



Arts Access Australia

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Arts Access Australia National Network

Disability Action Plan 2005 - 2010

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Purpose of Arts Access Australia Disability Action Plan

Arts Access Australia is committed to ongoing education in disability awareness for its board, staff and member organisations.

As the peak national arts and disability organisation we have a particular responsibility to ensure that our staff and board members have a strong and up to date understanding of disability awareness and its impact on social participation.

Arts Access Australia also has a responsibility to model best practice in the disability area.

It is in line with these aims that this Disability Action Plan has been developed and will remain a live document to be amended and improved through a regular process of review, consultation and feedback with our members and stakeholders.

The outcomes of this Plan will form part of Arts Access Australia's Business Plan, and will be revised annually as part of the organisational planning cycle.

What do we mean by Disability?

“Disability” is a complex term. It is understood and experienced by many people in many different ways, and definitions shift.

The World Health Organisation (“WHO”) International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (abbreviated as “ICF”) provides a conceptual basis for the definition, measurement and policy formulations for health and disability.

ICF is named as it is because of its stress on health and functioning, rather than on disability. Previously, disability began where health ended; once you were disabled, you were in a separate category. The WHO want to make ICF a tool for measuring functioning in society, no matter what the reason for one’s impairments.

This is a radical shift. From emphasising people’s disabilities, we now focus on the level of health.

ICF puts the notions of ‘health’ and ‘disability’ in a new light. It acknowledges that every human being can experience a decrement in health and thereby experience some disability. This is not something that happens to only a minority of humanity. ICF thus ‘mainstreams’ the experience of disability and recognises it as a universal human experience. By shifting the focus from cause to impact it places all health conditions on an equal footing allowing them to be compared.

Historically two major conceptual models of disability have been proposed. The medical model views disability as a feature of the person. Disability, on this model, calls for medical or other treatment or intervention, to ‘correct’ the problem with the individual.

The social model of disability, on the other hand, sees disability as a socially-created problem and not an attribute of an individual. Thus disability demands a political response since the problem is created by an unaccommodating physical environment brought about by attitudes and other features of the social environment.

On its own neither model is completely adequate. ICF is based on an integration of medical and social which allows for a coherent view of different perspectives.

As an arts and disability organisation, Arts Access Australia embraces the social model of disability. Within the social model of disability, a person is understood to experience a disability when the social or physical environment in which they live fails to accommodate them.

This approach allows us to focus on positive actions to remove social and physical barriers to full participation in the arts, rather than pathologising or medicalising the body of the individual.

This understanding also shifts some of the burden of responsibility for social participation for people with disabilities from the individual to the society. It also enables us to focus clearly on universal access, a very useful strategy for the arts industry, which is primarily people focused.

Arts Access Australia Mission and Values

Mission

Arts Access Australia is the national non-Government organisation working to increase cultural inclusion of the one in five Australians with a disability and those who are at risk of acquiring a disability.

Arts Access Australia's work reflects the World Health Organisation International Classification on Health and Functioning by promoting wellbeing and the social model of disability and health.

Values

Arts Access Australia believes that

- Everyone has innate creative ability
- It is a human right to have access to cultural opportunities
- Art created by people with a disability makes a unique contribution to the cultural life of Australia
- Cultural inclusion can be an effective means of achieving social change with a positive impact on health and wellbeing
- Our work is more effective when cooperating rather than competing with arts sector and disability sector stakeholders
- Improving access benefits the whole community

Setting the Context

Who Has a Disability in the Arts?

In Australia people with disabilities are involved in the arts and cultural sectors as practicing artists in professional and community contexts; and as consumers and audience members.

There has been minimal research on participation rates of people with disabilities with the exceptions being 'Arts and Disability' written by Des Walsh and Juliet London (Australia Council 1995) and 'Don't give up your day job – an economic study of professional artists in Australia' written by David Throsby and Virginia Hollister (Australia Council 2003).

The 1995 report used Australian Bureau of Statistics ("ABS") figures to determine that people with disabilities are less likely to attend arts events. The report also identified barriers to access and made broad recommendations.

The findings of the Throsby research are that of the estimated 45,000 artists in Australia around 10 per cent of those surveyed reported living with some form of disability. Of these about two-thirds report a physical disability and one-third have a mental illness or intellectual disability. Of the artists with a disability about 20 per

cent say that their disability impacts on their artistic practice most of the time or all of the time while another 20 per cent say it has no effect at all. The Throsby figures should be used and interpreted with some caution as Arts Access Australia and our extensive member network was not consulted as part of the research.

The context for these reports are ABS figures indicating that one in five Australians, or four million people, have one or more disabilities. This figure is increasing, in particular with the ageing of our population.

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) protects an even broader section of society than this because:

- it also protects people who are associates of people with disabilities (including families, friends and carers);
- the DDA definition of disability is wider at important points than the definition used by the ABS. For example the ABS excludes short-term disabilities lasting less than six months and it is thus likely to understate mental disorders in particular, while the the DDA covers these.
- People who do not have a disability now but may face disability discrimination in the future; and
- The DDA prohibits discrimination on the basis of imputed disability.

Noting the WHO ICF definition of health and disability and the Disability Discrimination Act, Arts Access Australia places itself firmly within a 'Wellbeing' framework. We use this term because of its currency within our Australian arts and health context. Direct participation in and increased access to the arts contributes to the wellbeing of people with a disability, their carers, family, friends and community.

Legislative Context

The Disability Discrimination Act (1992) sets the legislative framework to ensure the rights of people with disabilities are protected and advanced in Australia. Under the Act, cases of discrimination or breaches of human rights can be investigated by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC). If a complaint is made to the HREOC it will investigate the complaint with a conciliatory approach by working with both parties to try and find a mutually acceptable solution. If conciliation is unsuccessful a complaint can be taken further to the Federal Court or the Federal Magistrates Service.

This Disability Action Plan will be lodged with the HREOC as the appropriate legislative body to demonstrate Arts Access Australia's commitment to its implementation and ongoing application.

For a direct link to the HREOC web site regarding complaints go to;
www.hreoc.gov.au/complaints_information/guides/info_sheet_dda.html

A substantial proportion of complaints under the DDA are resolved by the parties deciding to settle the matter by conciliation, with the assistance of the Commission but without the Commission or the courts having to formally decide that unlawful discrimination has occurred or what the remedy should be. Well over a thousand complaints have been conciliated under the DDA to date. These complaints have involved both arts organisations and individual artists.

The practical application of the DDA for arts and cultural organisations is captured in the Disability Fact Pack available at:

http://www.ozco.gov.au/arts_resources/publications/disability_fact_pack_for_arts_and_cultural_organisations/

To see what other Arts and Cultural organisations are doing see in response to the DDA see:

http://www.hreoc.gov.au/disability_rights/arts.htm

Commonwealth Disability Service Standards

In addition to the HREOC compliance framework this Plan also embodies the Principles of the revised Commonwealth Disability Strategy (<http://www.facs.gov.au/disability/cds/cds/principles1.htm>) ;

Equity: people with disabilities have the right to participate in all aspects of the community including the opportunity to contribute to its social, political, economic and cultural life;

Inclusion: all mainstream Commonwealth programs, services and facilities should be available to people with disabilities. The requirements of people with disabilities should be taken into account at all stages in the development and delivery of these programs and services;

Participation: people with disabilities have the right to participate on an equal basis in all decision making processes that affect their lives;

Access: people with disabilities should have access to information in appropriate formats about the programs and services they use; and

Accountability: all areas of Commonwealth organisations should be clearly accountable for the provision of access to their programs, facilities and services for people with disabilities. This includes specifying the outcomes to be achieved, establishing performance indicators and linking reporting outcomes of the Strategy to mainstream reporting mechanisms.

Stakeholders

The Stakeholders for this plan include:

1. Staff
2. Board Members and advisors
3. Member Organisations
4. International Affiliates
5. Government Agencies
6. National Arts and National Disability Organisations

Arts Access Australia member organisations and an explanation of their work is available at www.artsaccessaustralia.org

The existence of this National Network allows Arts Access Australia to:

- initiate targeted industry development projects; and
- accurately represent the arts and disability sector to its stakeholders.

The Plan

Goal 1 - Arts Access Australia's staff and board members are aware of current disability awareness standards and equity principles		
Strategies	Outcome	Timeframe and Responsibility
1.1 Assess current level of disability awareness of staff and board members	Identification of gaps and strengths in levels of disability awareness	Assessment complete by end of 2003 / 04 and 2005 / 06 financial year by Board members and staff
1.2 Develop and deliver Disability Awareness Training in response to needs assessment	Increased levels of disability awareness reported by staff and board members	Training delivered by end of 2004 calendar year with assessment complete by end of 2004 / 2005 and 2006 / 07 financial year.
Goal 2 – Arts Access Australia supports the active participation of people with disabilities in decision making when developing and delivering services and projects.		
2.1 AAA user tests projects with pwd during their development	Pwd are able to influence projects that are about them	On an as needs basis by Board/Staff. Benchmark 2003/04 and review annually
2.2 AAA supports pwd to be involved at Board level	Pwd represented and involved in decision making in AAA AAA will support costs associated with carers and flexible travel arrangements where required	Benchmark representation and financial costs in 2003 /04 and review annually. Note there is no quota for representation as pwd may not wish to identify.
2.3 AAA will ensure that its facilities and meeting venues are accessible	Pwd involved in operational aspects of AAA and decision making	Accessibility audit of AAA office 2003/04 and biannual review by Staff, Meeting venues on an as needs basis reviewed annually
2.4 AAA supports positive discrimination for pwd when employing staff and selecting project workers	Employment opportunities for pwd	Benchmark 2003/04 and review annually

Goal 3 – Arts Access Australia communications reflect universal design principles		
3.1 AAA will research and use universal design principles in publications, website and other communications	Evidence that AAA communication reflect use of universal design principles as contained in industry standards (eg Royal Blind Society, W3C guidelines) Resources relating Universal design principles maintained on AAA website	Benchmark 2003 / 04 and review annually staff/Board
Goal 4 – Arts Access Australia uses its DAP as an effective advocacy tool to improve accessibility of stakeholder organisations		
4.1 AAA and Member organisations develop their own DAPs	Evidence of increased accessibility for pwd in AAA and State peak arts and disability organisations	Benchmark 2003/04, DAPs lodged with HREOC by end of 2004, and review annually staff/Board
4.2 AAA promotes DAP to national artspeak organisations	Evidence of increased accessibility for pwd in national artspeak organisations	Benchmark 2004/05, number of DAPs lodged with HREOC, and review annually Staff.
4.3 AAA promotes DAP to federation of disability peak organisations	Evidence of maintained/increased accessibility for pwd in federation of disability peak organisations	Benchmark 2004/05, number of DAPs lodged with HREOC, and review annually Staff
4.4 AAA promotes DAP to Federal arts funding and other government agencies who support arts and cultural activities	Evidence of maintained/increased accessibility for pwd in Federal arts funding and other government agencies	Benchmark 2004/05, number of DAPs lodged with HREOC, and review annually Staff
Goal 5 – Arts Access Australia develops and maintains accountability mechanisms for this DAP		
5.1 AAA develops hard file and web feedback form	Evidence of feedback from stakeholder organisations and members incorporated into annual review lodged with HREOC	Develop feedback mechanisms by 2003/04, Benchmark 2004/05 and review annually Staff
5.2 AAA will seek feedback from stakeholder organisations	Evidence that AAA has sought, received and utilised feedback in review lodged with HREOC.	Representatives from each stakeholder group consulted biannually. Benchmark 2004/05 and review 2006/07 Staff

Review and Evaluation Process

A review and evaluation process has been designed to ensure that this Disability Action Plan is continually reviewed to ensure that it is up to date and meets the needs of our stakeholders. This process will also ensure that the DAP is lived by the organisation as all stakeholders are able to participate in the review.

Throughout the year members and stakeholders will be able to provide feedback on the policy and Arts Access Australia's performance in areas related to the policy. This can be carried out by an online feedback option through the network's website, email, letter, telephone or in person to Arts Access Australia.

Arts Access Australia staff will then incorporate feedback where appropriate and implement changes in conjunction with the organisation's planning cycle.

A report on the DAP's performance for the year will be presented to the Board for annual review.

Board / Directors Declaration

The Directors of Arts Access Australia declare their commitment to the timely implementation and ongoing development of Arts Access Australia's Disability Action Plan.

This Disability Action Plan was unanimously approved by Directors of Arts Access Australia at their 24 August 2005 Teleconference.