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<b>Paper Name:</b>	Beyond Arts and Disability		
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Not since 1972 has Australia, seen the roll out of new Federal policy directions at such a rate.

Policies that at that time resulted in new civil rights and social support programs for:

- Single mothers
- Aboriginal people
- The unemployed
- Children
- The aged

Policies that continue to underpin Australian social policy today.

Right now we are at similar point, where Disability policy frameworks are set to re-align Australia's social and political response around the contemporary needs of people with disabilities.

History can do many things. Firstly it can show us that the past is never the story of smooth, unproblematic progress.

Advances in every field can be reversed, optimism replaced by pessimism; we can go backwards just as easily as we can go forwards.'

And in going forward we have seen areas of cultural practice such as Arts and Disability, highlighting critical issues in our society.

Invisibility is dangerous and relegates people with disabilities into the arena of the forgotten, the hidden the unseen, leaving people well off the broader political and social agenda.

We have come a long way towards cultural inclusion but need too collectively find ways to put people with a disability in the centre of our conversations in relation to disability.

The arts are for me a critical way in empowering people with disabilities to initiate, lead and sustain the disability dialogue.

Yet at this pivotal time in modern Australian history, where the National Social Inclusion agenda is set to permeate every arm of Government policy and literally change the opportunities available for Australians with a disability. I have begun to wonder what our cultural landscape will look like as we move beyond Arts and Disability into the prospect of a fully inclusive cultural environment.

There is growing debate within the disability movement: should social policy be concerned with enabling disabled people to fit more easily into the world as it is or should the world be altered to take account of disabled people's needs?

The movement itself - organisations of, and for, disabled people - divides between reformers, who challenge the status quo by arguing for incremental policy improvements, and radicals, who sometimes advocate direct action in favour of fundamental policy change.

These differences underline many of the critiques of current policies which have been produced and thus account for the variation in approach. There is growing debate within the disability movement: should social policy be concerned with enabling disabled people to fit more easily into the world as it is or should the world be altered to take account of disabled people's needs?

This paper is focused on a point in time which I feel could be nigh.

The point in time, when the practice of Arts and Disability could become harmonized within mainstream Arts practice.

The point where the Australian cultural and Training sectors adapt to enable people with a disability to fit more easily as the alternative, just has not worked.

Pre the Federal Governments endorsement of the National Arts and Disability Strategy I was invited to provide comment on the draft, following the strategies endorsement – there was much celebration across the National Arts and Disability sector.

Yet in all honesty at this time I've held back on the opportunity to celebrate.

In part today I want to share with you my thinking on the National Arts and Disability Strategy.

The following is a direct lift from my communication with the Federal Government on the National Arts and Disability Strategy.

I have reviewed the strategy and commend your Department upon the initiative, however I am concerned that a significant resource allocation will be required if the strategy is to maximize the full leverage potential within the national Arts and training sectors.

As yet there is no clear communication of resources attached to the draft strategy from Government. Nearly six months after the launch of the strategy, this still remains the case.

At present however, of the priority projects identified, there is limited focus on the professional development needs of emerging artists with disabilities, or those people with disabilities currently engaged within the Arts.

Rather the strategy focuses on support for 'outstanding' artists with disabilities and the developmental needs, of children and young people with disabilities.

Adult artists with disabilities and/ or mental illness face significant barriers in reaching their full potential:

- Retention rates of people with disabilities in the tertiary training sector are well below that of the broader population. Of the 5 recognized equity groups in vocational education and training (VET) women, indigenous people and people with a disability.
- As a whole people with a disability have the lowest levels of educational achievement and employment outcomes from VET.
- As a whole, students with a disability in VET have prior schooling education levels strikingly far below all other VET students. About 55% of all people with a disability have left school at or before the end of Year 10 , compared with 40% of all VET students. This suggests that developing educational pathways before Year 10 for people with a disability is important as part of an early intervention approach.
- As a whole, people with a disability are less likely to undertake/ attain higher – level Australian Qualifications Framework qualifications (Such as diplomas and certificate 3's) and are more likely to undertake / achieve certificate 1 or 2 qualifications: their subject completion rates are lower than of students with no declared disability.

It is important that broad and supportive pathways to formal Arts training and accreditation for adults with a disability wishing to progress into skilled roles within the Arts be a strong feature of the strategy.

A combination of accredited tertiary training and Arts industry based mentorships or traineeships should be explored as a strategy to support adults with disabilities to progress and develop meaningful roles and employment within the Australian Arts sector.

Without a clear training strategy, people with disabilities will remain captured within Community Arts, Arts and Health and therapeutic Arts programs, over

extended years of engagement with little or no chance of progressing into valued roles within the mainstream Arts sector.

The capacity of artists with disabilities to fully engage in the national Social Inclusion Policy direction of Government will be limited.

Clearly the public consultation undertaken in the development of the strategy demonstrates this:

I quote:

- “The need for flexible models of support for artists with a disability to support mainstream inclusion.”
- “The importance of creative pathways into the arts for people with a disability from education and training through to enterprise, employment and governance.”

Yet in its' present form the National Disability Arts Strategy fails to fully respond to the key points above.

Goal Four states ‘Strengthen pathways into the creative sector and employment opportunities for artists and arts workers with a disability, overall the strategy is underpinned by five broad strategies , yet I fear without clear actions, Key Performance Indicators and objectives, people with disabilities will simply left with more of the same.

The National Arts and Disability Strategy has the potential to offer a nationally coordinated approach to Australian Arts and Disability practices, however fails to sight who will hold carriage of the strategy, lacks evidence of resource allocations or working strategies to support the sector in truly participating within the strategy.

Pathways into the Arts as artists, performers and administrators continue to remain a significant barrier to participation for artists with disabilities.

There exists limited supported opportunities for individuals with disabilities who want to work in the arts to gain entry, access training, mentoring and or professional development and employment, apart from leadership opportunities, such as the Department of Culture and the Arts (DCA's) Artists with a Disability Grants Program .

There exists few Arts companies within Australia who have built a strong history of supporting the professional development needs of artists with disabilities, Restless Dance (SA), Back To Back, (VIC), DADAA Inc (WA), Tutti Ensemble (SA) and Arts Project Australia (VIC) are stand out examples of organizations

offering sustained and individualized pathways into the professional arts for artists with disabilities and or mental illness.

There exists real opportunity at this time for Arts Access Australia and it's member organisations to work with the CMC, towards a nationally coordinated approach to underpin and support the national arts sector's move towards inclusion.

Arts sector needs that I am aware of that need to be considered in moving the Draft National Disability Arts Strategy towards a working operational tool include:

#### Training and Professional Development

- Customized Disability Awareness Training as a key to building capacity to undertake meaningful cultural engagement with people with disabilities and or mental illness.
- Access to operational Policies and Procedures that align the Arts sectors operations with current Disability and Mental Health Standards.
- Access to resources and best practice models that maximize organizations capacity to address emergent issues such as:
  - Duty of Care
  - Risk Management
  - Adaptive Communication
  - Disability support
- Pathways for Artists with Disabilities into the professional and or community arts sector
  - Strategies for Artistic Directors and professional CCD artists to identify emerging artists with disabilities is an existing gap, that impacts upon the underrepresentation of professional working artists with disabilities in the Australia Cultural industry.
  - Broad consideration of further strategies at State and national levels such as Department of Culture and the Arts (Department of Culture and the Arts) Grants program for Artists with Disabilities, which was developed in 2008 as part of a long term partnership between Department of Culture and the Arts and the Disability Services Commission to increase participation and access to mainstream arts and cultural services.
  - Replication of this funding model needs to be developed to maximize cultural entry points for artists with a disability that offer real participation as trainees, mentees, artists in their own right and resource and stimulate artists with disabilities to in the long term enter the mainstream arts industry.

- The current uncoordinated approach leaves artists with disabilities with limited formal access to the Arts and Cultural industry, there exists real potential within the National Arts and Disability Strategy for targeted resources to address barriers to Arts Practice and professional development.
- Compounding this are the significant barriers to the built environment of the nation's cultural infrastructure, many companies currently operate from listed heritage buildings that are largely inaccessible:
- In addition strategies need to be considered to address the current barriers within the Arts sector to maximize inclusion and communication with people with disabilities and / or mental illness, current barriers include:
  - Limited knowledge of interpretive communication needs and supports required when working with people with disabilities.
  - Limited awareness of basic disability communication protocols, for example the need to work with interpreters when consulting with or working directly with the deaf community and minimal language strategies for people with intellectual disabilities.
  - Limited awareness of digital communication access standards and ratings.
  - Limited awareness of the role of the disability sector peak bodies in supporting / brokering communication between people with disabilities and the Arts sector.
  - Limited awareness of the potential for the Arts sector to utilize the significant marketing and communications platforms that already exists within the disability and mental health sector.
  - Need for internal communications strategies to support whole of organisational buy-in and commitment to the DAP process.

To maximize the sustainability of inclusive cultural practices and the strategies contained within the National Disability Arts Strategy, significant advocacy needs to be undertaken by government at both Federal and State Levels to build awareness in the Disability and Mental Health sectors of the Australian cultural sector's formal move towards inclusive cultural practices.

The scale and scope of the Australian Disability and Mental Health sectors combined with their expertise and resources offers a significant opportunity for the Australian Arts sector to sustain, resource and support inclusive cultural activity. High level discussion between the Arts and Disability arms of

government is to be encouraged as a key to informing the disability sector of this new national cultural direction to ensure that supports and partnership opportunities from within the disability sector are available to arts companies and organisations as they work towards an inclusive operating environment.

Partnership resources and toolkits would greatly assist the arts sector in brokering and sustaining partnerships within and across the disability and mental health sectors.

- Development of a practical **Disability Arts toolkit**, to support staff of Arts organisations to engage with the disability community as participants, employees, artists and audiences.
- **DAP Checklists** participants requested that a simple checklist be developed to support them in self assessing that the required compliance needs of their DAPs have been met.
  
- **Inclusive Consultation Strategy and resources** to assist the Arts sector in undertaking meaningful and appropriate consultation with people with disabilities, both as a key step in developing and confirming organisational Disability Action Plans and undertaking ongoing consultation with the sector.
- **Sample DAPS** participants requested access to leading examples of Disability Action Plans from within the Australian Arts and Cultural sector.
  
- Case Studies of Best Practice of Inclusive Cultural Practices – development of a document that provides contemporary Australian examples of inclusive cultural practices.
  
- The Australia Council for the Arts funded, Arts Access Australia in 2005 to produce **Making the Journey Arts & Disability in Australia**, It may be timely for Arts Access Australia and the CMC to develop a future promotions strategy of this resource across the sector. And /or consider the production of a current publication, as a key to stimulating broad sector awareness of the potential of Arts and Disability practices.

Additional point for consideration within the National Disability Arts Strategy

- Advocacy and communications @ Governance and senior Management levels across Funded organizations

- Cultural Ministers Council to consider the development and implementation of a communications strategy to all Boards and Managers of Key and Multi -year funded organisations with the objective of communicating responsibilities and required actions in line with the DDA and State and Federal Disability legislation.
- National Disability Arts Resource Centre
  - The CMC to develop a **stop digital resource one** designed to provide the national Arts sector with, the tools and resources to best support the sector in working to meet their compliance under State, National Arts Disability strategies (CMC) and the Australia Council for the Arts Disability Action plan obligations.
  - The digital resource may be developed to provide Arts organisations and artists with access to:
    - DAP resources
    - DAP checklist
    - Disability consultation tools and resources
    - Inclusive policy frameworks and operating procedures
    - Overview of the legislative environment
    - Examples of best practice in Arts & Disability / Arts & Health
    - Sample Arts sector DAPS
    - Disability sector partnership resources
    - Disability Awareness Training resources
    - Peak Disability/ Mental Health sector contacts
    - Guide lines for Arts and Disability/ Arts and Health practice
    - Overview of Disability policy intersection
    - Communication strategies to best support communication between the Australian Arts and Australian Disability /Mental Health sectors.
    - Information access for the Arts sector to confirm progress, raise questions, dialogue RE DAP and inclusive cultural practices.
    - Access guides for company websites, communications, venues and FOH
    - Access standards for the built environment and venues
    - Companion Card information
    - Strategies through which to promote and market accessibility to new audiences
    - How to Guides RE Marketing to people with disabilities.

This may be an obvious role for Arts Access Australia in partnership with the Australia Council for the Arts and State Arts Departments and a key strategy for

the development and rolling out of the **National Disability Arts Strategy**. And ultimately provide alignment with the Underlying Principles of the CMC National Disability Arts Strategy.

Last year I had the opportunity to undertake a contract for the Australia Council for the Arts, within the South Australian, Victorian and New South Wales Arts sector to:

- Stimulate approaches to Disability Action Planning
- Map the level of inclusive cultural practices underway within key organizations
- Explore social Inclusion within the Australian Arts Context.

This provided me with a fascinating insight into:

- The high level of inclusive practices currently underway within the mainstream Arts sector
- And importantly provided me with a very strong awareness of the needs of the mainstream Australian Arts sector in relation to the inclusion of people with disabilities as:
  - Audiences
  - Artists and performers
  - Employees
  - And creative collaborators.

The national Arts Disability Action Planning training program, was undertaken as a key deliverable of the Australia Council for the Arts Disability Action Plan:

In line with current Australian disability policy the training program worked from the perspective of the social model for disability. This understands disability as a problem of exclusion from everyday life, requiring a change in society's values and practices in order to remove attitudinal and environment barriers to participation.

Objectives:

- Provide staff of participating Arts and Cultural organizations with guiding principles under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) as a key to inform and guide interaction between the Australian Arts and Cultural sector and people with disabilities.
- Improve the Australian Arts and Cultural sectors capacity to provide and promote inclusive services.
- Proactively engage and support participating organisation's to commence the development of customized Disability Action Plans ( DAPs)
- Align the sector's understanding of the Disability Action Planning process with Federal and State legislative requirements and the broader National Social Inclusion policy agenda; and The Cultural Ministers Council (CMC) agreed National Arts & Disability Strategy.

- Broaden funded organisation's understanding of the significant work undertaken by the Australia Council for the Arts in relation to the development of Council's Disability Action Plan.
- Map and report to the Australia Council for the Arts and participating State Arts Departments feedback from the sector in relation to inclusive cultural services currently undertaken, along with the barriers identified by the sector in resourcing their Disability Action Plans ( DAPs).

What I witnessed was a significant commitment to inclusive practice within participating arts organizations, against a background of a largely an informal move towards inclusion and driven largely by individual artistic directors and artists.

The informal nature of inclusive practice, though significant remains under current trends vulnerable and reliant largely on the commitment and artistic direction of a few individuals within companies.

As yet we are not seeing whole scale buy in, into cultural inclusion. However there are some significant steps underway towards this. Stand out organizations that demonstrated whole of organization commitments to inclusive cultural access included MCA, Monkey Bar, the South Australian Opera and Circus OZ.

Top down commitments to DAP and inclusive cultural practices by Boards and Director's was sighted as a critical gap/ risk in gaining supporting staff within organizations to move towards full organizational commitments to inclusion.

The recent report on the Disability & the Arts Sector consultation, undertaken by Alexandra Reid, ARTS SA along with the continued inclusive cultural planning and strategy flowing out of ARTS VIC, combined with the new Artists with Disabilities strategies and programs within DCA demonstrate high level policy and program commitments at State Arts Department levels in South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia.

The leadership potential of these States offers demonstrable examples of inclusive cultural engineering for the rest of Australia.

The sector's awareness of their obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act, State Disability Discrimination Acts, Australia Council for the Arts Disability Action Plan framework and the CMC, National Disability Arts Strategy is limited and as such has the potential to impede the sectors move towards greater levels of culturally inclusive practices.

The Australian Government currently believes that all Australians need to be able to play a full role in all aspects of Australian life.

To be socially included, all Australians must be given the opportunity to:

- Secure a job
- Access services
- Connect with family, friends, work, personal interests and
- Local community
- Deal with personal crisis; and
- Have the voices heard.

The Australian Government's social inclusion agenda aims to launch a new era of governance to mainstream the task of building social inclusion so that all Australians can share in our nation's prosperity.

Promoting social inclusion requires a new way of governing. Australia must rethink how policy and programs across portfolios and levels of government can work together to combat economic and social disadvantage in Australia.

DADAA the organisation I lead adheres to the social model of disability. This does not view disability as medical condition and challenges the notion that it is a medical problem requiring treatment. It understands that disability is a problem of exclusion from ordinary life.

This requires a change in society's values and practices, in order to remove the barriers to participation and gain inclusion.

For artists building a longitudinal community narrative is often key to the process in the creation of cultural product in and with community, a process that requires us to go back to gain an understanding of why the people and communities with whom we work are placed in the present.

When I look at the key elements in a creative community the elements that stand out are:

- Evidence of cultural leaders and local champions
- Collective passion
- Capacity to identify, unlock and secure community resources
- Mobilizes and community connectors – the networkers
- Commitment
- Capacity to collectively identify and explore issues of relevance and local meaning.

The most creative communities are those, which can reflect upon their culture and are willing to explore it, be it shameful or something worth celebrating.

After over 20 years working in Community arts and Arts and Disability, I can confidently say that artists are incredibly gifted at dignifying the personal/ private response.

I guess where I'm heading here, is to that point not very far into the future when one in four Australian's experience a disability, to the point in time beyond Arts and Disability practice as a discreet area of practice, the point where we have to embrace a harmonized and completely mongrel, multi disciplinary, culturally pervasive approach.

Where we go beyond the Arts and Disability ghetto, towards far deeper collaboration with the mainstream cultural sector.

I think the Arts sector is ready for it, though not sure how to fully embrace and imbed long term, recurrent inclusive cultural practices.

The Arts and health sectors are moving fast towards fully inclusive cultural service delivery, largely within the medical and Health environments.

Yet we in the Arts and Disability sector have to lead the way.

Arts Activated is a great example of leadership, an event that will stimulate critical thinking both within the Disability Arts sector and hopefully result in impacts across the Arts and policy environments.

The Arts and Disability sector, as whole is largely focused on targeted cultural practices in disability and mental health populations, with inclusion, often a secondary or tertiary consideration, to contractual obligations, which include:

- Respite
- Day activity
- And Skills Development

We in the Disability Arts sector often consider our roles and work towards deep levels of inclusion, but I'd have to say we often remain locked in the disability or mental health ghetto.

Despite the fact that our work is multi layered and driven by a huge array of, often competing agendas.

There is for me too much comfort in the Australian Arts and Disability sector.

There is a huge political safety within the Disability Arts sector, a safety that sometimes impedes our progress, and isolates the practice.

Often led and staffed by able bodied people such as myself, positioned as advocates, producers, brokers and administrators.

It's hard to communicate the frustration I feel at times when people within the Disability Arts sector, criticize the mainstream arts sector or cultural arms of government, rather than sharing their knowledge, expertise and resources in shifting the structures that they see as impeding cultural inclusion.

Clearly we have to get out of the ghetto and collaborate, partner, resource and lead the changes that I believe most of the cultural sector is heading towards.

The Australian Arts and Disability sector really needs to look at its capacity to achieve inclusion with the broader Arts and Cultural sector.

And head towards that point in time when we effect fully inclusive cultural practices, where disability and mental health become a sub text in the broader cultural commentary, that point where the 20-25% of Australians with a disability can enter and fully participate in the broader cultural landscape as equitable contributors .

The point where the mainstream Arts and cultural sector is equipped and positioned to include a person with a disability at what ever participatory level they choose.

The point where the lived experience of disability, sits alongside the lived experience of broader Australia.

I think it's at this point (if we can get there) that we will have achieved cultural inclusion in this country and Disability Arts will get to it's rightful place as a key part of the cultural landscape.

Not something off to the side with a box a round it.

Thank you.

