

National Cultural Policy Submission

Judith Bowtell on behalf of Front & Centre 2022

Submitted: On behalf of a not-for-profit arts organisation;
On behalf of an organisation with arts-components (e.g. community organisation, tourism, venue, health, education etc) and;
As a worker/professional in an industry who uses arts (e.g. art therapist, tour guide)

About Front & Centre

The need for mentoring opportunities is well recognised in the artistic community, this is more so felt in the disabled sector.

Front & Centre is a leadership program for women and non-binary people, identifying as disabled or deaf, working in the arts, creative and cultural system. The 10-month program aims to challenge the traditional patterns of leadership that are inaccessible and create new forms that are inclusive and community-building.

The program developed by Albany Lane Consulting, features group webinars, one-to-one coaching, "buddy system", alumni program, and other network building opportunities.

It is delivered in partnership with Accessible Arts and funded by the Australian Government Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Office for Women.¹

Overarching principles

To deliver on the five pillars of the NCP, we believe that the policy needs to include the following.

- Commitment to developing an **inclusive art, creative and cultural sector**, challenging the inherited forms of discrimination and oppression that have shaped our society: especially our concepts of leadership, power, social privilege, mental health, acquisition of wealth, education, influence, and entitlement.
 - Around 1 in 6 (18%) people in Australia – or about 4.4 million – have disability. Another 22% (or 5.5 million) of people in Australia have a long-term health condition (including mental health) but no disability, and the remaining 60% (or 14.8 million) have no disability or long-term health condition.
 - One in five people (21.4% or 4.2 million) had a long-term (12-month) mental disorder: 3.3 million people had an anxiety disorder, 1.5 million had an affective (or mood) disorder, and 650,800 people had a substance use disorder.
- Acknowledge that the **NDIS does not adequately provide** for disabled people's participation in art, creative and cultural activity, and does not recognise "artist" nor creative industries as an employment objective.
 - **NDIS recipients are not representative of the population of disabled people in Australia.** Of the 337,300 NDIS participants as of 31 December 2019 almost two-thirds (65.5%) were aged under 35 years, compared to

¹ <https://www.albanylane.com.au/front-centre>

41.0% of the rest of population². In addition, 62% of NDIS participants are men, and 37% are women³

- The NDIS reports that this is due to the large % of recipients of the NDIS with autism, and the “higher prevalence of autism among males” put usually at 4:1⁴. But this figure may hide the true incidence of autism, especially in girls and women. **Research is proving that girls and women in Australia are underdiagnosed, mis-diagnosed, or diagnosed later in life**, leading to a range of struggles and mental health issues.⁵ Many autistic women and non-binary people do not receive diagnoses until adulthood.⁶
- Furthermore, research is showing that **social and economic privilege plays a big role in being diagnosed and treated** for other mental health issues, such as ADHD, leading to the exclusion of marginalised and under-represented people in accessing support.⁷
- Acknowledge the **multiple barriers to participation for disabled people** as creators and audiences, and that disabled people also face discrimination on other and intersectional areas of oppression based on identity: eg racism, sexism, homophobia, bias based on social and economic background.
 - These barriers especially impact the ability of disabled people to be seen as **potential leaders in arts and cultural practice**. The markers of leadership that may be inaccessible include tertiary qualifications, overseas experience, fellowships, presentations and residencies that are often not accessible for a disabled person.
- Commitment that any access and inclusion policies and programs funded through the NCP and government funding in general are based on the **Social Model of Disability** (where the removal of barriers is the responsibility of society, including organisations and institutions) rather than the Medical Model, where the disabled person is responsible for any changes that make arts, creativity and cultural practice and experiences accessible.⁸ This is the popular theory however an emerging theory is moving toward what is termed **Critical Realism**. “A critical realist approach, it is suggested, enables us to: (i) bring the biological body, impaired or otherwise, ‘back in’; (ii) relate the individual to society in a challenging, non-conflationary or non ‘unidirectional’ way; and (iii) rethink questions of identity, difference, and the ethics of care through a commitment to real bodies and real selves, real lives, and real worlds.”⁹

² <https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/characteristics-national-disability-insurance-scheme-ndis-participants-2019-analysis-linked-data#comparisons-across-populations>

³ <https://data.ndis.gov.au/reports-and-analyses/participant-groups/analysis-participants-gender>

⁴ <https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/characteristics-national-disability-insurance-scheme-ndis-participants-2019-analysis-linked-data#comparisons-across-populations>

⁵ <https://theconversation.com/autism-is-still-underdiagnosed-in-girls-and-women-that-can-compound-the-challenges-they-face-176036>

⁶ <https://www.autismawareness.com.au/understanding-autism/women-girls>

⁷ [https://ssri.psu.edu/news/privilege-plays-huge-role-getting-adhd-diagnosis#:~:text=Having%20ADHD%20\(like%20any%20other,ADHD%20label%20can%20be%20essential.](https://ssri.psu.edu/news/privilege-plays-huge-role-getting-adhd-diagnosis#:~:text=Having%20ADHD%20(like%20any%20other,ADHD%20label%20can%20be%20essential.)

⁸ Medical V Social Model of Disability <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MdzbyJq58Ws>

⁹ <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdfdirect/10.1111/1467-9566.00184>

- Note that the **NDIS and its practices replicate the medical model of disability**, in that the individual is supported in their participation, yet the overall environment may remain unchanged.
- The person-centred approach to funding disability access has many positives, yet the **removal and reduction of funding for community-centred approaches** has left many disabled people (especially those who do not access the NDIS) without access to facilities for art and cultural practice, including professional arts and community development activities.
- Acknowledge that the discrimination against disabled people as artist, cultural leaders, and creative professionals, has led to their work being marginalised in professional art practice, and often siloed into “community” or amateur categories. The long-term impact of this has led to **the erasure of the work of many disabled artists** from the canons and narratives of arts and cultural practice in Australia.¹⁰
 - **Perpetuating social exclusion is contrary to NDIS and Australia’s Disability Strategy** and limits opportunity for disabled and non-disabled artists to engage and explore collaborative practices and create theory, terminology and frameworks and allyship.¹¹
- Commitment to supporting the professional development of disabled artists and creatives, especially through introduction of following practices in funded arts and creative sector: **Access and wellbeing riders, and other non-discriminatory practices that allow for disclosure of support needs**.¹²
 - Artists, creatives, audiences, and participants should not need to disclose their impairment to have access needs met. There should always be an option for this to remain personal and confidential.
- **Commitment to supporting Disability Pride**¹³, including through the commissioning and promotion of works across art, cultural and creative forms for Disability Pride month (July).¹⁴
 - As in other areas where there is systemic discrimination, disability pride provides a forum and a practice that can lead to greater self-advocacy, challenging expectations and building community.
 - Disability pride shifts the emphasis away from disability culture being about “inspiration” and **challenges the systemic ableism** in our society.
 - External and internalised “ableism” are one of the many barriers that arts, culture and creativity can change, when it is led by disabled artists and creative practitioners, and when the curators, programmers, producers and commissioners include diverse disabled arts leaders.

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¹⁰ The Disability Pride Mural of Melbourne - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nRppIpeEKg&t=2s> featuring Front & Centre participant, Larissa Macfarlane

¹¹ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13569783.2020.1729716>

¹² <https://musiciansunion.org.uk/news/creating-your-own-access-rider#:~:text=An%20access%20rider%20is%20a,have%20equal%20access%20to%20work.>

¹³ <https://www.independenceaustralia.com.au/tips-and-advice/a-story-of-disability-pride/#:~:text=In%202017%2C%20Melbourne%20based%20artist,her%20story%20of%20disability%20pride.>

¹⁴ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/07/22/observing-disability-pride-month-july#:~:text=I%20only%20recently%20learned%20that,%2C%20Madison%2C%20and%20Los%20Angeles.>

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