

SOCIAL INCLUSION IN THE ARTS

2017 PLAN



ACT
Government

CHIEF MINISTER, TREASURY,
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

The Australian Capital Territory is Ngunnawal Country. The ACT Government acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as the traditional custodians of the Canberra region. The region was also an important meeting place and significant to other Aboriginal groups. The ACT Government acknowledges the historical dispossession and its continuing legacy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Social Inclusion in the Arts: 2017 Plan (the Plan) outlines what is currently happening within a selection of ACT arts organisations to promote social inclusion and accessibility. The Plan provides details of what is currently happening and what we can do in the future to improve access and inclusion in arts events and programs. By implementing inclusion and access strategies, arts organisations can grow their audience and become open to artists with mixed abilities and diverse experiences. Currently, the ACT Government does not require organisations to report on inclusion and access. The Plan fills an information gap by providing a snapshot of what is currently happening within the ACT. Gathering this information is important to fulfil the 2015 ACT Arts Policy Principle 1: Participation and access to the arts.

To find out what is happening, we consulted arts organisations funded through the ACT Arts Fund. The consultation revealed that most organisations are already considering accessibility and inclusion in their programming and events. The ways in which organisations practice inclusivity differs depending on the capacity of the organisation and the content of programs and events. From the consultation, we also heard that organisations need support to implement inclusive and accessible programs and initiatives.

Collaboration is a major strength of the ACT arts sector. This strength can be capitalised to create inclusion. Some organisations already work with other organisations to provide programs for people with mixed abilities, experience of mental illness, and groups who experience difficulty accessing the arts. Some organisations already work with not-for-profits, charities or community organisations to facilitate tailored programs to specific members of the community. Providing access to more people opens up the potential of developing artistic skills or individuals. This works towards the 2015 Arts Policy Principle 2: Great art and great artists.

The ACT Government encourages continued collaboration between arts organisations, as well as working relationships with community organisations. Establishing relationships with community organisations will be important to gauge interest in arts events from the wider community. The support of community organisations will help to establish and build audiences.

Government can support organisations through information provision, funding and formal training.

The ACT Government will begin to gather information from organisations in order to continually improve and update the way we support organisations to move toward accessibility and inclusion. Through reporting and evaluation processes, we can continually improve access to the arts. The ACT Government recognises that organisations operate with limited staff and resources, and so alternative ways of gathering information will be implemented. This includes visiting organisations and having conversations about their initiatives as a form of reportage.

INTRODUCTION

The ACT Government is committed to an inclusive community through creating opportunities for social inclusion for those who experience barriers to access. The 2015 ACT Arts Policy reflects this commitment in Principle 1: Participation and access to the arts.

Focusing on the arts as a tool for social inclusion can deliver benefits such as building confidence in children to participate in the arts and create a long term audience, share and develop new ideas, express meaning within communities and create a place to share cultural values, and bring wider communities together over a shared experience.

It is important to acknowledge that this Plan aims to provide ideas for opening up the ACT arts community to people who want to participate but experience barriers to access. Objectives are based on outcomes for the arts through a wider audience reach and diversification of participation as audience and as practicing artists, rather than devising new programs for community development or therapeutic outcomes.

The Plan demonstrates the existing high importance placed on inclusivity within the arts community. However, there are still areas for improvement within the sector. This initial snapshot of inclusion and accessibility in 2017 provides a basis for building on existing initiatives as well as information sharing and collaboration across organisations.

PURPOSE

The Plan serves the following purposes:

- > Outline what is currently happening within the ACT arts sector.
- > Provide support and information for organisations to improve accessibility.
- > Provide a framework for organisations to report and evaluate their inclusion and accessibility.

The Plan will have a twofold benefit. Firstly, programs and events that are developed with accessibility in mind will open up the sector to a wider audience and to diverse artists. Secondly, arts organisations can realise their capacity to run programs and events that include people who experience barriers to accessing the arts. Through increased engagement, we can fulfil the 2015 ACT Arts Policy vision of being a diverse and dynamic arts ecology valued locally, nationally and globally.

OBJECTIVES

1. Increase participation within the arts sector through participation as audience and active involvement through making, performing and exhibiting.
2. Promote great art and great artists by opening up the mainstream arts sector to people who experience barriers to access.
3. Create a culture shift by asking how we can change aspects of the arts to allow greater access, including content, physical access and representation.

WHAT IS HAPPENING?

ACT arts organisations are working toward inclusion and accessibility through a number of initiatives. The organisations that provided information have varying capacities to deliver programs and events in terms of their staffing, budgets, venues and other resources. In this report, initiatives are categorised to aggregate the information collected.

This is not an exhaustive list of all initiatives and measures in place to include and provide access. The process of consultation allowed the arts organisations to consider what they currently do and what they would like to do. It also allowed the ACT Government to find out what organisations are doing and working towards. The consultation process uncovered many stories of how organisations connect with communities and open their spaces to people who experience difficulty accessing the arts. A few of these stories are told through case studies.

PARTICIPATION AS AUDIENCE

Participation as an audience member means experiencing the arts in a sensory manner, without being involved in making or doing. An example is viewing or hearing not acting or singing. Barriers to such participation include associated costs and potential negative feelings associated with arts events, such as intimidation.

Free tickets and events

Some organisations have procedures in place to offer free tickets to people who cannot afford to buy them. Most organisations have limited to no control over the ticket inventory of shows at their venues, which limits their ability to obtain free tickets. There are a number of ways organisations are currently obtaining and offering free tickets, which include:

- > Making free tickets a budget consideration at planning stages.
- > Collaborate with an organisation to assist financially to put aside free tickets.
- > Give paying patrons the opportunity to donate tickets or money toward tickets for people who cannot afford to buy tickets.
- > Give free tickets to charities or community organisations that can choose individuals for tickets to avoid self-identification.
- > Free exhibitions and free public programs that relate to the exhibitions such as curator talks or technical demonstrations.
- > Free performances and events.
- > Q&A or group discussions after shows or performances to encourage further engagement in the arts. This is happening with school aged groups currently.

Canberra Symphony Orchestra (CSO): HeartStrings

HeartStrings is a program that is funded through donations from the Orchestra's patrons and partners, and the ACT Government. HeartStrings provides tickets to individuals and families who would enjoy attending a concert but cannot because of financial restrictions, social isolation and other factors. CSO allocates donated tickets across various concert offerings and distributes them to registered charitable organisations, community organisations and not-for-profits, who then pass the tickets on to their nominated recipients. In 2016 CSO gave approximately 550 tickets through HeartStrings.

Accessibility

Considering accessibility is important to ensure those who want to participate as an audience member can, regardless of abilities. Some organisations are currently implementing measures to make events and venues accessible in a physical sense and in a social sense. While the ACT arts sector has a long way to go to being accessible, some organisations are working with people (living with disability) to improve their accessibility. The following are measures some organisations are currently taking:

- > Auslan interpreters at events and performances.
- > Asking artists and curators to consider from the beginning of planning how people with mixed abilities will be able to access their work, and how they can make their work more accessible.
- > Providing information on the levels of accessibility for different abilities, and ensuring this information is accurate.
- > Making available accessible formats of brochures, websites and other information.
- > Audio description.
- > Live captioning.
- > Wheelchair access and seating for people in wheelchairs.
- > Audio loops.
- > Being a Companion Card affiliate to ensure people who need a carer to attend events with them know their carer can attend for free.
- > Tactile and touch tours for people with sight impairment.
- > Relaxed performances for people with learning disabilities or sensory communication impairments, such as autism.
- > Having a medical team present if the demographic of the audience is at a higher risk of injury. For example, St John's Ambulance being present at an event with a high number of elderly people.
- > Warnings about the content of a show.

You Are Here Festival: Accessibility

Accessibility information and services allow people with mixed abilities to experience events to a fuller capacity. You Are Here Festival has worked to make their festival events more accessible to people with experiences of disability. Arrangements include Auslan interpretation, audio description of visual works, accessible formats for brochures and website, physical venue access information, tactile/touch tours for sight impaired, assistive listening, relaxed performances (designed to create a safe and welcoming space for patrons with learning disabilities and sensory communication impairments), and a rating of shows that are 100%, 75% and 50% visual content for those who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.

You Are Here Festival organisers select events for Auslan interpreting based on certain criteria including suitability of the event for Auslan interpretation (e.g. there is dialogue to be interpreted), time and date of the event (as this can affect whether the relevant community will be able to attend the event). Festival staff also have conversations with the artist presenting an event to ensure they understand the benefits of having the event interpreted, as sometimes use of interpretation can involve changes to event set up and technical requirements. Organisers also aim to present a diverse offering of events in accessible formats by considering different types of events and topics.

SUBSIDIES

Offering subsidies can create access to events and facilities for people to participate as audience, maker, or performer. Subsidies are being used in formal and informal ways in the ACT arts sector, and vary depending on the demographic of the organisation's patrons.

- > Concessions for card holders such as pension, seniors, students, and health care.
- > Bursary funds to allow students whose families cannot afford classes to stay in classes.
- > Case by case basis through self identification by advertising available tickets or places in workshops publicly.
- > Taking referrals from community groups for adults and children who would benefit from attending workshops however cannot afford fees.
- > Offering discounts on hiring exhibitions space to community organisations.
- > Offering alternative space to exhibit where an individual or group cannot afford to hire gallery space, such as a workshop, lobby or hallway space.
- > Companion Card affiliation. People who cannot attend events without a carer are able to receive a free ticket for their carer, as well as a concession price for their own.
- > Artist in residence programs give artists access to equipment and space they otherwise could not afford.
- > Rush tickets. Students can receive discounted tickets one hour before the beginning of a performance by presenting their student card.
- > Heavily subsidised tickets for school groups.
- > Low ticket prices for family and child oriented programming.

M16 Artspace: Workspace A

M16 Artspace exhibitions are free to attend, however they do charge a production fee for gallery space that includes multiple benefits to exhibitors. M16 assists smaller groups who cannot afford to hire gallery space to have shows and opening nights by allowing them to hire Workspace A as a gallery while a bigger exhibition is on in the main gallery space. Not only does this reduce the cost of venue hire, it also offers cross-pollination of audience, and allows the smaller group to benefit from the food and beverages supplied for opening night and experience their own opening night. M16 has offered this option to Hands On Studio, Palliative Care Australia, Canberra Art Workshop and numerous ACT school groups for exhibitions.

Canberra Theatre Centre: Children and Families

Canberra Theatre Centre offers a range of shows for children and families at low ticket prices, as well as heavily subsidised ticket prices for schools and teachers. Canberra Theatre Centre also programs matinee shows to coincide with the school day, and has introduced subsidised pricing for select evening performances to provide flexibility for teachers to access the theatre outside school hours. In the last financial year 13,351 students attended the theatre from 134 schools at subsidised ticket prices. These opportunities are also being offered to home schooled students.

ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT

Active involvement recognises that individuals have their own artistic practice or interest, as a hobby or as a profession. This includes making, volunteering, performance, exhibiting and other forms of active participation. A number of organisations have programs specifically for people who find accessing mainstream arts organisations difficult.

- > Post show discussions for youth or school groups.
- > Free public programs such as panel discussions where the audience can ask questions.

- > Diverse programming to show work of people who have a disability, lived experience or mental illness, or are been socially marginalised.
- > Free exhibition spaces.
- > Paying artists to exhibit.
- > Community and regional engagement programs where artists or performers go to areas or schools who have low access to the arts.
- > Programs for people who have a shared experience, such as Painting with Parkinson's.
- > Working with community groups to build an audience and tailor relevant programs to that audience.
- > Taking an integrated approach by supporting individuals to remain in programs or classes that are not specially for people with mixed abilities.

PhotoAccess: Community outreach

Through their community outreach program, PhotoAccess partners with community groups to run projects that are tailored to a particular group of people. In 2016 PhotoAccess partnered with a number of organisations to deliver specific programs. They partnered with the Domestic Violence Crisis Service to deliver a digital storytelling project for women who have experienced domestic violence and family violence. They also ran a digital storytelling project with Woden Community Service for The Big Issue Vendors. They ran point, shoot and self-publish programs with BAC in their Ignite program for people experiencing disability, and Blue Gum Community School for students in The Big Picture program. In 2017 PhotoAccess will partner with the Yuruana Centre at Canberra Institute of Technology, ACT Deafness Resource Centre, BAC, and Belconnen Community Service. PhotoAccess will also be working on a radio series on photography with ArtSound FM specifically designed for ArtSound's Silver Memories program and people with restricted access to social services and entertainment. PhotoAccess also has a long history of supporting Indigenous artists through their Indigenous Photomedia Artists Program, which supports one or more Indigenous artists each year to exhibit work in the Huw Davies Gallery. The exhibition coincides with NAIDOC week.

COLLABORATION ACROSS ORGANISATIONS

The ACT arts sector is in a unique position of being able to connect and collaborate across facilities and disciplines. The sector fosters strong collaborative relationships that result in the ability for organisations to offer programs that open up the sector to people who experience barriers to access. Collaborating across organisations gives participants the chance to engage with varied practices, and gives organisations the opportunity to benefit from each other's knowledge and practice.

- > Acting as an auspice organisation for small groups or individuals who have limited capacity, for example, in administrative duties.
- > Working with community organisations to create programs or classes for their clients or communities.
- > Engaging with other arts organisations to work across mediums to develop the skills of participants.
- > Donating free tickets for the venue to give to charities or community groups.
- > Reaching out to organisations or community groups to build working relationships.
- > Working with community organisations to offer working space to people who do not feel comfortable approaching arts organisations.
- > Working with cultural groups to diversify programming and build an audience.
- > Partnering with other arts organisations to create cross pollination of audience.

Belconnen Arts Centre: IGNITE

In addition to term based workshops for adults, children and school holiday programs, Belconnen Arts Centre (BAC) runs a suite of dedicated programs to involve and build the artistic capacity of people with mixed abilities and lived experience of mental illness. IGNITE: Alternative Arts Academy is a series of seven creative programs providing multiple entry points suitable for those interested in art as a hobby though to artists with established practices. The programs offer people with mixed abilities or lived experience of mental illness a variety of ways to be involved in arts from making and exhibiting to visiting cultural institutions and discovering how artists can utilise their facilities. The programs empower participants to build their sector awareness through practical application of skills, and learning how to access the facilities they need.

Many arts organisations work with BAC to deliver elements of the programs such as IGNITE: Connect. This is a series of short, concentrated programs in various disciplines that serve as an introduction to new art forms and media as well as the partner organisations: Canberra Glassworks, PhotoAccess, Megalo, Canberra Potters Society, Warehouse Circus, Young Music Society, and ACT Writers Centre. BAC also collaborates to deliver a range of other exhibitions, programs and community events with other organisations: Ausdance ACT, Belconnen Community Service, Paperworks, Rebus Theatre, and Hands on Studio.

IGNITE Room to Move is a dance class for people with mixed abilities which complements the Feel the Music: Dance for the Deaf and Hard-of-hearing; Dance for People with Parkinson's, Dance for People with Multiple Sclerosis and Vivacity -Dance for People with Dementia in BAC's new "Dance for Wellbeing" program. Relationships with BAC are not just beneficial for participants, but also for practitioners and organisations, as the experience of working with BAC strengthens their ability and will to deliver programs to people who experience disability and disadvantage.

KEY MESSAGES

- > Organisations want to implement programs that promote inclusion, however need assistance with information and implementation.
- > ACT arts organisations value diversity and inclusion in the arts.
- > There are effective initiatives currently underway in the ACT, however there needs to be a greater emphasis on the arts for all.
- > The more inclusive and accessible the arts are, the wider the audience.
- > Increased importance of the arts within the community will create a highly regarded sector.
- > Sustainable ways of implementing inclusion and accessibility will take time but are preferable to poorly executed rush jobs.
- > Identifying communities and individuals that experience difficulty in accessing the arts is complex, as is making connections to relevant arts mediums and organisations. Self-determination must come in to play when engaging with community.
- > Projects should prioritise excellence in art making as one of the main objectives where active participation occurs to maintain the quality of the ACT arts sector.

WHAT WE WILL DO

ENHANCE THE CULTURE

Arts organisations already have a commitment to inclusion and have indicated that they want to do more. There are a number of ways to enhance this culture. For example, the sector can continually improve accessibility by including measures in planning and funding applications. Accounting for accessibility measures in budgeting, reporting and evaluation is one way to deliver well thought out and meaningful programs or events.

Enhancing the culture means looking at how the arts are organised and how that excludes certain people. This includes physical spaces, the delivery of work and the content of work. Physical aspects, attitudes within the arts sector, how work is communicated and the social environment created around the arts should be considered from the beginning of planning stages.

Beginning change is a four step process.

1. Standard access. This includes requirements are in place for physical access, including signage and being able to move around a space.
2. Accessibility information. Supplying information about how accessible a venue or event is goes a step beyond requirements. Examples include detailed information about how accessible a venue is, trigger warnings for people with sensory impairments, and ratings for how much of a performance's content relies on visual to inform people with vision impairments.
3. Accountability. Making sure you do what you say you will. This includes making sure the reality of a situation matches what public information says.
4. Inclusion and representation. Ensure people from the community are included in consultation, employment, and in the content of shows and events.

Going beyond access and providing information is to make accessibility part of the content of work. As part of their planning stages, curators, producers and artists can ask, how can accessibility be integrated into the artistic process? Who will not be able to experience this work due to their abilities, and how can someone who experience senses in isolation access the work?

Case Study: The Sublimation Project

The Sublimation Project was programmed as part of the You Are Here Festival in 2017. The project saw four artists who were already involved in the festival paired with another artist chosen by Daniel Savage, the artist running the project. The chosen artists were asked to translate the works and performances they were paired with into a different medium creating a new work that involved a different sensory experience. For example a sight piece into sound or 2D into physical tactile piece. The project aimed to recreate art works from their first medium that may not be accessible for someone with a disability, to another medium that could provide a similar experience using a different sense. The project also aimed to create something that was interesting for someone who experiences both senses resulting in a work that engages all audiences regardless of ability.

The work demonstrated how people engage with the world differently, but can have similar experiences. It also aimed to give the audience a way to understand how someone experiences senses in isolation. The project had three major goals. The first goal was for the audience to experience and think about accessibility issues beyond their own capabilities. Second, to expose artists to different ideas, and to think about their own practice at the development stages in terms of how it is accessible to people with mixed abilities. Finally, to test an experimental new way of making arts and arts events more accessible to people with disabilities.

TRAIN STAFF

The ACT Government can support funded organisations through assisting in the delivery of training programs that address barriers of cultural awareness and working with vulnerable people. As each funded organisation will work with different groups, developing training opportunities will happen through a consultation process with organisations and within the ACT Government.

PROVIDE INFORMATION

The ACT Government will provide information online to assist organisations in first steps toward inclusion and access. Pages on the artsACT website will be set up and regularly updated to provide organisations with relevant information in areas such as accessibility, sponsorship opportunities, and alternative funding.

ENCOURAGE COLLABORATION AND CONNECTIONS

ACT arts organisations already collaborate across organisations and with community. This is a strength of the sector. Collaborating is providing artists with opportunities to improve their skills, and creating inclusion and access. We encourage organisations to continue to work collaboratively, and to build relationships with community groups.

Working with community organisations is important to establish an audience and discover their needs and interests, and to ensure the audience is aware of accessible opportunities. Involving the community during consultation, in employment and in exhibitions and performances is necessary. This ensures the content is relevant to the audience, the community is represented, and builds trust with the arts community.

COLLECT DATA THROUGH CONVERSATIONS

Acknowledging that many funded organisations operate with limited staff and are already stretched in their output capacity, the ACT Government can explore alternatives to written reporting for gathering more in depth information. Visiting arts organisations for meetings can provide an open dialogue that can take less time than a written report but still supply rich qualitative data. Funded organisations can also keep the ACT Government informed of relevant stories or case studies as they arise to reduce the amount of reporting at the end of the reporting cycle.

WHY WE NEED INFORMATION

The ACT Government can gain an overall perspective of how the ACT arts sector ensures access to arts events. We can continually improve access and inclusion by collecting information and evaluating approaches.

Receiving regular and detailed feedback from organisations assists the ACT Government in demonstrating the value of the arts to the wider community, and the benefit of artistic practice to individuals.

The ACT Government will seek the permission of the supplying organisation before making any information public. Reasons the ACT Government may want to make information public include profiling an organisation's success story on the CBR Arts Showcase section of the artsACT website, or using a success story as a case study for other arts organisations. Organisations can preface information supplied as for internal use only.

APPENDIX A: HELPFUL HINTS FOR REPORTING

Reporting on and evaluating programs or events with social inclusion in mind will assist organisations and Government to identify successes and areas for improvement.

Although reporting on inclusion and access is not a mandatory requirement for organisations funded through the ACT Arts Fund, the following information provides some helpful hints on what kind of information to collect and how to do it.

In order to enhance the culture of accessibility and inclusion, organisations can build mechanisms into the beginning of project planning. Considering accessibility and inclusion early in planning will encourage meaningful commitments and better outcomes.

QUANTITATIVE DATA

Quantitative data is information that can be measured and written down with numbers.

Simple ways in which to collect quantitative data could include:

- > head counts at each activity to monitor attendance and participation rates; and/or
- > surveys to attendees via email correspondence or in person.

You could use a table like the one below to assist with both the planning and reporting process. This gives us an overview of what is happening, as well as the ability to aggregate data across organisations.

Please note that the examples included in the table are not exhaustive.

NAME OF ACTIVITY	INITIATIVE	BARRIERS ADDRESSED	TARGET COMMUNITY	NO OF PEOPLE ENGAGED
	For example: - Free tickets - Discounted tickets - Pay what you can - Free performance and event - Free public program - Bursary - Access program	For example: - Financial - Physical access - Content access - Awareness	For example: - Low income - Children - Students - Concession card holders - Seniors - People with disability - Disadvantaged schools - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples - Refugees - Region - General	

QUALITATIVE DATA

Qualitative data is typically descriptive data and is harder to analyse than quantitative data.

Qualitative data will provide a more detailed picture of social inclusion and tells the stories of how the arts impact individuals and groups. More detail creates more accurate reporting.

Simple ways in which to collect quantitative data could include:

- > feedback from participants or community organisations involved;
- > survey participants, if appropriate;
- > casual conversations with participants, if appropriate;
- > relationships with community organisations;
- > longitudinal success of a program (e.g. improvement of the artistic practice of a participant); and/or
- > meaningful outcomes generated from the program (e.g. leading to employment for a participant).

Qualitative data is usually best expressed in a written format, such as a case study, or in a visual format such as a video.

ACCESSIBILITY

The ACT Government is committed to making its information, services, events and venues as accessible as possible.

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