



The peak body for arts & disability

**Arts Access Australia**

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## PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION 2022-2023 TO THE TREASURY

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Arts Access Australia welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the identification of priorities for the 2022-23 Federal Budget.

### Who we are

Arts Access Australia (**AAA**) is the peak national body for arts and disability. Established in 1992, AAA is a disability-led company limited by guarantee, registered under the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission Act 2012, and governed by a volunteer board. It is also recognised by the Australian Taxation Office as a “public benevolent institution”, and has “deductible gift recipient” status.

We act and speak on behalf of Australian artists, arts workers, participants and audiences with disability, at the national level, to increase opportunities to fully participate in, and contribute to, Australian arts and culture. We do this through systemic advocacy, sector development and representation, and information provision. It is an important part of our mission to lead on sustainable artistic practice, professional and career development, and leadership opportunities for artists and arts workers with disability who are forging professional careers or making art through creative community connections, to create space to share their own stories, or inform and challenge audiences.

We are unique because we work with people with disability in all areas of the arts, with all art forms, all age groups, and across all experiences of disabling barriers. We work in collaboration with our members throughout Australia.

Our members include the State and Territory arts and disability bodies, disability and mainstream arts organisations, disability services, and individual artists and arts-workers with disability (and more).

We have an inclusive approach to disability, and have adopted the social model of disability, which is a way of viewing the world and disability, developed by people with disability. The social model of disability says that people with disability are prevented from participating fully, and on an equal basis with others, because of systemic, attitudinal, environmental and other barriers in society, such as buildings not having accessible toilets, or people’s attitudes,

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*AAA acknowledges Aboriginal people as the traditional custodians of Australia and we pay our respects to elders past and present.*

like assuming people with disability can't do certain things. The social model helps us recognise barriers that make life harder for people with disability. Removing these barriers creates equality and offers people with disability more independence, choice and control.

When we say we work with 'people with disability', we mean anyone who is Deaf, with learning disabilities or sensory, physical, hidden or mental health conditions.

We also work with people without disability, arts and cultural organisations, and others within the wider arts and disability sectors.

### Context of this submission

This submission, and our identification of priorities for the 2022-23 Federal Budget, is framed by reference to AAA's vision and mission, and is made in the context of:

1. the release by the Department of Social Services, on 3 December 2021, of:
  - a) Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031 (Strategy)<sup>1</sup> and
  - b) Employ My Ability, the Disability Employment Strategy, an Associated Plan of the Strategy<sup>2</sup>
2. the continuing work by the Office for the Arts (within the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications) (OfA) in "developing a Commonwealth-only National Arts and Disability Associated Plan (the Associated Plan) under the (Strategy) to drive improved outcomes for people with disability in the arts at a Commonwealth level".<sup>3</sup>
3. the "strategic direction statement" of the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications (**Department**), specifically:
  - a) the Department's purpose of "supporting sustainable and inclusive creative and cultural sectors, and protecting and promoting Australian content and culture"<sup>4</sup>
  - b) Outcome 6 ("participation in, and access to, Australia's arts and culture through developing and supporting cultural expression")<sup>5</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.dss.gov.au/disability-and-carers/a-new-national-disability-strategy>, accessed 28 January 2022

<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.dss.gov.au/disability-and-carers/disability-employment-strategy>, accessed 28 January 2022

<sup>3</sup> Email from M Gunnell, Assistant Secretary, Arts Access and Participation, Office for the Arts to M Hall, CEO, Arts Access Australia "Update on National Arts and Disability Strategy" dated 29 October 2021.

<sup>4</sup> See Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications "Entity resources and planned performance", Portfolio Budget Statements 2021-22, p.24, found at [https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/department/statements/2021\\_2022/budget](https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/department/statements/2021_2022/budget), accessed 27 January 2022.

<sup>5</sup> ibid. p81.

- c) the objective of the Department's Arts and Cultural Development Program ("to provide an environment in which all Australians can access and benefit from creative experiences and culture, supporting inclusiveness and growth in Australia's creative sector, and protecting and promoting Australian content and culture")<sup>6</sup>
- d) the Department's performance measures (in 2020-2021) of the "impact of our arts and cultural activities to support inclusion of people with disability"<sup>7</sup>, and (in 2021-2022 and beyond) of "progress against the National Arts and Disability Strategy"<sup>8</sup>

The Strategy is focused on interrelated outcome areas with "tangible, achievable policy priorities" and inbuilt rigorous measuring, evaluation and reporting of outcomes. It represents the Government's commitment to enabling every Australian to meet their potential, to achieve, to have a fair go and to have real choices.<sup>9</sup>

Under the Strategy, Associated Plans are focused on improving aspects of Australian life (e.g. the arts sector) and provide a more coordinated, long term approach to how governments work to improve outcomes for people with disability. An Associated Plan generally runs for three to ten years. All Associated Plans must clearly identify how they contribute to achieving the outcomes of the Strategy.<sup>10</sup>

OftA has advised us that, once publically released, OftA will undertake limited public consultation in relation to the Associated Plan. OftA has not yet indicated when it will release the Associated Plan, when it will undertake consultation on that plan, and the timetable for implementation of the plan. Based on discussions with OftA, we understand that OftA is planning to release the Associated Plan for consultation in Q3 of 2021-2022, and undertake and complete consultation by the end of Q4. However, the timing depends entirely on the decision of the Minister, who has made (as far as we are aware) no public statements as to that timing.

For the purposes of this submission, we assume that OftA is currently funded to develop the Associated plan and to undertake the proposed further public consultation on the Associated Plan (once released) under the 2021-2022 Budget. However, to the extent to which that process is not complete by 30 June 2022, we strongly urge the Government to fund completion in the 2022-2023 Budget.

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<sup>6</sup> *ibid.* p.84.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.* p.85.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.* p.86.

<sup>9</sup> Department of Social Services, *Summary of Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031*, p.1, found at <https://www.disabilitygateway.gov.au/ads>, accessed 14 January 2022.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.* p.11.

This approach is focused solely on actions by the Australian Government. Other jurisdictions remain responsible and have an important role to play in improving opportunities for people with disability to engage with and participate in the arts. The Associated Plan will set an ambitious vision and goals for all governments to aspire to, and OftA expects all other jurisdictions to develop and implement their own Associated Plan for the arts sector under the Strategy, to respond to the specific priorities and needs of their local communities.

However, there is currently no coordination of policy or the development of these separate plans, and no mechanisms for consistency, common goals, and accountability in development and implementation. Now that the Meeting of Cultural Ministers no longer occurs, any coordination only occurs at the level of Department officials.

Government will use public reporting, governance and evaluation to determine if the Strategy is changing the lives of people with disability.

The Australian government will publish an annual Targeted Action Plans Report covering implementation progress, successes, and overall status, and an annual Outcomes Framework (Dashboard), which will feature high-level data against the outcomes of the Strategy.<sup>11</sup> However, there are currently no reporting obligations in respect of any Associated Plans, other than in the limited context of:

- (a) the biennial Implementation Report, on progress against disability initiatives at all levels of government, and
- (b) the two Major Evaluation Reports (produced in 2025 and 2029) informed by an independent review into the extent to which the Strategy is delivering improvements for people with disability.

### Principle recommendation

It is within this context that we urge the Government to ensure:

1. sufficient funding is allocated under the 2022-2023 Budget and forward estimates to maximise the opportunities for significant, sustainable improvements in disability access and inclusion consistent with the with Guiding Principles and Outcome Areas of the Strategy and Employ My Ability, and
2. the development, implementation and monitoring of the arts and disability Associated Plan is sufficiently resourced, and funded, so as to maximise its potential to improve opportunities for people with disability to engage with and participate in the arts, as artists, arts workers and audiences.

This is consistent with the Department's performance measure for 2021-2022 and beyond of "progress against the National Arts and Disability Strategy". However, we believe that the

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<sup>11</sup> ibid. p.12.

Department must be more ambitious in the targets it sets to measure its level of achievement for 2022-23 and beyond<sup>12</sup>.

### Specific recommendations

In particular, we recommend that the Government:

1. develops a National Arts, Culture, Creativity and Entertainment Plan, that it is consistent with, and advances the objects of the Strategy and the arts and disability Associated Plan and that complies with the Government's Evaluation Good Practice Guide Checklist<sup>13</sup>
2. funds the OftA, in this budget, and across the forward estimates for the entire term of the Associated Plan, to:
  - (a) implement, monitor, evaluate and report (at least annually) on the Associated Plan, and the ways in which the policies and activities under the plan are delivering improved outcomes for people with disability
  - (b) establish, and implement a process to coordinate arts and disability policy among the Commonwealth and the States and Territories and the development, implementation, evaluation and of the separate arts and disability Associated Plans of each of the States and Territories, including practical, effective mechanisms for consistency, common goals, and accountability in development and implementation, and in data collection, analysis and reporting
  - (c) establish a formal process to engage with the arts sector and people with disability, in order to provide ways for people with disability and the sector to tell government what they think the Strategy and the arts and disability Associated Plans need to do, and to provide a mechanism to provide that feedback to the Advisory Council that will be established under the Strategy
  - (d) establish an independent service that will develop (with the involvement and agency of people with disability) and provide information, advice, education, training and supporting resources to the arts and cultural sector to provide practical assistance to arts organisations to better understand issues of disability access and inclusion, and the actions that can be taken to improve disability access and inclusion within their operations, programs, workforces, physical and digital infrastructure and disability arts projects
3. funds the Australia Council for the Arts and Screen Australia in this budget, and across the forward estimates for the entire term of the Associated Plan, to establish specific funding programs to assist Australian arts organisations to improve disability access and inclusion within their operations, programs, workforces, physical and digital infrastructure and disability arts projects

4. funds each of

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<sup>12</sup> note 8, "Strategy implemented, including maintaining the arts and disability resource hub".

<sup>13</sup> See <https://www.disabilitygateway.gov.au/document/3131>, accessed 28 January 2022.

- (a) Australian Film, Television and Radio School
- (b) Australian National Maritime Museum
- (c) National Film and Sound Archive of Australia
- (d) National Gallery Australia
- (e) National Library Australia
- (f) National Museum Australia
- (g) National Portrait Gallery of Australia,

in this budget, and across the forward estimates for the entire term of the Associated Plan, to improve disability access and inclusion within their operations, programs, workforces, physical and digital infrastructure and disability arts projects

- 5. funds the Australia Council for the Arts and Screen Australia in this budget, and across the forward estimates for the entire term of the Associated Plan, to establish specific funding programs to provide assistance to artists and arts workers with disability to access their other funding programs for artists and arts workers
- 6. funds the Australia Council for the Arts and Screen Australia in this budget, and across the forward estimates for the entire term of the Associated Plan, investigate, and make recommendations to Government, on the establishment of a funding program that exclusively funds arts and cultural activities and projects produced and presented by artists with disability, or that are disability-led
- 7. funds the Australia Australia Council for the Arts and Screen Australia in this budget, and across the forward estimates for the entire term of the Associated Plan, to develop, and implement a plan to increase the number of members of peer assessment panels who are artists with disability, and to provide assistance to, and encourage, artists with disability to apply to become members of those peer assessment panels.
- 8. in relation to education:
  - (a) provides a more equitable higher education and vocational training system
  - (b) ensures that any increased Federal Government fees for arts courses see funds make their way to departments delivering the curriculum, and
  - (c) allocates specific funding within the higher education and vocational training budget funding to improve pathways and accessibility to further education and training in the arts for people with disability, and to increase opportunities for artists and arts workers with disability to participate in accessible and inclusive lifelong learning, and professional development, consistent with, and that will advance, the education and learning Outcome Area of the Strategy, and provide greater employment opportunities, consistent with the Disability Employment Strategy. This includes providing funding to arts organisations to provide clear

career development pathways and professional development and “on the job” learning opportunities for artists and arts workers with disability.