call for representation and disability equity to be championed across all Australian governments and the wider arts and cultural sector. It is also a four-year roadmap of activities to build foundational equity for d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers and audiences with disability across Australia, with an \$8.1 million investment in actions to drive change.

The Office for the Arts and Creative Australia are partnering to deliver the Plan. This will provide a unified approach to engaging with the arts and cultural sector to achieve equity for d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers and audiences with disability. To achieve these outcomes, the Government will work collaboratively with a range of stakeholders across Australia's diverse arts and cultural sector to ensure the Plan delivers sustainable progress. This includes supporting the sector to drive forward actions for meaningful, step-by-step improvements in equity for d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers and audiences with disability.

¹⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2024), *Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings*.

The Government recognises that the arts and cultural sector has experienced significant challenges to its sustainability in recent years. Cost-of-living increases, uncertainty due to natural disasters, and the long-term impacts of COVID-19 continue to affect financial and operational viability and capacity to make new investments to improve **accessibility**. A staged approach to implementation of the Plan will balance the need for change without imposing additional administrative and financial pressures on an already stretched sector. However, it is also important to recognise that investing in equity actively benefits the whole arts and cultural sector by introducing new, innovative arts practices and diversifying and building audiences.

Underpinning the Plan is a recognition that ableism, which is discrimination or prejudice towards people with disability, results in an ongoing lack of equity and accessibility in Australian cultural and creative life. Ableism is part of a larger framework of issues that pose significant barriers to participation, career development and leadership in the arts and cultural sector for people with disability. These include gender discrimination and inequality, lack of appropriate services and supports, or heightened financial pressures.

'Ableism affects everyone'
— Co-Design Working Group member

People with disability and disability advocacy bodies have consistently emphasised the importance of the Plan being co-designed, implemented and evaluated in partnership with people with disability, particularly d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers, reflecting the key principle of the disability rights movement: *'Nothing about us without us.'*

The importance of centring the voices of people with lived experience of disability in the development of disability policy was also a repeated theme in the submissions, public hearings and Final Report for the *Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability* (Disability Royal Commission).

The Disability Royal Commission heard that ‘governments, disability service providers, businesses and community organisations often ignore the expertise of people with disability’.¹⁶

The success of the Plan will require the expertise and lived experience of people with disability to inform all aspects of the Plan. The implementation of the Plan will be guided by a dedicated Implementation Advisory Group of people with disability with experience in the arts and cultural sector, and new disability-affirmative staffing within the Office for the Arts and Creative Australia will support outreach and delivery.

Achieving equity in the arts for people with disability will not look the same for every organisation or all parts of the sector. However, the whole arts and cultural sector, including industry development and investment agencies like the Office for the Arts, Creative Australia and Screen Australia, will need to make changes to ensure fairness for d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers. These changes will focus on improving access to information and resources, and providing opportunities to not only make and present work, but to access and engage with arts and culture on an equal basis as people without disability. The Government recognises that the arts and cultural sector is diverse, with very different business and operating models and different levels of maturity in terms of disability access and inclusion. The Government is investing in actions to lift the foundational capability of the arts and cultural sector to become more equitable. It will undertake enhanced, targeted and systematic engagement with arts and cultural sub-sectors to support this work over the life of the Plan.

¹⁶ Commonwealth of Australia (2023), Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, *Final Report – Executive Summary, Our vision for an Inclusive Australia and Recommendations*.

The Plan has been developed in consultation with people with disability, and builds on the five pillars of *Revive*. There are two *Revive* pillars that underpin all parts of this Plan: A Place for Every Story and First Nations First. Building on *Revive*'s other pillars, the Plan's three key priorities are:

- **Priority 1:** Recognising d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers as central to our vibrant arts and cultural sector.
- **Priority 2:** Strong and inclusive governments and organisations.
- **Priority 3:** Engaging the audience: fair, open and equitable access to arts and culture.

The Government is providing **\$8.1 million** over the life of the Plan from 2024–25 for funded actions to support these priorities. Actions will be delivered by both the Office for the Arts and Creative Australia:

- **\$2.25 million** for an Arts and Screen Employment Pathways Pilot Program
- **\$2.0 million** to extend and expand the reach of the current Creative Australia Arts and Disability Initiatives
- **\$1.2 million** for accessibility activities at live music venues and music festivals through the 2024–25 *Revive* Live program
- **\$1.0 million** for arts and disability services
- **\$600,000** to continue funding the annual National Arts and Disability Awards and Arts and Disability Fellowship
- **\$600,000** for a National Arts and Disability Forum and Gathering
- **\$250,000** for a National Arts and Disability Code of Practice or appropriate guidelines
- **\$200,000** for First Nations arts and disability needs and projects, to be delivered by Creative Australia's First Nations Board.

The Government will work closely with key stakeholders to establish an evaluation framework for the Plan, including defining evaluation principles and identifying critical baseline data points and measures of success.

Introduction

Access to, and equity in, arts and culture for d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers and audiences with disability is a human right and a priority for the Government. Work created by d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers gives voice to the experiences of over 20 per cent of the Australian community who have disability, and it is critical that all Australians are able to participate equally in creative life.¹⁷

Revive recognises that d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers make great art, and that people with disability have the right to participate in and connect with the arts as workers and consumers. In this context, the Government committed to delivering an Arts and Disability Associated Plan (this Plan) under Australia's Disability Strategy.¹⁸ The Plan will replace the *National Arts and Disability Strategy*, which was released in 2009. *Revive* committed \$5.0 million to implement the Plan.¹⁹

Reflecting the priorities of people with disability, the Plan will support change over time by:

- funding actions to build support towards sustainable careers for d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers
- supporting the wider arts and cultural sector to become more accessible and inclusive
- including strong disability representation in the development and implementation of the Plan, including from intersectional cohorts.

17 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2024), *Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings*.

18 Commonwealth of Australia (2021), *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031*.

19 Commonwealth of Australia (2023), *Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place – Australia's cultural policy for the next five years*.

What is an Associated Plan?

Australia's Disability Strategy is Australia's national disability policy framework which drives action at all levels of government to improve the lives of people with disability.

Associated Plans are strategies, plans, roadmaps and frameworks that focus on improving aspects of Australian life for people with disability and also work to deliver the vision of Australia's Disability Strategy. Associated Plans can be sector-specific, like this Plan, or for a specific segment of the community, and generally run for three to ten years.

In this case, the Plan is focused on laying the foundations for equitable participation in cultural life for d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers and audiences with disability, with a range of actions to be implemented by 2028. It will help the Government contribute to delivering progress in the Inclusive Homes and Communities Outcome Area of Australia's Disability Strategy – Policy Priority 3: *people with disability are able to fully participate in social, recreational, sporting, religious and cultural life*. The Plan will also contribute to achieving progress under other Outcome Areas, including the Community Attitudes Outcome: *community attitudes support equality, inclusion and participation in society for people with disability*, and Policy Priority 1 under the Employment and Financial Security Outcome: *to increase employment of people with disability*.²⁰

²⁰ Commonwealth of Australia (2021), [Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031](#).

The social model of disability and human rights

The Government, like many arts and cultural organisations across Australia, uses the social model of disability which recognises that social attitudes, practices and structures can be disabling and act as barriers that prevent people from fulfilling their potential and exercising their rights as equal members of the community. Providing information in accessible formats like **Easy Read** or Auslan is one example of removing barriers to access and participation.

Like Australia's Disability Strategy, this Plan adopts the social model of disability. The Plan also recognises the importance of the human rights principles that underpin the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability, and has a focus on removing barriers so people with disability have equality of opportunity to access, participate in, and contribute to cultural, social and economic life in Australia.

The human rights model of disability recognises that disability is a natural part of a diverse society that needs to be recognised, respected and supported and that every person has equal rights and freedoms. Countries that have signed up to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability recognise the human rights of people with disability to take part in cultural life on an equal basis with others.²¹

In this context, improving equity is about more than removing barriers. It is also about addressing the impacts of barriers and promoting inclusive environments. This includes recognising that people with disability may require additional services and support to participate as equal members of the community.

²¹ Australia formally ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability on 17 July 2008. The full text of Article 30, 'Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport,' can be found in the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability](#).

d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers and audiences with disability, and stakeholders from across the arts and cultural sector including the screen and digital games industries, have consistently identified significant and ongoing barriers to equity that require coordinated action for long-term change. The priorities and actions in this Plan have been informed by these barriers.

EMOTIONAL LABOUR

Emotional labour is the term given to the effort people with disability often have to make when participating in public life, including in workplaces and public spaces such as arts venues, to advocate for reasonable accommodations. In some cases, this can result in arts employment and attendance being unsafe and exclusionary.

Barriers to equity in the arts



ABLEISM: discrimination or prejudice towards people with disability.



COMMUNITY ATTITUDES: negative or uninformed community attitudes about people with disability can result in low expectations of the capability and aspirations of d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers and audiences with disability.



INACCESSIBILITY: many venues and institutions where art happens continue to be inaccessible to d/Deaf and disabled artists, arts workers and audiences with disability.



FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS: accessibility arrangements representing an additional cost, or perceived cost, in arts organisations and workplaces.



INCOMPATIBLE GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES, SERVICES AND PAYMENTS: the intersection between the structure and eligibility requirements of Government disability supports, payments and programs, and the short-term, intermittent nature of employment engagements in many parts of the arts and cultural sector, can contribute to inconsistent financial and career outcomes for d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers.



LACK OF SERVICES IN OUTER URBAN, REGIONAL AND REMOTE AREAS: a disparity in levels of accessibility, services to support people with disability, and opportunities to engage in the arts in outer urban, regional and remote areas.



POOR REPRESENTATION: a historical and ongoing lack of authentic representation of people with disability in the arts.

Priorities for action

1

Recognising d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers as central to our vibrant arts and cultural sector

2

Strong and inclusive governments and organisations

3

Engaging the audience: fair, open and equitable access to arts and culture

Centring the voices of people with disability

The Government values the expertise of all people with disability who contributed to the consultation and co-design processes that supported the development of this Plan. Building on these foundations, a critical element of the Plan implementation will be the establishment of an Implementation Advisory Group (the Group). The Group will be a paid advisory body made up of people with disability from a diverse range of intersectional backgrounds and with experience in the arts, screen, digital games and cultural sectors.

The Group will:

- be consulted on, and shape, the implementation of actions and commitments under the Plan
- contribute to the Plan's monitoring and reporting activities
- co-design the Plan's evaluation framework with the Government, including Creative Australia.

The Office for the Arts will also draw on the expertise and experiences of the Group to understand the impact of reforms to broader disability policy frameworks on people with disability in the arts, to feed back into discussions across all levels of government on these issues.

In addition, the Office for the Arts and Creative Australia will embed new disability-affirmative staff in each organisation to support the delivery of the Plan, and Creative Australia's response to the Disability Arts Needs Analysis and Audit. This forms part of the Government's ongoing commitment to ensuring people with disability take part in the development and implementation of disability policy.

Working together with the arts and cultural sector

The Government started this journey to make Australia's arts and cultural sector more accessible, inclusive and equitable by listening to people with disability. Now, the Government needs to listen to and work with the wider arts and cultural sector to develop and implement solutions, while continuing to build its important relationships with people with disability.

The Government recognises that many parts of the arts and cultural sector are already working hard to create inclusive and accessible environments for people with disability, as workers and consumers. It is also clear that the sector is financially pressured and will not have the capacity to meet the cost of all activities required to achieve full equity for people with disability participating in the arts. The Plan aims to achieve change over time by supporting the diverse range of sub-sectors, within the wider arts and cultural sector, to continue building the foundational capability and confidence needed to achieve greater equity.

The Government will do this in two key ways:

1. Investing in actions that will support the sector to build or extend capability in applying relevant disability legislation, language, guidelines and processes in workplaces, work practices, and business planning.²²

²² Professor Bree Hadley (2022), *Disability and the Arts, Creative, and Cultural Industries in Australia*, Australian Academy of the Humanities, Report for the Australian Council of Learned Academies [PDF 0.548 MB].

2. Committing to a program of enhanced, targeted and systematic engagement with arts and cultural sub-sectors over the life of the Plan on:
 - what the Government's expectations and aims for accessibility and inclusion will be going forward
 - how the actions under the Plan will help the arts and cultural sector lift its capability to achieve greater equity
 - how the sub-sectors can respond strategically and sustainably to the needs of d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers and audiences with disability.

While the Government has a policy interest in, and may provide financial support to, arts and cultural sub-sectors, each sub-sector operates differently in terms of:

- what is produced by arts practitioners, and the processes of creation
- how an artwork or creative experience is shared with an audience or consumer
- the business model for charging audiences or customers for the artwork or experience
- financial pressures and logistical constraints
- range of stakeholders
- career pathways and employment structures
- methods of reducing barriers to equitable access
- existing Government intervention and financial support
- the extent to which the Government has a legislative and constitutional basis to engage with the sub-sector on arts and disability issues
- the extent to which the sub-sector is commercialised.

Equity: the Arts and Disability Associated Plan

It is also important to recognise that art is often created and valued for purposes beyond economic return or audience exposure, particularly in the First Nations arts and cultural context where cultural significance, cultural expression, sharing traditional knowledges and passing on culture may be primary drivers of arts practice.

Sub-sectoral engagement activities will be a channel for consulting on the deliverables under the Plan and aim to create a shared understanding of the challenges each sub-sector faces in becoming more equitable. While the Government recognises that arts and cultural sub-sectors are interconnected in terms of art forms, personnel and roles, it will also tailor its engagement according to each sub-sector's unique characteristics.

Advancing *Revive*: priorities for action

The Plan has been developed in consultation with people with disability and builds on the five pillars of *Revive*. There are two *Revive* pillars that underpin all parts of this Plan: A Place for Every Story and First Nations First.

The Plan's priorities and actions build on *Revive*'s other three pillars:

- Centrality of the Artist
- Strong Cultural Infrastructure
- Engaging the Audience.

These pillars, which are critical areas of focus for the Government in the arts and cultural sector, have been adapted and expanded to reflect the issues that matter most to d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers and audiences with disability.

A Place for Every Story

Under the A Place for Every Story pillar, the Government acknowledges the important stories and contributions of all Australians as the creators of culture. The Associated Plan is an initiative under this pillar.

Arts and culture belong to everyone, and people with disability have the right to freedom of expression without prejudice or discrimination. *Revive* endorses the principles of access, equity, participation and representation in arts and cultural activities for all people in Australia, including the 1 in 5 people in Australia who identify as having disability.²³

²³ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2024), *Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings*.

This is consistent with Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states that ‘everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits’.²⁴

Stories can be shared through different mediums and communicate shared identities, ideas, aspirations, and a sense of belonging. They give people a voice. For the rich diversity of stories from Australia’s communities, including the people with disability who form part of those communities, to be told and shared by everyone, the Government and the arts and cultural sector need to work together to remove barriers to participation for story-tellers and audiences.

First Nations First

Through *Revive*, the Government recognises and respects the crucial place of First Nations stories at the centre of Australia’s arts and culture. There is a lot of diversity between First Nations communities across Australia, including in languages, cultural practices, beliefs and artistic expression. First Nations peoples experience higher rates of disability compared to the general population, including acquired disability, which is when a person acquires or develops disability during their lifetime from an accident, condition, illness or injury. Around 35 per cent of First Nations people under the age of 65 have disability, which is nearly two times higher than the general population.²⁵

²⁴ [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) (1948).

²⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2019), *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey*; Australian Bureau of Statistics (2024), *Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings*.

It is important for the Plan and implementation to be considered through a **cultural lens** which recognises diversity, different experiences and support needs.

The Plan supports self-determination, **autonomy** and cultural safety for First Nations peoples, including aligning with the approach that decisions about First Nations funding priorities should be made by First Nations peoples. Arts and cultural initiatives supported and run by First Nations peoples enhance connections to culture and Country. This contributes, in turn, to improving Closing the Gap outcomes in education, employment, justice, health, wellbeing and languages.

Implementation activities to support First Nations peoples with disability will be led by the First Nations Board within Creative Australia. Investment decisions will be made according to the final governance structures of the Board, informed by Creative Australia's 'First Nations First' consultations in 2023 and 2024. This was a First Nations-led process to seek feedback from First Nations peoples who work within the arts and cultural sector on the establishment of the First Nations Board. These consultations included workshops with First Nations peoples who are d/Deaf or have disability. Where there are limits to the responsibilities of the First Nations Board, implementation activities to support First Nations peoples with disability will be determined in partnership with the relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak organisations, and other arts and cultural peak organisations with established connections to First Nations communities across Australia.



Priority 1: Recognising d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers as central to our vibrant arts and cultural sector

'We all know that we can be a professional artist. We are seen. We are heard. We are culture makers that are respected'

— Participant in Associated Plan stakeholder workshop

Australia's d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers are innovative creators who make meaningful, engaging and high-quality arts and cultural experiences for everyone.

Of the estimated 47,100 practising professional artists in Australia, 16 per cent have some form of disability that may affect their artistic practice, which is almost double the figure reported in 2017.²⁶ Despite relatively high overall levels of representation of people with disability as artists, as well as overall improvements in their incomes since 2017,²⁷ people with disability continue to experience inequality and barriers to pursuing careers in the arts.

26 David Throsby and Katya Petetskaya (2024), *Artists as Workers: An Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia*, Creative Australia. In this context, a practising professional artist is defined as someone who is permanently living in Australia and working within the arts and cultural sector.

27 David Throsby and Katya Petetskaya (2024), *Artists as Workers: An Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia*, Creative Australia.

Within the cohort of artists who identified that disability has affected their artistic practice, 10 per cent considered that disability has been the most important factor inhibiting their professional development throughout their career, and 37 per cent indicated that their disability affects their creative practice all or most of the time.²⁸ These findings were confirmed in Creative Australia's recent consultations on service needs with d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers, which indicated that barriers and challenges remain for workers with disability seeking a career in a range of roles across the sector, including technical, production, curatorial, administrative and other roles; and that they are also under-represented in leadership roles.

Similar issues have been reported in the screen sector. In 2021–22, people with disability comprised only 6.4 per cent of all roles in the screen industry, despite making up over 20 per cent of the broader Australian population. People with disability had stronger representation in on-screen roles (8.9 per cent) than among crew (5.3 per cent).²⁹ And despite this stronger representation in on-screen roles, in 2023, Screen Australia's *Seeing Ourselves 2* found that disability representation among main characters in Australian TV drama remains critically low – around 6.6 per cent, and 71 per cent of programs do not feature any main characters who have disability.³⁰

28 David Throsby and Katya Petetskaya (2024), *Artists as Workers: An Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia*, Creative Australia.

29 Screen Diversity and Inclusion Network (2022), *Everyone Counts: Preliminary data on diversity in the screen industry from The Everyone Project* [PDF 10.3 MB].

30 Screen Australia (2023), *Seeing Ourselves 2: Diversity, equity and inclusion in Australian TV drama*.

d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers are often disadvantaged by the impacts of ongoing barriers across their careers. In particular, negative or uninformed community attitudes about people with disability, including as a result of entrenched ableism, can result in:

- low expectations about the capability of d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers
- inaccessible or unsafe arts and cultural organisations, workplaces, education and training institutions, venues, events or experiences.

d/Deaf and disabled artists are more likely to experience unemployment compared to non-disabled artists: 55 per cent of d/Deaf and disabled artists had experienced unemployment between 2017 and 2022, compared to 46 per cent of non-disabled artists.³¹ Feeling invested in work is important, and for many people with disability who are unemployed, finding a job that matches their skills and experience is the most important incentive that would encourage them into the labour force.³²

Creating more opportunities for the development of new artistic work, networking and employment pathways for d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers is critical to supporting equity due to the combined impacts of barriers on career progression.

31 David Throsby and Katya Petetskaya (2024), *Artists as Workers: An Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia*, Creative Australia.

32 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2024), *Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation, Australia*.

Actions to build the foundations for change

Under the Plan, the Government will support equity for d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers by increasing investment in career progression.

The Government is investing in the development of new works, and in creating opportunities for d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers to build peer-to-peer connections, and connect to potential markets. This includes by extending and expanding the reach of Creative Australia's Arts and Disability Initiatives, and providing seed funding for an arts and disability forum and gathering. These activities will primarily be delivered by Creative Australia, as providing direct support to artists and arts workers is within its remit and it has the well-established industry networks and expertise to deliver the initiatives.

The Government will also invest in career development through the Arts and Screen Employment Pathways Pilot Program, which will provide opportunities for d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers to apply and develop their professional skills in accessible and culturally safe temporary employment placements.

The Government recognises that inaccessible funding processes and systems can be barriers to d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers participating equitably in the sector. In this context, over the life of the Plan, both the Office for the Arts and Creative Australia are committed to:

- identifying and implementing targeted improvements to the accessibility of arts grants and other initiatives, and assessment processes, in consultation with the Implementation Advisory Group
- lifting disability awareness and cultural capability of staff responsible for administering and supporting grants funding and other initiatives
- improving accessibility of communications, including the websites of the Office for the Arts and Creative Australia
- actively increasing diversity of grants assessors to include more people with disability.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DISABILITY-LED WORK

The Government is committed to supporting genuinely disability-led work in both organisations and arts practice. It is important to amplify the voices and boost the careers of all d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers.

'It's not about exclusion - it's about 'nothing about us without us'. It's about 'who has the right to tell this story?'

— Co-Design Working Group member

The conditions for 'disability-led' need to be determined by d/Deaf and disabled artists. Some established principles are that a disability-led organisation is run by a majority of people with disability and a disability-led project is:

- initiated by d/Deaf or disabled artists
- led by d/Deaf or disabled artists who have creative control
- led by d/Deaf or disabled artists as key decision-makers.³³

³³ Undercover Artist Festival, *What is Disability-led?*; Arts Access Victoria, *Our Language*.



Priority 2: Strong and inclusive governments and organisations

'I really believe training and educating internal staff around unconscious bias (for both disability and race) would be a helpful first step to creating an inclusive workplace. People can be so scared of being called out for discrimination that it discourages them from engaging with these discussions at all'

— Co-Design Working Group member

Government agencies and arts organisations of all sizes and types form part of a cultural ecology that supports Australia's arts and cultural sector to flourish. These are embedded within geographic, cultural, professional and social communities; may receive support from different levels of government; and have different roles in how they engage with people with disability – as employers, service providers, suppliers of the spaces to participate in arts and culture, and as producers of arts and culture.

Arts organisations include but are not limited to:

- Government program and service delivery agencies (such as the Office for the Arts) and government-funded portfolio agencies (including Creative Australia and Screen Australia), noting that all levels of government provide support to the arts and cultural sector
- government-funded and privately funded arts training organisations
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art centres
- state and territory arts and disability service delivery and peak organisations

Equity: the Arts and Disability Associated Plan

- sub-sectoral peak organisations, guilds and other service delivery providers
- established cultural organisations, commercial businesses and venues
- small mixed-use cultural hubs
- artist-led collectives
- artist studios and other places to create.

The Plan recognises that there is a disparity in levels of access to services and opportunities for people with disability to engage in the arts in outer urban, regional and remote areas. There are a range of reasons for this, which may include a lack of financial resources (including due to a low consumer base or social disadvantage in the region), and ageing infrastructure that cannot be easily upgraded for accessibility. Proportionately, d/Deaf and disabled artists are more likely to live in regional, rural and remote locations than other artists. 25 per cent live in regional cities or towns and 16 per cent in rural, remote or very remote areas, while 59 per cent live in capital cities. By comparison, 70 per cent of non-disabled artists live in capital cities.³⁴

³⁴ David Throsby and Katya Petetskaya (2024), *Artists as Workers: An Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia*, Creative Australia.

A key role for the arts and cultural sector

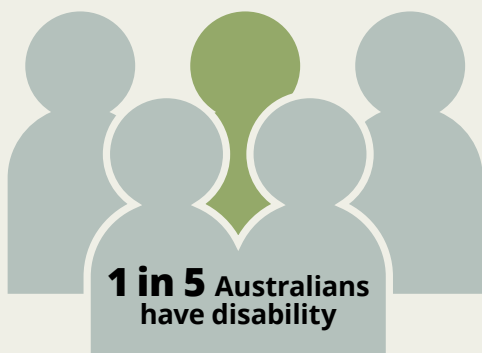
Established arts and cultural organisations – both public and private – like performing arts organisations, museums, long-standing festivals, and screen sector businesses or venues (such as cinemas, studios and film sets), have a key role to play in driving more equitable outcomes for people with disability.

This is because these organisations have responsibility for the elements of their business which can be barriers to, but also opportunities for, improved accessibility and inclusion, such as:

- venue accessibility arrangements for both visible and non-visible disability
- staff disability confidence training and cultural competency on disability issues
- organisational culture and attitudes to people with disability
- commissioning of artistic works or engagement of artists and arts workers as employees
- operating requirements, for example, determining timeframes for the delivery of activities, or whether employees work extended hours to deliver outputs.

Improving equity and inclusion in the arts, cultural and screen sectors

Why?



The arts and cultural sector engages **97%** of the population...

...through activities including events, exhibitions, screen, digital content and more.*

Simple actions

Some simple actions that arts and cultural organisations can take to improve equity, inclusion and representation for d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers and audiences with disability include:



investing in disability-led projects



striving for diversity in staffing and inclusive recruitment



developing and implementing **disability action plans**³⁵



considering accessibility in long-term business planning



publicly communicating and promoting their organisation's accessibility arrangements



engaging appropriately qualified providers to deliver:

- disability awareness and engagement training for all staff
- organisational accessibility audits
- **disability cultural safety** audits (these can assist organisations to provide an environment where people with disability feel comfortable, supported and respected)

*See Creative Australia (2023), *Creating Value: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*.

The arts and cultural sector as a whole has also experienced significant financial pressures due to the impacts of COVID-19, natural disasters and cost-of-living increases in recent years. The cost and viability of making changes to improve accessibility and inclusion will vary, but many potential improvements are low or no cost. Sustainable investment by arts and cultural sector organisations in improving accessibility is essential to improving equity in the sector for d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers and audiences with disability.

Investing in accessibility also makes good business sense – aside from the artistic and economic value of works created by artists with disability, increased inclusion can help grow audiences and the creative workforce. In Australia, people with disability are more likely to creatively participate in the arts and more likely to invest in arts participation than people without disability.³⁶ However, people with disability are three times as likely to avoid an organisation, and twice as likely to dissuade others from engaging with that organisation, because of a negative diversity reputation.³⁷

The Government recognises that systemic cultural and organisational change takes time and needs to account for varying levels of accessibility and disability confidence across the arts and cultural sector. This is why the Government is funding activities to help the sector build the foundational capability to provide safer, more accessible and more inclusive workplaces and businesses. This aligns with the vision of *Employ My Ability*, the Government's Disability Employment Strategy, an Associated Plan under Australia's Disability Strategy, to create workplace cultures where people with disability thrive in their careers.

36 Creative Australia (2023), *Creating Value – Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*.

37 Australian Human Rights Commission (2017), *Missing out: The business case for customer diversity*.

These activities will also complement and build upon the important accessibility work already being done by arts and cultural organisations, states and territories, and arts and cultural sector peak bodies such as the National Association for Visual Arts (NAVA), the Australian Museum and Galleries Association (AMaGA) and the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA).

Actions to build the foundations for change

Creative Australia's 2023 consultation on arts and disability service needs found that while artists reported there is often a lack of available information about whether a venue might be accessible for them to exhibit or perform in, equally there are no widely accepted guidelines to assist the broader sector to understand and implement accessibility.³⁸ Under the Plan, a key area of investment for the Government is developing clear guidance on best practice accessibility and disability engagement to support the wider arts and cultural sector build its foundational capability to become more equitable for people with disability. Key supports will include the development of:

- a National Arts and Disability Code of Practice or appropriate guidelines
- new best practice accessibility guidance, including tools and templates
- other supports still to be scoped in consultation with the sector.

In addition, the Arts and Screen Employment Pathways Pilot Program will support participating organisations in the arts and cultural sector to build and showcase their capability and competence in disability access and inclusion.

As the Plan progresses, the arts and cultural sector can expect that organisations receiving Government funding for arts and cultural activities will need to demonstrate that they are giving due consideration to the best practice guidelines created under the Plan.

³⁸ Creative Australia (2024), *Building Strong Foundations: Research on arts and disability needs and opportunities*.

In parallel with providing clearer guidance on these issues, the Government will encourage potential grants recipients to have greater consideration of accessibility through improvements to arts grants processes such as:

- ensuring all grants guidelines have clear statements about accessibility requirements and that activities to support accessibility are eligible activities
- providing better guidance on disability action plans and how to incorporate disability considerations into projects
- encouraging grant recipients to include information in grant acquittals on the outcomes of any additional accessibility actions that were taken for funded projects.

For arts and cultural organisations receiving multi-year operational funding, the Government will drive improvements in access and inclusion to support greater equity for people with disability over the life of the Plan by:

- Increasing accessibility expectations over time, including by requiring Government-funded arts and cultural organisations to:
 - have a current disability action plan in place
 - demonstrate how accessibility is being considered in business planning to achieve sustainable improvements in equity for d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers and audiences with disability.
- Improving disability representation in appointments to the boards of Government-funded arts and cultural organisations and governing committees.
 - In December 2023, the Office for the Arts established a register for people interested in being considered for appointments to statutory and non-statutory boards, councils and committees within the portfolio of the Minister for the Arts. Information on skills, experiences, qualifications and diversity characteristics (such as disability) is collected as part of the register, and are key considerations in the selection of appointees.

- Introducing access and inclusion key performance indicators, initially based on industry standards, for relevant Creative Australia multi-year funded organisations' contracts and reporting. These may be revised in future multi-year funding programs to align with best practice guidance on disability considerations in the arts which will be developed under the Plan.

The Government will also improve data collection and reporting on disability for Government-funded arts projects and organisations to inform monitoring and evaluation of the Plan and future policy directions. This includes developing and refining key indicators and metrics for disability and accessibility.

The Plan's sub-sectoral engagement activities will be a critical part of supporting the broader arts and cultural sector to understand the Government's expectations in relation to accessibility and inclusion, and promoting the supports available to help them meet these expectations. This approach will recognise the diverse operating environments across the sector, and broader systemic issues which affect the implementation of best practice accessibility.

Challenges and opportunities: the impact of policies and services outside of the arts portfolio

The participation of people with disability in arts and culture as workers and consumers is impacted by services and activities provided by other sectors and delivered by agencies outside of the remit of the Government's arts agencies. For example:

- Inadequate safe and accessible transport options, unreliable digital connectivity, and inaccessible buildings and premises that are barriers to equitable participation in social and economic life for all people with disability, including d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers and audiences with disability.

- Inconsistent approaches to disability access and representation in arts-adjacent sectors, such as the broadcasting sector, that commission and distribute content created or consumed by people with disability.
- Inaccessible digital tools and interfaces for some employment services and websites.
- Government initiatives, services and payments such as the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), Disability Support Pension, and employment programs can help people with disability to participate in social and economic life, including through participation in the arts.³⁹ However:

- d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers, as well as arts and disability peak organisations, have noted that NDIS participants continue to experience challenges in using NDIS funding to support participation in the arts as both consumers and workers.
- They have also repeatedly raised concerns about how the structure and eligibility requirements of the Disability Support Pension and disability employment services and programs, combined with the short-term or intermittent nature of jobs in many parts of the arts and cultural sector, can contribute to inconsistent financial and career opportunity outcomes for artists and arts workers.
- In particular, Government employment programs broadly have the objective of supporting people to find secure and long-term employment. There is a tension between this objective and employment structures in many parts of the arts and cultural sector, where engagements may be intermittent and short in duration, but are important for building careers, networks and professional skills which lead to other career opportunities.

³⁹ It is important to note that not all people with disability are NDIS participants or receive income or employment supports.

In addition, the Government is progressing a broader disability policy reform agenda, particularly in the context of:

- the Government's response to the Final Report of the Disability Royal Commission⁴⁰
- proposed reforms to the NDIS, resulting from the 2023 NDIS Review⁴¹
- the response to recommendations impacting people with disability made by the House of Representatives Select Committee on Workforce Australia Employment Services' 2023 *Rebuilding Employment Services* final report.⁴²

The reforms also include the new specialist disability employment program commencing from 1 July 2025. The new program will remove access barriers by expanding eligibility, which will include volunteer entrants, improve the quality of services, and provide tailored and flexible support that reflects individuals' diverse pathways to finding and retaining employment. An additional 15,000 people are expected to benefit from the program each year.

The outcomes of these reforms are expected to impact d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers and audiences with disability, although they will be unlikely to address all the issues raised by stakeholders in the development of the Plan.

40 Commonwealth of Australia (2024), *Australian Government Response to the Disability Royal Commission*.

41 Commonwealth of Australia (2023), *Working together to deliver the NDIS: Independent Review into the National Disability Insurance Scheme Final Report*.

42 Commonwealth of Australia (2024), *Australian Government response to the House Select Committee on Workforce Australia Employment Services reports: Your Future Planning and Rebuilding Employment Services*.

It is not within the scope of this Plan to address all the cross-government issues. However, under the Plan, the Government commits to increase cross-government coordination to achieve a more informed and unified approach to these issues. This includes by continuing to actively participate in the Government's broader disability policy reform agenda to ensure priority issues raised by the sector are considered. In the development of an arts portfolio position on these issues, the Office for the Arts will consult the Implementation Advisory Group, where practicable, to put forward views informed by the lived experience of artists and arts workers with disability. Over the life of the Plan, the Office for the Arts will:

- Continue to engage with key Commonwealth policy agencies to ensure that the unique operating structures of the arts and cultural sector are considered in the development and implementation of new disability employment and income support frameworks, reforms and programs going forward. This will include engagement with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, the Department of Social Services, the National Disability Insurance Agency, and the National Indigenous Australians Agency.
- Continue to engage with key Commonwealth policy agencies which are responsible for policy frameworks that are arts-adjacent and impact arts access and content creation, including on the Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010 (also known as the Premises Standards) and accessibility and disability representation in the broadcasting sector.
- Work across Government to develop and promote resources and information supporting arts education and career pathways for people with disability. This includes working with the Departments of Employment and Workplace Relations and Social Services to provide career information for people with disability, including school leavers; and appropriate guidance for employment providers which support people with disability to find employment.

- Increase engagement with state, territory and local governments on issues impacting d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers, as well as people with disability seeking to participate in creative life.

ARTS AND DISABILITY ENGAGEMENT ACROSS AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS

The Australian Government recognises that all levels of government are responsible for investing in arts and culture, and deep expertise on the issues impacting artists and arts workers, including issues specific to d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers, is held within state, territory and local government organisations.

Cultural Ministers from the Commonwealth, state and territory governments, and representatives from the Australian Local Government Association, have agreed to increase engagement between governments on arts and disability issues across the arts and cultural sector, including the screen and digital games industries.

This will support better coordination on arts and disability matters across all levels of government on issues where responsibilities overlap, and connect the arts portfolios within state, territory and local governments to broader disability policy reform issues.



Priority 3: Engaging the audience: fair, open and equitable access to arts and culture

'Access looks different for every disabled person. Identify who are the disabled people in your community, what do they require and build the audiences that way. Otherwise, what we have is all these great venues that on paper are wonderful in terms of accessibility, but they are not reaching the people that they need to'

— Participant in Associated Plan stakeholder workshop

Revive commits to making sure that diverse Australian stories reflect contemporary Australian society and resonate with audiences at home and overseas. People with disability have the right to connect with stories that are meaningful and important to them through accessible experiences across all art forms and platforms. Having the right accessibility provisions also means that people with disability can take part in arts and culture as a shared experience with the broader community.

People with disability continue to experience barriers to participation in arts and cultural activities. Creative Australia's 2022 National Arts Participation Survey found that Australians with disability creatively participate at higher rates than Australians without disability (51 per cent compared to 42 per cent), and are more likely to give time or money to the arts than those without disability (30 per cent compared to 21 per cent).⁴³

⁴³ Creative Australia (2023), *Creating Value: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*. Creative participation includes creating art such as music, creative writing, dance, theatre and visual arts and craft, and participating in community arts activities such as attending a choir.

However, they are less likely to attend arts events than people without disability (58 per cent compared to 70 per cent) and are under-represented in festival audiences overall (40 per cent compared to 45 per cent).⁴⁴

While there are a range of factors that may contribute to these findings, people with disability also reported that they are more likely to experience difficulties getting to arts events than people without disability (34 per cent compared to 27 per cent) and more people with disability see safety concerns as a barrier to arts attendance than people without disability (29 per cent compared to 18 per cent).⁴⁵

Actions to build the foundations for change

All people with disability are potential audience members and are impacted by broader barriers to equitable participation in social and economic life. Some of these broader barriers that particularly affect audiences are inaccessible or unsafe transport to cultural and creative events, and unreliable digital connectivity to participate in creative events online. However, as noted previously, these issues are outside the scope of this Plan to address.

In this Plan, the Government recognises that strengthening the capacity of the wider arts and cultural sector to provide equitable access and inclusive experiences is critical to achieving fairer and more inclusive access to cultural and creative life for people with disability.

44 Creative Australia (2023), *Creating Value: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*.

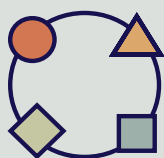
45 Creative Australia (2023), *Creating Value: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*.

In this context, the Government is laying the foundations for more equitable access and participation in the arts for audiences with disability by:

- supporting d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers to build thriving careers to increase disability representation across the sector and tell authentic stories that resonate with diverse audiences
- supporting the arts and cultural sector to build its foundational capability and competence in disability access and inclusion, including for audiences and consumers
- setting stronger accessibility expectations for the wider arts and cultural sector and embedding greater accessibility considerations for organisations receiving Government funding.

The Office for the Arts will also continue to engage across the Australian Government, with state, territory and local governments, and arts and cultural sub-sectors on the issues impacting people with disability fully participating in cultural and creative life.

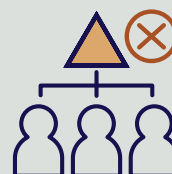
Accessibility needs in the arts sector are diverse, and it's important to know your audience



**diverse
accessibility needs**



**fit-for-purpose
approach**



**a one-size-fits-all
solution doesn't work**

ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS ARE DIVERSE

Rather than supplying generic access arrangements, a place-based approach which engages people with disability within target audiences and focuses on their specific access needs ensures that investments in accessibility are fit-for-purpose and value for money.

Considerations and mechanisms to provide accessible and inclusive experiences for audiences with disability can include (but not be limited to):



exhibitions and events that offer an online or hybrid form of access



access to quiet or low sensory hours



appropriate physical access arrangements



access to low sensory or decompression spaces



open and/or closed captioning



hearing loops



Auslan interpretations



audio descriptions



sensory maps



suitably trained venue employees to support different access needs and engage respectfully with people with disability.



visual stories

Investing in the foundations for change

In the 2024–25 Budget, the Government agreed to fund the following actions under the Plan to support the careers of d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers to thrive. Funding for all actions will commence in 2024–25 unless otherwise stated. These actions will lift the capability of the wider sector to deliver equitable access to the arts, and support people with disability in the wider community to participate in arts and culture.

\$2.25 million for an Arts and Screen Employment Pathways Pilot Program

The Arts and Screen Employment Pathways Pilot Program (the Pilot) will match early to mid-career d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers with arts and cultural organisations, including in the screen and digital games sectors, for temporary employment placements. Funding for this program will commence in 2025–26, although placements are not expected to commence until 2026–27.

The Pilot is expected to fund work placements of up to twelve months, for any art form and any position level across Australia. It will build on the lessons of existing state-based arts and screen industry placement programs such as Createability⁴⁶ and Ripple⁴⁷, and be informed by in-depth consultation with the Implementation Advisory Group, arts and disability peak bodies and the wider arts and cultural sector.

46 Delivered by [Create NSW](#).

47 Delivered by [Accessible Arts NSW](#).

The Pilot will support d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers to build professional skills and networks to advance their careers, and contribute to greater accessibility and disability cultural safety within the arts and cultural sector. It will also benefit the organisations that take part in its implementation:

- placement organisations will gain access to skilled talent whose salaries will be paid through the Pilot
- organisations that currently provide services to d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers and have experience in improving organisational accessibility can apply to deliver the placement program, either alone or in partnership with another organisation/s, to supplement existing resources and build their experience and networks through program delivery.

The Pilot will be administered as a grants program by the Office for the Arts, but delivered by an appropriately qualified service provider or providers, or a consortium of providers:

- the service provider, or consortium of providers, will be responsible for selecting placement organisations and participants and matching them; providing support to participants over the life of the placements; and assisting placement organisations to ensure they are accessible and culturally safe prior to placements commencing
- participants will be employed under any applicable award or agreement wages and conditions
- the Pilot will also include a capped pool of funding for accessibility adjustments which are not available through existing Government programs such as the NDIS and Employment Assistance Fund; and funding for an evaluation of the impact of the Pilot to inform future investment decisions.

\$2.0 million to extend and expand the reach of the current Creative Australia Arts and Disability Initiatives

Under the enhanced Arts and Disability Initiatives, Creative Australia will deliver a range of activities that will support the practice of d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers, such as:

- providing seed funding for, or for development of, new works
- building the practices, skills or networks of artists and arts workers
- other sector-responsive programs.

Creative Australia is also committed to ongoing consultation with d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers on the design of the Arts and Disability Initiatives, to ensure they are genuinely supporting them to progress their careers.

In addition to these initiatives, Creative Australia will provide **\$600,000** to continue supporting the following initiatives:

- \$280,000 for the National Arts and Disability Award (Established – \$50,000 annually and Early Career – \$20,000 annually) to celebrate the work and achievements of d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers.
- \$320,000 for the Arts and Disability Fellowship (\$80,000 annually), which supports the activities and professional development of outstanding, established d/Deaf or disabled artists and arts workers for a period of one to two years.

\$1.2 million to lift accessibility at live music venues and music festivals

The Government has committed \$8.6 million in 2024–25 for the *Revive Live* program to provide grant funding to live music venues and music festivals. A minimum of \$1.2 million from this funding pool is for accessibility activities. This funding will support the sustainability of the live music sector by making it more accessible to d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers and audiences with disability.

\$1.0 million for arts and disability services

Creative Australia will commission specific services, including through an arts and disability services Delivery Partnership for 2025–2028, to support d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers, and help build the foundational access and inclusion capabilities of the wider arts and cultural sector, including the screen sector. Based on the priorities identified in the Disability Needs Analysis and Audit, as well as consultation for the Plan, these activities are expected to include:

- collating existing accessibility resources into a central online location
- developing new best practice accessibility guidance for arts and cultural organisations to complement the work to develop a National Arts and Disability Code of Practice or appropriate guidelines (see below), which could include language and terminology guides, pro-forma templates or tools
- providing sector leadership to respond to high priority issues that may emerge and change across time and providing advice to artists with disability to support their professional practice (examples include grants advice and other general support).

CREATIVE WORKPLACES

Creative Workplaces is developing a new online platform to promote fair, safe and respectful workplaces for Australian artists, arts workers and arts organisations. Once up and running, the platform will host resources created and collated under the Plan to support the arts and cultural sector, including the screen and digital games industries, to become more equitable. Screen Australia will be consulted in the development of material to support the screen and digital games industries.

\$600,000 for a National Arts and Disability Forum and Gathering

The Plan will support d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers to build peer-to-peer connections and connect them to potential markets with seed funding for a national arts and disability forum and gathering:

- the forum will be an accessible, online event in 2025 and 2027 for formal discussions and information-sharing on national disability-related issues in the arts and cultural sector, including the screen and digital games industries
- the gathering will extend the work of the forum as an in-person event (with online elements) in 2026 and 2028 to build wider sector awareness of the work being produced in the arts and disability space; offer development and capacity-building programs for arts organisations and individuals; and provide opportunities for d/Deaf and disabled artists and screen practitioners to pitch or present work to grow networks and markets for disability-led work across all art forms.

The forum and gathering will be delivered by a suitably-qualified, and preferably disability-led, organisation or consortium of organisations. The delivery body will be engaged through a call for proposals or tender process by Creative Australia.

\$250,000 for a National Arts and Disability Code of Practice or appropriate guidelines

Creative Australia will develop and steward a new National Arts and Disability Code of Practice or appropriate guidelines to set the access and representation expectations for the arts, cultural, screen and digital games sectors, including in workplaces.

The Code of Practice or appropriate guidelines will identify options for improving and maintaining accessibility; and outline approaches to best practice engagement with people who are d/Deaf or have disability. The wider arts and cultural sector will benefit from having clearer directions available for best practice disability engagement in order to tackle ableism, improve accessibility and drive equity for d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers, screen practitioners and digital games makers.

This initiative will be developed by Creative Australia in collaboration with Screen Australia and Creative Workplaces, and in consultation with the Implementation Advisory Group. Creative Workplaces will contribute content on fair, safe and respectful workplaces for d/Deaf and disabled artists and screen workers.

\$200,000 for First Nations arts and disability needs and projects, to be delivered by Creative Australia's First Nations Board

\$200,000 will be provided to Creative Australia's First Nations Board to invest in First Nations arts and disability needs and projects, as determined by First Nations people. Investments will be informed by the 2023–24 First Nations First consultations, which included First Nations people who are d/Deaf or have disability. This investment is in addition to funds provided to the First Nations Board through *Revive*. The First Nations Board will determine the allocation of this investment.

Partnerships for change: the Office for the Arts and Creative Australia

The Office for the Arts and Creative Australia will undertake a range of activities (relevant to our roles and responsibilities) over the life of the Plan, in consultation with the Implementation Advisory Group.

The Office for the Arts and Creative Australia will also work in partnership with First Nations communities, including through the Creative Australia First Nations Board, to develop and implement activities directly affecting them, consistent with commitments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and as outlined in the 'First Nations First' section of the Plan.

The Government invests around \$1.0 billion a year through the arts portfolio. This investment is delivered as:

- grants, awards and payments for projects, artists and practitioners
- operational funding for organisations
- funding for other supports, such as support for First Nations cultural expression through funding for First Nations languages and arts
- collections outreach and sustainability activities
- audience access and touring activities, including for regional communities.

The Government also provides around \$685.0 million a year⁴⁸ in rebates to the screen and digital games industries through tax offsets.

48 Based on 2023–24 forecasts.

Equity: the Arts and Disability Associated Plan

These investments offer a further opportunity to achieve better outcomes for people with disability as the Government lifts support for, and expectations of, organisations receiving Government funding. Both Creative Australia and the Office for the Arts are also committed to ongoing improvements to the accessibility of existing grants and funding processes.

Under the Plan, the Office for the Arts will be responsible for delivering the following actions:

- convening and supporting the Implementation Advisory Group
- enhanced stakeholder engagement with sub-sectors
- increased cross-government coordination on broader disability policy issues
- administering the Arts and Screen Employment Pathways Pilot Program
- administering grant funding under *Revive Live* for accessibility uplifts in live music venues and music festivals.

Under the Plan, Creative Australia will be responsible for delivering the following actions:

- extended and expanded Arts and Disability Initiatives
- commissioning arts and disability services
- a national arts and disability forum and gathering
- a National Arts and Disability Code of Practice or appropriate guidelines
- First Nations arts and disability needs and projects.

Creative Australia is committed to consolidating its existing commitments and new commitments under the Plan into a new Disability Action Plan 2025-2028 which will also serve as its implementation map for Creative Australia's activities under the Plan.

ACTIVE CHANGE UNDERWAY

The Government is already progressing opportunities to support the participation of, and greater equity for, people with disability in the arts, cultural and screen sectors through existing and new policy and program initiatives. For example:

- Creative Workplaces has committed to contributing content to support fair, safe and respectful workplaces for d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers, including in the screen and digital games development sector, in its core work.
- In their most recent Statement of Expectations,⁴⁹ the nine National Collecting Institutions have been directed to ensure they have current disability action plans. All have committed to implementing disability action plans in their Statements of Intention.⁵⁰

49 A Statement of Expectations is correspondence issued by a minister to a portfolio agency that provides greater clarity about government policies and objectives relevant to that organisation, including policies and priorities it is expected to observe in conducting its operations. Statements of Expectations are published on the websites of the nine National Collecting Institutions.

50 A Statement of Intention is the response of a National Collecting Institution to the Minister for the Arts' Statement of Expectations which is also published on the organisation's website.

- Recent amendments to the Location Offset⁵¹ for large-scale film and television projects introduce new requirements that recipients must undertake activities to alleviate capacity constraints in the Australian screen industry, including through training expenditure. The training activities or program should, among other things, contribute to improvements in health and safety, and diversity and inclusion in the Australian screen industry.
- In July 2023, Screen Australia launched the Access Coordinator Training Program that gives screen practitioners knowledge and experience in facilitating required adjustments and access provisions for neurodivergent people and people with disability in front of, and behind, the camera.

51 The Location Offset is the Australian Government's primary mechanism for attracting large-scale film and television projects to film in Australia.

Developing a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

A strong evaluation framework for the Plan is critical to demonstrating the impacts of the actions to inform future policy development, including future updates to arts and disability, or broader arts and cultural, policies. It also ensures that there is accountability for delivering actions and outcomes under the Plan.

As part of the first phase of implementation in 2024–25, the Office for the Arts will work closely with other key stakeholders with expertise in best practice evaluation to establish an evaluation framework. This will include working with Creative Australia, Screen Australia and the Implementation Advisory Group to help define the evaluation principles and identify critical baseline data points and measures of success, in accordance with the Commonwealth Evaluation Policy and Principles.⁵² Engaging the Implementation Advisory Group in the development of the evaluation framework, as well as in the evaluation itself, will be critical for ensuring that the people who will be most impacted by the Plan have a strong voice in assessing its progress and success.

⁵² Commonwealth of Australia (2021), Australian Centre for Evaluation – The Treasury, *Commonwealth Evaluation Policy*.

Key considerations for the development of the evaluation framework include:

- ensuring the complexity of the evaluation approach is fit-for-purpose to the scope of the Plan and scale of funding
- drawing on existing data collection frameworks such as the future State of Australian Culture Survey and Creative Australia's equity and diversity reporting framework; and leveraging other evaluation activities
- working with the Implementation Advisory Group to identify priority areas for data collection, including disaggregated data on intersectional cohorts such as gender. There is a need to prioritise data collection given the limited availability of baseline data on disability across the sector (including inconsistent frequency and collection of data).

The outcomes of monitoring activities and the evaluation will be reported through Australia's Disability Strategy mechanisms where appropriate. This will include reporting through Australia's Disability Strategy Implementation Reports, and where relevant, Targeted Action Plans. Over the life of the Plan, this could also include:

- Australia's Disability Strategy Data Improvement Plan
- Australia's Disability Strategy Annual Outcomes Framework Report
- Closing the Gap Annual Report and Implementation Plan
- Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts' Disability Data Improvement Plan.

The Australia's Disability Strategy Advisory Council will also be updated on the progress of the Associated Plan from time to time, recognising the Advisory Council's role in providing advice on activities delivered under Australia's Disability Strategy.

A robust monitoring and evaluation framework for the Plan will result in a stronger evidence base, highlighting priority areas for ongoing policy focus and growth, as well as opportunities for revision and improvement. Monitoring and evaluation activities will also be an opportunity to highlight the achievements of all the people with disability and organisations who participate in the implementation of the Plan. Ultimately, the evaluation framework will be a roadmap to help Government and the wider arts and cultural sector to build on the foundations of this Plan and identify the next steps to achieve more equitable access, participation and representation in Australian arts and cultural life for all d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers and audiences with disability.

Appendix A: Glossary of terms

This glossary defines how terms are used in this Plan. The definitions draw on a range of sources, including the Australian Government Response to the Disability Royal Commission, and the work of academics such as Professor Bree Hadley. Other organisations, agencies and individuals may have different interpretations of the same terms.

Ableism

Ableism refers to attitudes and behaviours that label people with disability as different, less than or inferior to people without disability, incapable of exercising choice and control.

Accessibility

Accessibility describes environments, facilities, services, products and information that people are able to use and interact with in a way that suits their needs.

Artist/s, arts worker/s

In this Plan, 'artists' and 'arts workers' are people involved in the production of cultural and creative activity. This includes:

- people who are working within cultural and creative industries, including the screen and digital games sectors, and
- people who are producing cultural and creative products in other industries.

Arts and disability

The Plan uses the term 'arts and disability' to collectively refer to the broad ecology that works together with artists and arts workers with disability to make arts and culture, and supports access to arts and cultural experiences for audiences with disability.

Auslan

Auslan is the name for Australian Sign Language and the main language of Australia's Deaf community.

Australian Government

In the Plan, the 'Australian Government' or 'the Government' means the Commonwealth Government (as opposed to state and territory or local governments) departments and agencies.

Autonomy

Autonomy describes a person's right and freedom to make decisions, control their life and exercise choice.

Barrier/s

The social model of disability recognises that people are disabled by barriers in society, such as buildings not having a ramp or accessible toilets, or people's attitudes, like assuming people with disability cannot do certain things.

Chronic health condition/s

Chronic health conditions are an ongoing cause of substantial ill health, disability and premature death. Chronic health conditions are characterised by their long-lasting and persistent effects. Their social and economic consequences can affect quality of life.

Cultural and linguistic diversity

Cultural and linguistic diversity describes communities with diverse languages, ethnic backgrounds, nationalities, traditions, societal structures and religions. This includes people with a different heritage or linguistic background than the dominant Australian culture and language, people with dual heritage, and people who are migrants and refugees.

Cultural lens

A cultural lens is the lens through which people see, think, interpret the world and experiences, make assumptions about themselves and others, and understand and represent individual and community identity.

Disability cultural safety

Cultural safety is a practice of ensuring respect for cultural and social differences through self-reflection and recognition of the attitudes, beliefs and social, historical, political and economic circumstances that create power relationships and inequalities. Disability cultural safety recognises that people with disability have a shared identity, community, and culture, based on a shared history of oppression, shared lived experience, and shared language to describe that experience, and projects or workplaces that do not respect this are alienating.

Easy Read

Easy Read format is a way of presenting written information to make it easier to understand. It typically uses simpler words, short sentences, accessible fonts and layouts, and images or photos to assist in illustrating the information.

Equity

Equity recognises that everyone does not start from the same place, and adjustments may be needed to ensure everyone has access to the same opportunities.

Hard of hearing

The term 'hard of hearing' describes people who are unable to hear, have some hearing difficulties or become deaf later in life, and whose communication mode is usually speech. People who are hard of hearing may rely on hearing assistance devices (such as hearing aids or cochlear implants), lip reading and captions, and some may learn Auslan as a second language later.

Inclusion

Inclusion is achieved when a diversity of people feel they are respected, connected, contributing and progressing at work. To achieve an inclusive society, systems and services must be universally accessible and responsive to the diverse experiences, circumstances and needs of all people.

Neurodivergence/neurodivergent

'Neurodivergence' describes people with neurological differences and diverse thinking or processing styles.

Psychosocial disability

Psychosocial disability arises from the interaction between a person with a long-term mental health condition (that may be episodic) and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

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