**ACCESSIBLE ARTS STRATGEIC PLAN**

**2021 - 24**



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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

As NSW’s peak arts and disability organisation, Accessible Arts is driven by our vision of equity and excellence in arts, culture and disability. Over the next four years, we will deliver a comprehensive suite of innovative state-wide programs and services which will advance the rights of and opportunities for people with disability and/or who are Deaf to develop and sustain professional careers in the arts and have equitable access to arts and culture across NSW.

We will do this by providing programs and services which focus on career advancement, audience development and community engagement for arts practitioners and audiences with disability. These will include creative initiatives, internships, mentorships and artist residencies, professional development workshops, leadership development programs, industry education and advocacy, community and industry forums, networking events and advisory services.

One in five NSW residents live with disability or are Deaf, and many engage with the arts in a multitude of vital, unique and dynamic ways. However, when it comes to professional practice, arts practitioners with disability are under-represented, earn less, experience higher unemployment, and get much less professional support compared to artists without disability. When it comes to audiences with disability, despite being enthusiastic consumers of arts and culture, many don’t experience equitable levels of access to many cultural activities.

We are here to make change happen for the people and communities we serve and over the next four years we will do this by accelerating the diverse professional, cultural, social and audience impacts of arts and disability in NSW. We will advance the careers and work of professional arts practitioners with disability in NSW by facilitating disability-led development and production partnerships, providing relevant training programs and advocating for more equitable employment policies and practices in the arts and cultural sector. By championing the unique and compelling creative visions of emerging and established arts practitioners with disability – as well as increasing their representation in all art form programming, workplaces and boards – we will be making a vital contribution to the diversity of cultural expression and leadership in NSW.

We will continue to develop audiences in NSW by educating industry and government about the cultural, social and economic benefits of making their programming, services and infrastructure more accessible for and inclusive of audiences with disability. Through strategic engagement and collaborations, we will encourage innovation and best practice in relation to universal access and design, delivering growth of audiences with disability across NSW. And by delivering multi-scale community forums and events, expanding our networks and partnerships, and building organisational relevance and capacity, we will strengthen our community’s vibrancy, influence, cohesion and resilience, ensuring the interests and aspirations of people with disability are a vital part of NSW’s cultural agenda into the future.

This Strategic Plan 2021-24 outlines the action we will take for the change we want to make. Importantly, this plan also outlines how we will measure the various approaches we will put in place to realise our strategic goals. As a very small organisation with limited financial resources, we have to be realistic about what we can achieve, and our KPIs reflect this. However, they also reflect the aspiration, confidence and enthusiasm of a community which boldly strives to make its mark and to have its voices understood, respected and celebrated. We are looking forward to working with all our stakeholders over the next four years as we work to invigorate the impact that people with disability have on the creative and cultural life of NSW by ensuring their contribution and participation remains vibrant, innovative and diverse.

**ABOUT US**

**Our Mission**

We advance the rights of and opportunities for people with disability and/or who are Deaf to develop and sustain professional careers in the arts and have equitable access to arts and culture across NSW.

**Our Vision**

Equity and excellence in arts, culture and disability.

**Our Values**

Equity | Excellence | Diversity | Creativity | Partnership

**ABOUT DISABILITY**

**Definition of Disability**

The *Disability Inclusion Act NSW* defines disability as "physical, psychiatric, intellectual or sensory impairment that, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder the person’s full and effective participation in the community on an equal basis with others.” Mental health is included in this definition. However, not everyone who is diagnosed with a mental health condition identifies as having disability. The term ‘disability’ can also include people who are Deaf or hard of hearing. People from the Deaf community may not always identify as having disability, and may identify as part of a cultural and linguistic group with their first language being Auslan (Australian Sign Language).

**Social Model of Disability**

The Social Model of Disability makes a distinction between an individual's medical condition and disability. Under this model, barriers and discrimination created by society are seen as the disabling factors which prevent or limit opportunities and participation. They may take the form of attitudes, discrimination or the physical environment. So, we use the term ‘disability’ to refer to barriers, rather than medical conditions. The Social Model looks at the environment instead of individuals and gives us all power over things we can change. From this perspective, a person is disabled not by who they are but by a world that is not equipped to allow them to fully participate and thrive.

**Arts & Disability In NSW**

One in five NSW residents live with disability or are Deaf, and many engage with the arts in a multitude of vital, unique and dynamic ways. However, when it comes to professional practice, arts practitioners with disability are under-represented, earn less, experience higher unemployment, and get much less professional support compared to artists without disability.

When it comes to audiences with disability, despite being enthusiastic consumers of arts and culture, many don’t experience equitable levels of access to many cultural activities. Across both groups, there is also a diverse intersection of cultural identities and geographic locations across all types of disability, including people who identify as First Nations, cultural and linguistically diverse, and sexuality and gender diverse, as well as people who live in Western Sydney and regional NSW.

We know that innovation is powered by distinctive insights, unique skills, and creative problem solving. This gives arts practitioners and audiences with disability a valuable edge in both the arts sector and cultural marketplace. However, it’s an advantage that is under-utilized or ignored. By being more inclusive of arts practitioners and audiences with disability, we will be able to tap into vital creative forces, elevate our society’s collective experience of art and culture, and build communities where everyone feels they belong.

**KEY STATS**

**Arts Practitioners With Disability In NSW**\*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **17,000** | in NSW |
| **Produce important work** | across all creative fields |
| **Under-represented professionally** | 9% of industry but 18% of population |
| **Earn 42% less** | than non-APWD |
| **25% more unemployed** | than non-APWD |
| **Under-represented culturally** | 4% of TV roles but 18% of population |

**Audiences With Disability In NSW\***

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| --- | --- |
| **Are attending more cultural events** | 78% of PWD in 2018 v 58% in 2009 |
| **Attend cultural events at higher rates** | 2% - 20% more than non-PWD across all art forms |
| **Have more positive attitudes to the arts** | 77% - PWD v 75% - non-PWD |
| **Experience barriers to participation**  | Physical | Technical | Social Attitudes Policies | Transport | Cost |
| **Experience more barriers in regional areas** | Less Cultural Activities | Remoteness |

*\*Research Overview, Arts and Disability In Australia, Meeting of Cultural Ministers, 2018*

**OUR IMPACT**

For over 33 years, Accessible Arts has been a leading force in shaping and advancing the intersection of arts, culture and disability in NSW. Through our various approaches to career advancement, audience development and community engagement, we’ve played a key role in accelerating and amplifying the diverse, dynamic and distinctive impact of disability on NSW’s creative industries and cultural activities.

In terms of arts practitioners, our work has been about evening up the professional playing field for artists and arts workers with disability as they do not always get to develop their careers in the same way as arts practitioners without disability due to discrimination, negative attitudes, and physical, social and technological barriers. Through our programs, services and partnerships, we have empowered thousands of artists and arts workers across all creative disciplines to produce or facilitate unique, powerful and important work that has advanced their careers, enhanced our understanding of living with disability, and transformed how our society experiences the arts. Through championing the work of artists with disability in NSW, we have also helped to grow audiences for their work within NSW as well as nationally and internationally.

In terms of audiences, our work has been focused on influencing industry and government to make cultural programming, services, infrastructure and policies more accessible for and inclusive of people with disability. Over three decades, our efforts have contributed to a range of important outcomes in relation to social equity, audience development and the evolution of creative practice. In terms of NSW’s arts and disability community, we are proud to have provided a vital focal point for over 30 years for community members to collaborate, communicate, and agitate around issues related to advancing arts and disability in NSW.

**OUR STAKEHOLDERS**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **People** | **Arts & Culture** | **Disability** | **Government** | **Education** |
| Arts practitioners with disability | Arts companies | Disability organisations | NSW Government | Universities |
| Audiences with disability | Cultural organisations and venues | NDIS | Local governments | Vocational and training organisations |
| Families and friends of people with disability | Festival and event producers | Carers and support workers | Government agencies and policymakers | Researchers |

**OUR PROGRAMS & SERVICES**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Career Advancement** | **Audience Development** | **Community Engagement** |
| Development & Production Initiatives | Industry Engagement  | Arts Activated Conference  |
| Internships/Mentorships | Industry Education | Artist Q&As  |
| Artist Residencies | Industry Advocacy  | Community Education  |
| Professional Development Workshops | Training Workshops | Community Liaison |
| Leadership Development Programs | Consulting Services | Community Representation (in cross government forums) |
| Industry Advocacy | Stakeholder Sector Engagement  | Stakeholder Consultations  |
| Networking Events | Sector Program Evaluation  | Networking Events  |
| Advisory Services  | Sector Program Innovation | Media & Comms  |

**KEY STATS (2019)**

* **105** arts practitioners with disability employed, supported or mentored
* **20** events produced or supported
* **1000** event participants
* **27** training sessions delivered
* **700** training participants
* **15** arts organisations provided with consulting services
* **42,000** social media engagements
* **13,000** social media followers
* **17,000** website visitors
* **3.8 staff** (full-time equivalent)

**TOWARDS 2024**

As Australia increases its understanding of and commitment to the enormous cultural, social and economic benefits of diversity and inclusion, NSW’s arts and creative industries have an abundance of opportunities over the next four years to maximise the extraordinary potential of arts practitioners and audiences with disability. We are here to help ensure that these opportunities are embraced by all our relevant stakeholders.

The unique perspectives and experiences of artists with disability – as well as the intersection of cultural identities across all types of disability – present exciting avenues for new artistic possibilities right across the spectrum of visual, performing, literary and digital arts. Accordingly, our programs and services will provide opportunities to engage with a diverse array of artists and cultural practitioners as well as foster valuable creative collaborations with a wide variety of arts organisations across the state. By unearthing new voices and modes of storytelling, and by supporting arts practitioners with disability to have sustainable and distinguished careers, we will be making a vital contribution to the diversity of cultural expression in NSW.

Through strategic engagement and collaborations with industry and government, we will encourage innovation and best practice in relation to universal access and design, delivering growth of audiences with disability across NSW. And by delivering multi-scale community forums and events, expanding our networks and partnerships, and building organisational relevance and capacity, we will strengthen our community’s vibrancy, influence, cohesion and resilience, ensuring the interests and aspirations of people with disability are a vital part of NSW’s cultural agenda into the future.

**STRATEGIC VALUES**

**Equity**

Human rights are not just about ‘equality,’ or treating everyone the same. Human rights are also about ‘equity’ which allows for beneficial treatment for some people so they can enjoy their human rights equally with others. This is an important principle of social justice and is the foundation of our strategic approach. Many people with disability do not enjoy the same access to opportunities, experiences, services and facilities across NSW’s arts and cultural sector. Everything we do is about shifting that balance in favour of fairness.

**Excellence**

While we acknowledge and celebrate the therapeutic value of creative pursuits for many people with disability, our primary focus as an organisation is on professional arts practice. This involves empowering arts practitioners with disability to strive for excellence within commercial creative industries and encouraging commercial creative industries to strive for excellence in relation to access for audiences with disability. We also acknowledge that in relation to creative practice, excellence can be a subjective measure and so we seek to enable all kinds of creative visions in all kinds of professional contexts.

**Diversity**

Diversity is a defining feature of both the arts and disability and so we value and celebrate the diverse talent, skill, creativity, ability, identity and life experience of people with disability. Accordingly, we work to enable as many people with disability as possible to create work for and participate in NSW’s creative industries and cultural activities.

**Creativity**

Original ideas, new perspectives and innovative approaches are intrinsic to advancing arts and culture. We recognise that creativity and imagination come in many different forms and can serve many different purposes, and so we work to provide as many opportunities as possible for the creativity of our community members to shine.

**Partnership**

As a small organisation with limited resources, we recognise that to achieve transformational change we need to work in partnership with a range of organisations, agencies and individuals. We seek out collaborators who share our vision and values, and we will work together with them in strategic and innovative ways to accomplish our organisational aims and deliver the best possible outcomes for the people and communities we serve.

**STRATEGIC GOALS**

**1. CAREER ADVANCEMENT**

**Increase representation, appreciation and career sustainability of arts practitioners with disability across all levels of NSW’s diverse spectrum of arts and cultural activities.**

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| **Objective** | **Outcome**  |
| **1.1** | **1.1** |
| Generate and facilitate professional employment and cultural leadership opportunities for arts practitioners with disability.  | Greater representation of people with disability as creators, leaders and workers within NSW’s arts and creative industries. |
| **1.2** | **1.2** |
| Decrease barriers to professional employment and cultural leadership for arts practitioners with disability. | A NSW arts and cultural sector that responds more effectively to the professional interests and aspirations of arts practitioners with disability in NSW. |
| **1.3** | **1.3** |
| Deliver professional and leadership development opportunities for arts practitioners with disability. | More opportunities for arts practitioners with disability to increase relevant knowledge, skills and networks. |
| **1.4** | **1.4** |
| Increase awareness of and regard for arts practitioners with disability and their work across NSW as well as nationally and internationally. | Greater understanding and appreciation in the broader community of the unique, innovative and compelling cultural impact of arts practitioners with disability  |

**2. AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT**

**Improve engagement with and understanding of people with disability in NSW as culturally and geographically diverse creators of, participants in and audiences for arts and cultural activities.**

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| **Objective** | **Outcome**  |
| **2.1** | **2.1** |
| Decrease barriers to the participation of people with disability across the programming, services, policies, infrastructure and digital assets of arts and cultural organisations. | A more effective response from organisations in NSW’s arts and cultural sector to the access requirements of audiences, visitors and other participants with disability. |
| **2.2** | **2.2** |
| Generate and facilitate opportunities for people with disability to participate equitably in arts and cultural activities, including those from First Nations backgrounds, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds and from Western Sydney and regional NSW. | People with disability – including from diverse cultural backgrounds and geographic locations – having increased access to and participation in arts and cultural activities. |
| **2.3** | **2.3** |
| Raise awareness of the benefits of delivering equitable participation of people with disability in arts and cultural activities | Increased understanding in the broader community of the health, cultural, social, and economic benefits of people with disability having full access to arts and cultural activities. |

**3. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

**Build a sustainable, engaged and influential arts and disability sector in NSW through effective leadership, diverse disability representation, strategic partnerships and best practice organisational operations.**

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| **Objective** | **Outcome**  |
| **3.1** | **3.1** |
| Deliver and participate in opportunities to share information and ideas that advance arts and disability in NSW. | A more vibrant, independent, informed and cohesive arts and disability sector in NSW. |
| **3.2** | **3.2** |
| Build the capacity, sustainability, influence and operational impact of Accessible Arts. | A more confident, better connected and financially stable organisation. |
| **3.3** | **3.3** |
| Increase the representation of people with disability across all areas of Accessible Arts’ operations. | More people with disability employed as staff, board members, advisors, consultants and event talent. |
| **3.4** | **3.4** |
| Ensure sound governance and management of Accessible Arts. | Improved performance across all relevant governance and management metrics. |

**IMPLEMENTATION & EVALUATION**

**Action Plan & Key Performance Indicators**

This strategic plan is linked to an action plan which details the full range of strategies we will employ to achieve the goals and objectives detailed in this document. All our key activities are linked to key performance indictors (KPIs) which have been set across the four-year duration of this plan. Our KPIs have been developed to be ambitious but achievable, not only in the specific context of arts and disability, but also in the context of a limited – but hopefully expanding – operational capacity.

**Program, Service & Event Evaluations**

Participant feedback and evaluation processes will be built into the delivery of all relevant Accessible Arts projects and activities. This includes participant surveys for activities such as our Arts Activated Conference, artist residencies and ATAG events. The feedback we receive will be used to continually improve the quality and relevance of our programs and services.

**Mid Term Review**

After two years, we will undertake a review of our strategic and action plans to ensure our strategic approach, operational activities and KPIs are relevant to the evolving needs and priorities of our stakeholders as well as our organisational capacity. This will involve consultation with relevant individuals and organisations across the arts and disability community as well as the broader NSW arts and cultural sector.

**Stakeholder Surveys**

We will commit to undertaking regular stakeholder surveys to allow individuals and organisations from the sector and our community to review our performance and provide relevant feedback and ideas so we can continually improve how we respond to the interests and aspirations of the people and communities we serve.

**CONTACT**

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