

arts • access • excellence
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| Paper Name: | “Cultural Ministers Council National Arts and Disability Strategy - Where to from here?” | |
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| Day of presentation: | Thursday 25 March 2010 | Program session no: 1a |

Introduction

- Paper will be available on the conference website
- Not dealing with the detail of the National Arts and Disability Strategy
- More an overview of it as a strategic document presented as a SWOT
- Presented in the order SWTO to end on a positive note and answer the ‘where to from here’ topic of the presentation
- I’ve also tried to remove all the jargon and expand the acronym’s that crop up everywhere
- Please ask questions or make comments through out and there will also be time at the end to discuss

Given we’re at an arts and disability conference I’m going to assume everyone knows that there is a National Arts and Disability Strategy.

I’m interested in how many people have read it? (Show of Hands = about half)

Introduction to Cultural Ministers Council, Arts Access Australia, National Arts and Disability Strategy

Cultural Ministers Council (CMC) National Arts and Disability Strategy

- The Cultural Ministers Council is where all nine state, territory and federal arts ministers meet along with the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA)
- The Cultural Ministers Council is one of the COAG Ministerial Councils. COAG being the Council of Australian Government (COAG) and it includes a range of Ministerial Councils like the Australian Health Ministers Conference, Community and Disability Services Ministers Conference and

Cultural Ministers Council. In each case nine jurisdictions (state, territory and federal) are trying to work together and each Ministerial Council then has Standing Committee's of senior public servants and working groups for specific issues so you can be trying to talk to up to 27 different people in any one portfolio area

- The Cultural Ministers Council National Arts and Disability Strategy is a direct result of Arts Access Australia's lobbying and is a 2007 election promise of the Rudd government expressed in the Australian Labor Party 'New Directions in the Arts' Policy Document. It's one line on page 7 of a 15-page document: "Labor will work with the Australia Council to develop an *Arts and Disability Strategy*." Nothing there about the Cultural Ministers Council... Arts Access Australia had tried previously to get arts and disability in the Cultural Ministers Council agenda and thanks to Peter Garrett this was successful on the second attempt essentially because he put it on the agenda.

About Arts Access Australia

- Arts Access Australia has 1.6 full time equivalent staff (Sarah Tracton Communications Manager is .5 and our Finance Manager James Wu is the .1), Our members are a network of eight state and territory arts and disability organisations, we are funded by Australia Council
- At a federal level our work cuts across arts, disability, mental health, ageing, employment, education and training portfolios. If you were feeling ambitious you could add homelessness and corrective service to that list. In other words we have tried to identify who people with disability are, following the Disability Discrimination Act definition, and influence the government departments that work with them.
- It's also useful at this point to note the way we work which is to provide information and resources useful to people with a disability and influence government policy and programs. We do this in a funding environment that pushes us towards a project and service delivery model rather than systemic advocacy which is very difficult to measure and evaluate in quantitative terms. We're mindful of this pressure as without our government funding we would cease to exist and grateful to the Australia Council for valuing the work we do and outcomes we have achieved which includes successfully using their funding to leverage resources from other sources while also achieving big picture outcomes like the National Arts and Disability Strategy.

Why do we need a National Arts and Disability Strategy

- After all the Disability Discrimination Act has existed since 1992 so in almost 20 years you would expect significant change?
- There are various sources of statistics on cultural participation including a Cultural Ministers Council report published in March 2007 (using data from

- 2003 and 2005 Australian Bureau of Statistics surveys) and research this year released by the Australia Council
- The 2010 Australia Council research “More than bums on seats: Australian participation in the arts” found that “People with a serious illness or disability experience significant difficulties accessing the various services offered by the arts and consequently had much lower levels of arts participation”.
 - Both the Cultural Ministers Council and more recent Australia Council reports confirm findings of an earlier Australia Council report from 1995. Between 1996 and 2007 the unavoidable conclusion is that not much happened federally in the arts and disability space.

What the National Arts and Disability Strategy covers

The National Arts and Disability Strategy identifies four focus areas:

1. Access and participation
Strategies to address the barriers which prevent people with a disability from accessing and participating in the arts and cultural activities, both as audiences and participants.
2. Arts and cultural practice
Strategies to address the barriers which prevent emerging and professional artists and arts/cultural workers with a disability from realising their ambitions.
3. Audience development
Strategies for developing and growing audiences for work created by artists with a disability and disability arts organisations.
4. Strategic development
Strategies at a broader policy level to improve coordination and collaboration across all levels of government, empower people with a disability to have a stronger voice in policy development and planning, and support informed decision making.

Responses to the National Arts and Disability Strategy since October 2009

- Responses Arts Access Australia has received to the National Arts and Disability Strategy have ranged from heart felt individual reports of feeling validated to ‘reality check’ assessments noting the lack of money and measurable outcomes
- Comparisons have been drawn with the Cultural Ministers Council Visual Arts and Craft Strategy which included significant financial resources and the National Education and the Arts Statement which also had no money attached to it though has led to some budget initiatives around artists in residence in schools.

So how does the Cultural Ministers Council National Arts and Disability Strategy measure up?

The SWOT: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

*** Note Presentation Order: Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats, Opportunities**

Strengths

- The Cultural Ministers Council have done a good job identifying the major issues, challenges and aspirations of people with disability. In short I think they have listened to the consultation input from people with disability
- The National Arts and Disability Strategy names three non-arts priority areas and federal strategies as: The National Disability Strategy, Fourth National Mental Health Plan and National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy. These strategies come under the broad heading of the government's Social Inclusion Agenda and represent a genuine attempt by the Cultural Ministers Council to work across government
- The Cultural Ministers Council have committed to an implementation committee and annual communiqué reporting on progress so there is a degree of transparency and accountability.
- The National Arts and Disability Strategy had a smooth-ish run through all nine jurisdictions: state, territory and federal, that needed to agree on its contents which could bode well for its future as there is general agreement that this is an important area of the arts to focus on
- The National Arts and Disability Strategy is the first time in the 15 years since the Australia Council Arts and Disability report that anyone has paid much attention to arts and disability at a federal level (note: it coincided with the Australia Council Disability Action Plan). Comparing the National Arts and Disability Strategy and the Australia Council 1995 report: yes the issues are pretty much the same so I can't under-estimate the significance of the National Arts and Disability Strategy and this time around there is hope we may see some significant progress.

Weaknesses - Current

- The National Arts and Disability Strategy currently lacks measurable outcomes and a timeframe for achieving them though I've mentioned the planned implementation committee. The National Arts and Disability Strategy's perceived weaknesses are partly explained by the Cultural Ministers Council structure where nine jurisdictions needed to agree and each is individually responsible for implementation in its own jurisdiction
- The National Arts and Disability Strategy identifies a clear desire to include representation of people with disability in the development of arts policies yet no member of the Cultural Ministers Council Working Group identifies as having a disability

- The National Arts and Disability Strategy is an arts document reflected in its focus on excellence and young / emerging and excellent artists. As some of my colleagues have pointed out the majority of aspiring artists with disability are neither young nor excellent – where do they fit?
- After all the goals and strategies in the National Arts and Disability Strategy there are number of priority projects named – I’ve heard anecdotal concern that these are the (only) bits of the National Arts and Disability Strategy that will happen. I prefer to think that the priority projects are just that: priorities within the context of the overall Strategy
- A major gap is recognition of ageing. Now you won’t hear the ‘Disability’ word mentioned in the ageing sector though when asked by the Australian Bureau of Statistics one in two people over the age of 60 self-identify as having a disability. This makes them the largest group of people with disability and they’re not clearly placed in the Strategy. What I find particularly interesting is that back in 1995 when the Australia Council produced their Arts and Disability report they also produced a companion report on Older Australians and the Arts. The issues identified in 1995 remain and the challenge here is how government portfolio areas match up with disability, mental health and ageing not always having a strong interface. Perhaps the Cultural Ministers Council having already tilted at Disability and Mental Health and Employment decided that would do. Arts Access Australia has proposed creating a National Centre for Creative Ageing based on the USA model of the same name. It’s an idea whose time will come though perhaps not as soon as we had expected.
- National Arts and Disability Strategy consultation in November 2008 had over 100 responses raising many issues including much that was relevant to local government. The submissions have not been made public by the Department of Environment Water Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) despite several Arts Access Australia requests and an expectation that submissions would be made public. We’d love to have a look because this national consultation process might reasonably be expected to be of interest to the arts and disability sector, Arts Access Australia and to inform our collective work.
- In many areas of interest to the arts and disability sector, like disability and mental health, federal funding is devolved and delivered in partnership with state and territory government making it difficult to identify an effective point of intervention or to establish a national overview of activity.

Threats – Future

- We seem to be through the worst of the Global Financial Crisis though the impact on government spending may still be felt: To be implemented effectively there is a clear need for new money to support the National Arts and Disability Strategy
- 2010 is a federal election year and there is a risk of change of government or Minister/s

- There is a risk that the Cultural Ministers Council will develop a weak implementation plan and reporting that lacks the detail to assess progress
- Looking across government Arts Access Australia's initial correspondence and discussions around the National Disability Strategy with the Community and Disability Services Ministers Conference and National People With Disability and Carers Council have referred us back to the Cultural Ministers Council.
- The Fourth National Mental Health Plan does, as a result of Arts Access Australia's advocacy, include mention of art though specifically as a non-mental health area that can make a contribution to resilience and recovery which potentially could mean exactly what we didn't ask for as we wanted recognition and support for the arts within the mental health portfolio.
- While Arts Access Australia has responded to all the Employment and Disability Employment discussion papers and consultations it is difficult to tell from the National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy whether it will lead to any change in arts employment.
- There is, **overall**, a worst case scenario risk that each of the non-arts areas of government may do less not more as a result of the National Arts and Disability Strategy as they will see arts and disability as an arts issue and acknowledge and refer back to the work of the Cultural Ministers Council
- A final point here is the National Arts Curriculum. At this stage it's not clear how the arts education of the 8% of students with disability will be included though the draft curriculum will be released this year and we encourage you to respond.

Opportunities

- The focus of discussions around money should be on state, territory and federal budgets and not just the Cultural Ministers Council's own budget which is very small
- The major need Arts Access Australia sees for people with disability in the arts is the establishment and articulation of pathways from participation to professional practice. These pathways are often more clearly articulated in the sports portfolio so there are models to look at and Accessible Arts NSW has done some work in this area.
- The main use right now Arts Access Australia can see for the National Arts and Disability Strategy is as a lobbying tool to support your work. Since it has been launched Arts Access Australia has referred to the document on an almost daily basis for example: in launching a sculpture garden in the Eurobodalla Shire (regional NSW), lobbying the Tasmanian state government to support arts and disability practice and networks and in responding to the Australian Human Rights Commission about a request for exemption from the Disability Discrimination Act lodged by major cinema exhibitors.

- There is also a related need for capacity building and resources that provide the information and tools to access resources that are already there. For example the Australia Council puts about \$1.1 million a year into arts and disability while Families and Housing Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) puts \$7.2 million a year into arts and craft through federally run disability business services alone. Who knew that and what else is out there at the State and Territory level? Also more recent Arts Access Australia correspondence with Bill Shorten indicates a recognition that support for arts participation is both a responsibility of the arts and the disability and community services portfolios so there is hope this will be recognised in the National Disability Strategy
- In mental health I've identified about \$8 million a year in money that supports arts activities in WA, SA, VIC and the ACT which is only half the picture. More recent discussions around the Fourth National Mental Health Plan have led to an interest in identifying where the arts can deliver on mental health outcome areas. This discussion has been assisted by an peer reviewed and published article Arts Access Australia has written on community arts and mental health in Australia
- Arts Access Australia is seeking a meeting with Minister for Employment Participation, Mark Arbib, to discuss the relationship between the National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy and National Arts and Disability Strategy
- Arts Access Australia has written to the Australian Curriculum and Assessment Reporting Authority about the National Arts Curriculum and will be responding their consultation process
- When you look there is also a fair bit of activity happening in arts and disability at a state, territory and federal level and an opportunity exists for these programs and research to inform each other and stimulate further activity through the Cultural Ministers Council. Continuing with the theme of opportunity I'll now provide a brief round up of current government activity that I'm aware of and note that the National Arts and Disability Strategy Implementation Committee is yet to meet so this is just the beginning.

State / Territory / Federal government Round Up of arts and disability activity

VIC – The Office of Disability has funded a three-part study of arts and disability with the second stage report due for release soon. The stage one literature review has been published. Victoria also has an Arts and Disability Access Network (ADAN) where three government departments and assorted non-Government stakeholders come together to improve access.

SA – Arts South Australia have led a review of arts and disability and the final report is available from their website. South Australia also has a dedicated arts and disability funding program called the Richard Llewellyn Arts and Disability Trust which we hope to see continue.

WA – West Australia has a dedicated arts and disability strategy and funding program called the Disability Arts Inclusion Initiative (DAII) which is a collaboration between their Disability Services Commission and Department of Culture and the Arts. As with South Australia we hope to see this program continue.

TAS – Early in 2010 the Tasmanian government announced \$250,000 in new money for arts and disability.

NT – There are ongoing discussions with the Northern Territory Government and small steps like part funding for Arts Access Darwin and Arts Access Central Australia which can be built on.

ACT – There is currently a review of Arts ACT priorities and while we're yet to see the outcome this is an opportunity to incorporate National Arts and Disability Strategy priorities.

QLD – There is nothing I'm aware of yet in Queensland though some informal discussions are occurring

NSW - Nothing I'm aware of yet though on the non-Government side the Accessible Arts **Speak Up** arts and disability consultation and strategy report is an excellent document to inform future developments and one that could be looked at as a national model.

Australia Council – Parallel to the National Arts and Disability Strategy the Australia Council developed a 2008 – 2010 Disability Action Plan which is on their website. While there has been no new money for artists and organisations the Disability Action Plan has some very interesting initiatives like disability awareness training and disability strategy development for Key Organisations. The Australia Council, at the half-way mark, is well on the way to achieving the majority of objectives named in the Disability Action Plan and there is potential for a follow on plan for 2011 - 2013.

Department of Environment Water Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) – Apart from managing the Cultural Ministers Council secretariate there is nothing I'm aware of yet though touring is mentioned in the National Arts and Disability Strategy and I expect this will be an area for future discussion.

Conclusion – four take away points

- 1) The key concepts driving the strategy are access, inclusion and pathways from participation to professionalism
- 2) The National Arts and Disability Strategy is a beginning not an end. The Cultural Ministers Council is establishing an implementation

committee and will be releasing an annual communiqué to track progress. It will also be up to groups and individuals like Arts Access Australia and each of you to advocate and propose solutions to the many challenges various government departments i.e. not just the arts face in implementing the Strategy. We have the political outcome the need now is a practical one.

- 3) The National Arts and Disability Strategy needs budget allocations from Federal, State and Territory governments if it is to achieve its many objectives
- 4) In the meantime apply for funding as individuals and for projects. You won't always be successful, don't expect that to change, though change does happen by engaging with the funders and building relationships. I see a lot of self-censorship and low expectations from artists with disabilities and yes it is often understandable though just maybe things are changing. Over to you...

And hopefully those of you who are yet to read the National Arts and Disability Strategy will now do so.

Questions / Comments ?

