

DiSability Action Plan (2014–16)

Progress Report

JANUARY 2015

Introduction

This first year of the Australia Council's new Disability Action Plan (DAP) has been an exciting one in relation to arts and disability activities delivered by the Council, and the incredible work being made by artists with disability. The implementation of the DAP has reshaped our thinking and the way we work on behalf of the sector. The results of that shift include practical developments which improve the accessibility of information and application processes, and a successful \$300,000 pilot funding program which led to a \$1 million commitment over the next three years.

Our Disability Action Plan (DAP), published in December 2013, included a commitment to conducting an evaluation of actions progressed and publishing an annual progress report. This report features information about our achievements to date and outlines our agenda for the future. The original DAP can be viewed online (hyperlink: <http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/about/disability/>).

I am delighted to see the vibrancy of the arts and disability sector continue to grow, and look forward to further developing the Council's capacity to be a disability confident and competent organisation.

**Tony Grybowski,
Chief Executive Officer**

Goal 1 – Leadership

There are already strong leaders with disability who work within the arts and disability, Disability Arts and Deaf Arts spaces. The Australia Council acknowledges the critical work of existing leaders and will continue to provide further opportunities and encouragement to people with disability to fulfill their potential as future leaders, contributing both within and beyond the arts and disability sector.

The Australia Council aspires to be a leader in the area of disability, arts and accessibility practices. We appreciate diversity and acknowledge the value of the representation of people with disability in leadership positions, across our workforce, governance and in our stakeholder groups. We are committed to removing barriers that people with disability face when accessing opportunities. We aim to be an example of good practice for other organisations to follow, in how we engage with people with disability, and benefit from their expertise.

Achievement highlights from 2014:

- National roadshow of arts and disability leadership talks by UK expert Jo Verrent
- Participation by twelve Australians with disability in the Sync Leadership Program
(Sync Leadership Program media release: <http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/news/media-centre/media-releases/australia-council-promotes-disability-leadership-in-the-arts/>)
- Active encouragement of people with disability to apply for and participate in mentoring and leadership programs, with Emma Bennison supported to research disability leadership in the UK through an Executive Leadership grant.

(More about Emma Bennison: <https://emmabennison.wordpress.com/>)

- Prominence given to accessibility at the 2014 Marketing Summit, which included a session with Jo Verrent and Emma Bennison on “Connecting Diversity”
(Jo Verrent, Connecting Diversity presentation: <http://vimeo.com/101459121>)
- Emma Bennison and Jo Verrent, Connecting Diversity presentation:

<http://vimeo.com/101459122>)

- \$25,000 Major Sponsor support for the 2014 Arts Activated conference (Arts Activated hyperlink: <http://aarts.net.au/artsactivated/>)
- Australia Council talks: Unlimited Panel Session (31 October 2014) and celebrating the International Day of People with Disability with guest speaker Caroline Bowditch on 3 December 2014
- Proactive recruitment and promotion of the peer registry and opportunities to participate in all panel based structures for people with disability. An increase in the number of peers with disability used across the Australia Council
- First international secondment in Cultural Engagement Framework area and a staff member seconded to Unlimited Festival at the Southbank Centre in London (Morwenna Collett Unlimited festival recap: <http://aarts.net.au/artsactivated/>)
- Staff participant in the NDIS arts working group and National Arts and Disability strategy working group (National Arts and Disability Strategy: <http://mcm.arts.gov.au/working-groups/nads>)
- First engagement with Deaf and visually impaired peers through our peer assessment process

In 2015, the Australia Council will:

- Continue with a whole of organisation responsibility and commitment to the delivery of our Disability Action Plan
- Ensure that Australia Council research and data collection activity considers people with disability
- Increase the number of panel/board members with disability that are engaged across the Australia Council
- Explore options for acknowledging significant contributions towards access improvements across our organisation through an annual staff/team award or other means
- Continue to develop appropriate Peer Induction information to ensure assessors are informed about applications from people with disability
- Engage in regular discussions and dialogue with the arts and disability sector and attend and present at events
- Develop staff through Disability Equality training
- Develop research project options relating to the area of arts and disability

Goal 2 – Accessibility

People with disability have rights to equal access and the Australia Council is committed to improving access across all areas of our organisation. As we embark on a significant period of change across our organisation, this is an opportune time to consider accessibility in the re-design of our funding structures, systems and processes, building space, human resources and communications approach. Over the next three years, we will be particularly focused on improving the following forms of access: physical, intellectual, attitudinal and communications.

Achievement highlights from 2014:

- Australia Council events are held in accessible venues and captioning and Auslan is provided on request
- Our new website has reached AA WCOAG standards and we are currently working on our online grants system to reach AA standard in 2015
- All our online videos are now captioned and we are investigating audio description for videos in 2015
- Grant applications across all categories are accepted in a range of accessible formats including online, electronically, handwritten, video, audio and Auslan
- We ran an information session about our funding programs in partnership with Accessible Arts NSW and the Deaf Arts Network, which was live streamed to approximately 550 people across the country
(Accessible Arts and Arts + Disability information session: <http://vimeo.com/112142492>)
- Systems are in place to ensure all new staff and peers are asked about their access requirements on commencement

In 2015, the Australia Council will:

- Implement recommended changes of the 2013 Accessibility Audit of Online System to improve accessibility
- Continue to investigate alternative formats for communication
- Ensure physical accessibility is improved across our organisation and accessibility is considered in future refurbishments and use of the physical space
- Continue its inclusion of accessibility in a range of forums, networks and summits

- Develop a plan to encourage funded organisations to have DAPs and provide accessible presentations
- Conduct an audit of the accessibility of existing residency spaces and investigate international best practice
- Create case studies highlighting funded organisations who are actively addressing current barriers to access across all areas of their operations for artists and audiences

Goal 3 - Arts Practice

Australia is proud of our recognised artists with disability who are regularly invited to perform on the world stage. Our artists and companies are acknowledged locally, nationally and internationally as leaders in both the arts and disability fields across a range of different areas of art form practice. We are conscious of the different types of disability arts practices and how disability may influence work. The artistic resources, cultural capital and potential of artists with disability need to be fostered and unleashed to further contribute to Australia's cultural narrative. We aim to assist in doing this by increasing access to funding opportunities and awareness-raising through promotion and advocacy

Achievement highlights from 2014:

- The announcement of \$1 million dedicated Arts and Disability funding over three years, commencing in the 2014-2015 financial year (Commitment to Artists with Disability media release: <http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/news/media-centre/media-releases/a-million-dollar-commitment-to-artists-with-disability/>)
- Support of *Intimacy* by Torque Show, in collaboration with Michelle Ryan, to be presented at the Unlimited Festival at the Southbank centre in London in September (Intimacy at Southbank centre in London: <http://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/whatson/michelle-ryan-85312>)
- Advocacy and promotion of arts and disability activities through a range of channels (see sample of links below)
- The successful completion of the Artists with Disability Program pilot round, with 217 applications received and 25 supported. The program was assessed by a panel with the majority of peers identifying as having a disability and we enabled applicants to submit proposals using accessible formats, including handwritten, electronic, online, video, audio and Auslan. Prior to the roadshow, a national roadshow of information sessions was conducted which reached approximately 400 artists across the country
- A disability session with London based Unlimited Festival producer

Wendy Martin was held at the Australian Performing Arts Market (APAM)

In 2015, The Australia Council will:

- Continue to ensure artists with disability and their managers/producers are aware that they can apply for funding to present their work locally, nationally and internationally
- Continue to promote stories of artists with disability who are successful in our funding programs
- Continue to encourage a space for artists to discuss/promote their work through attendance at arts markets/events and by contributing to panel discussions
- Work with arts media to promote arts and disability achievements including those of artists with disability funded by the Australia Council

Media coverage examples

- Australian Policy Online, Disability Action Plan
(Hyperlink: <http://apo.org.au/research/disability-action-plan-2014-16>)
- ABC News Online, Fewer people with disabilities in workforce than 20 years ago, Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show
(Hyperlink: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-12-03/less-people-with-disabilities-in-workforce-than-20-years-ago-abs/5131716>)
- ArtsHub, New funding for artists with disabilities
(Hyperlink: <http://www.artshub.com.au/news-article/news/all-arts/new-funding-for-artists-with-disabilities-197530>)
- ArtsHub, Funding for artists with disability
(Hyperlink: [http://www.artshub.com.au/au/news.aspx?contentTypeCatId=118&CategoryId=740&ListingId=198042&HubId=0&CategoryGroupId=\\${mapfile_categorygroups}](http://www.artshub.com.au/au/news.aspx?contentTypeCatId=118&CategoryId=740&ListingId=198042&HubId=0&CategoryGroupId=${mapfile_categorygroups}))
- Australia Council Article, Are you ready for the museum of imagined touch?
(Hyperlink: <http://australiacouncil.gov.au/arts-in-daily-life/artist-stories/are-you-ready-for-the-museum-of-imagined-touch/>)
- Australia Council Article, Australia Council Launches a new Disability Action Plan

- (Hyperlink: <http://artery.australiacouncil.gov.au/2013/12/australia-council-launches-a-new-disability-action-plan/>)
- Australia Council Article, Creating awareness around arts and disability (Hyperlink: <http://artery.australiacouncil.gov.au/2013/10/creating-awareness-around-arts-and-disability/>)
- Divine Blog, An opportunity for artists with disability (Hyperlink: <http://www.divine.vic.gov.au/main-site/arts/opportunities/an-opportunity-for-artists-with-disability;storyId,12627>)
- Accessible Arts, Unlimited Opportunity for Morwenna Collett with UK Internship (Hyperlink: <http://www.aarts.net.au/news/1992/140/Unlimited-Opportunity-for-Morwenna-Collett-with-UK-Internship/>)
- Access to arts, The Australia Council's million dollar commitment to artists with disability (hyperlink: <http://access2arts.org.au/the-australia-councils-million-dollar-commitment-to-artists-with-disability/>)
- Access to arts, A new era for arts and disability at the Australia Council (hyperlink: <http://access2arts.org.au/a-new-era-for-arts-and-disability-at-the-australia-council/>)
- Access to arts, Leadership and diversity challenging assumptions (Hyperlink <http://access2arts.org.au/leadership-and-diversity-challenging-assumptions/>)
- The Music Network, Australia Council extends disability program (Hyperlink: <https://www.themusicnetwork.com/news/australia-council-extends-disability-program-commits-1m>)

Examples of events attended or delivered by Australia Council staff

- National roadshow for pilot Artists with Disability funding program (Jan/ Feb 2014)
- Australian Performing Arts Market disability session (Feb 2014)
- *Ganesh vs the Third Reich* by Back to Back Theatre (Mar 2014)
- Marketing Summit 2014, with accessibility focus (July 2014)
- National roadshow of Jo Verrent arts and disability leadership talks (July 2014)
- Unlimited Festival, Southbank Centre London (Sept 2014)
- Arts Activated (Oct 2014)
- Arts Access Australia's 40th birthday (Oct 2014)
- Sync Leadership Program (Oct 2014)

- Unlimited discussion at the Australia Council (Oct 2014)
- Beyond Access: Creative Case for Disability Arts, Arts Access Victoria (Nov 2014)
- Caroline Bowditch keynote presentation at the Australia Council (Dec 2014)

Examples of Australia Council funded projects by artists with disability

- Assessment meeting report for the Artists with Disability pilot program funded 25 recipients (Read the assessment meeting report: <http://2014.australiacouncil.gov.au/grants/grant-decisions/reports/arts-funding-division-assessment-meeting-reports/artists-with-disability-program>)
- A range of artists with disability were supported through our other funding programs. A small example includes the following grant recipients:
 - Emma Bennison (TAS), Executive Leadership Grant
 - Rohan Brooks/Rudely Interrupted (VIC), Artists with Disability Program
 - Milk Crate Theatre (NSW), Theatre New Work – Production (*This House is Mine*)
 - Daniel Savage (ACT), Artists with Disability Program
 - stArts with D (NT), Artists with Disability Program
 - Jessica White (QLD), Artists with Disability Program