



Ainslie and Gorman Arts Centres | Arts Capital Limited
Disability Inclusion Action Plan | *Project Overview*
2017 - 2027



Ainslie and Gorman Arts Centres

Acknowledgement of Country

Arts Capital Limited, the registered charity managing Ainslie and Gorman Arts Centres (A+G), acknowledge the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians and recognise all other First Nations peoples and families with connection to the ACT. We honour and pay our respects to Elders past, present and future. Sovereignty was never ceded.



Position Statement

Arts Capital Limited's mission is to nurture Canberra's creative ecosystem, increasing opportunities for artistic excellence and transformative experiences. We bring together an enduring, local and regional arts community, ready to exchange, and showcase diverse creative perspectives - open to all.



Contents

Introduction - Message from the Team and Board	4
In Gratitude	4
The Case for Inclusion	5
What is disability?	
Barriers	
Notable Statistics	7
Legislative and Policy Framework	8
DIAP Development and Methodology	9
History and Timeline	
Consultation Summary	10
1. Convening of a Resident Working Group 2018 - 2019	11
2. Convening of a Disability Advisory Committee 2018-2019	11
3. Survey Consultation	12
4. Training and Summary of Actions	12
5. Access Audits	13
6. DIAP Development	13
Accessibility Strategy	14
Outcome 1: Attitudes and Behaviors	15
Outcome 2: Livable Communities	15
Outcome 3: Employment	16
Outcome 4: Systems and Processes	16
References	17



Introduction and Director's Message

We are delighted to present Arts Capital's Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP), one of the first initiatives set out in our new Strategic Plan: Reset to Regenerate 2024-2027.

Situated on Ngunnawal Country, Ainslie and Gorman Art Centres are comprised of two heritage-listed facilities that form a multidisciplinary arts precinct, home to some of the ACT's leading arts organisations and artists.

Our centres house the capital's largest collective of artists. This DIAP represents our commitment to improving and supporting accessibility and inclusion for all who inhabit our spaces, venues and studios.

Our centres represent a long, rich, creative history of Canberra, whereby community participation, learning and knowledge sharing is vital. We are honoured to contribute to extending this history by tangibly increasing the accessibility and inclusiveness through the implementation of our DIAP. We recognise that the future of the ACT's arts ecosystem is dependent on access and inclusion.

This Plan's outcomes will ensure our service provision, operations, and practices are inclusive, accessible, and safe, which is foundational to our core business and service.

In Gratitude

We extend our deep gratitude to a diverse range of contributors in realising this DIAP through the years. Special thanks to Access Advisors Liz Lea, Natalee Thomas and Shawnah Cady; and the Rebus Theatre Team (Ben Drysdale, Robin Davidson, Daniel Savage) for writing development and editorial.

Thank you to Isabelle Sheppard, Rochelle Whyte*, Adelin Chin* (Arts Capital team members); and Arts Capital Board members Morwenna Collett* and Eric Martin. Thank you to everyone who so generously shared their professionalism, knowledge, ideas, stories, experiences, and reflections, as we look forward to welcoming ever more diverse artists, practitioners, and audiences to A+G.

Ainslie Arts Centre and Gorman Arts Centre are heritage-listed ACT Government-owned facilities managed by Arts Capital Limited (ACN 639 255 815), a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee and a registered charity.

*Staff or Board members who have since departed from the Arts Capital team at time of publication.



The Case for Inclusion

What is disability?

Arts Capital subscribes to the *social model of disability*, distinguishing the difference between the individual's impairment, illness or condition, and disability as the environmental or attitudinal barriers created by society. Barriers are disabling factors that limit opportunity and create disadvantage.

Disability can be temporary or permanent, visible or invisible.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities defines people living with disability as including, 'those who have physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.'¹

We acknowledge that not everyone who encounters disabling factors identifies as a person with disability.

The definition of disability includes, but is not limited to the following categories²:

- Auditory: conditions that affect the sense of hearing and aural processing
- Cognitive: conditions that affect processes involved in understanding, perception, memory, judgement and reasoning
- Intellectual: conditions that affect intellectual functioning (such as learning, problem-solving) and adaptive functioning (such as communication and independent living)
- Physical: conditions that affect mobility, stamina, capacity or dexterity
- Psychosocial: where the psychological condition impacts social behaviour, or the social environment impacts the psychological response
- Sensory: conditions that affect sight, touch, smell, taste and hearing and impact how a person gathers information from the environment
- Significant mental health issues: conditions that impact a person's cognitive, emotional, and social abilities.
- Visual: conditions that impact sight including non-correctable loss of vision that is partial or complete.



Barriers

Aligning with the Social Model of Disability, Arts Capital will endeavour to identify and reduce barriers within all aspects of our undertakings where possible and to work collaboratively with external stakeholders, visitors, residents and hirers. Working to address and remove these barriers for those who have lived experience with disability improves the user experience for the whole community and provides sound universal design.

The four outcome areas suggested under the NSW DIAP³ guidelines provide insight into the barriers to equal access to people living with disability. They include:

- Attitudes and behaviours, tackling to change the negative view that is often motivated by ignorance against people living with disability.
- Liveable Communities, improving the accessibility and inclusion of spaces, buildings programs and engagement.
- Employment, modifying employment and work environment processes to improve accessibility and inclusion.
- Systems and processes, undertaking actions to improve the navigation and access to services and information.

Derived from community consultation and engagement undertaken in the development of our DIAP, we have identified the following key barriers for people with disability wanting to access the arts:

- Financial: The costs of admission and capacity to pay
- Physical: Transport and parking difficulties, lack of access to arts venues, lack of accessibility features in arts venues, both physical (for example, wheelchair access, hearing augmentation technology, mobility equipment) and interpretive (for example subtitles and Auslan interpreters for people who are d/Deaf and hard of hearing, or remote participation such as live streaming events)
- Awareness: Low levels of awareness in organisations and their staff and boards; lack of information about the accessibility of arts venues and accessible activities, on websites and in marketing materials
- Training: Low levels of disability awareness and training among staff at arts venues
- Attitudinal: Negative views of staff and community about people with disability; lack of representation of people with disability in programming, marketing, staff, and boards



Notable Statistics

- **Almost 1 in 6 Australians are people with disability (18% or 4.4 million people).⁴**
- **Around 1 in 5 people in ACT are people living with disability (19.4% or 80,000 people).⁵**
- **Just under half (45.1%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 years and over, experience disability.⁶**
- **39% of A+G core staff members identify as a person with lived experience with disability.⁷**





Legislative and Policy Framework

Arts Capital's DIAP exists in the context of international, national and ACT legislative and policy frameworks, including:

- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) (UNCRPD)
- UN Sustainable Development Goals (2017)
- Disability Discrimination ACT (1992)
- Disability Services Act (1986) (Commonwealth)
- Australian Disability Strategy (2021-2031) (NDS)
- Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards (2010)
- Disability Services ACT (1991) (Australian Capital Territory)
- Disability Justice Strategy (2019-2029) (Australian Capital Territory)

We are committed to working with the ACT Office for Disability and the ACT Government through artsACT, to continually monitor the progress and advocate for actions in the improvement of accessibility and inclusion in the ACT arts sector.

Since 2017 the National Arts and Disability Strategy has been in a review and consultation towards a renewed national strategy. Once finalised and released, we will work to incorporate the new strategy's recommendations into our strategic planning processes and practices.



DIAP Development and Methodology

History and Timeline

Arts Capital, trading as A+G, is a not-for-profit organisation and registered charity that holds the head license from the ACT government to manage two of the ACT Government's 12 arts facilities, Ainslie Arts Centre on Elouera St, and Gorman Arts Centre on Ainslie Ave, Braddon. Our mission is to nurture Canberra's creative ecosystem, increasing opportunities for artistic excellence and transformative experiences.

Our Centres are home to more than 50 resident artists and organisations, including key program-funded entities critical to the ACT arts sector ecology. Our residents include ACT key arts organisations, as well as being home to a rich community of independent, multidisciplinary artists. We have facilitated more than 1500 individual venue hirers annually in the 2022-2023 period, and continually collaborate with a diverse arrangement of arts and cultural partners. We are deeply connected to the needs of the ACT arts sector; through this connection, we acknowledge the need for sustained improvements to accessibility and inclusion at our Centres.

Since 2017, we have been working to make our Centres a more inclusive and accessible place to work and visit. We are committed to actioning the barriers to accessibility and improving inclusion at our Centres while maintaining and upholding the cultural significance of our built environment.

In 2018, with support from the ACT Office for Disability, we presented a one-day conference as a part of International Day for People with Disability, around best practices in access and inclusion. This event was a good test of our approach and helped us gain practical insight into the needs of audiences and artists with disability and identify gaps in our systems and processes.

In 2019, we engaged in consultation, engagement and awareness training of staff and residents, to begin developing the DIAP. This was possible with support from the ACT Office for Disability as well as guidance and advice from Accessible Arts.

In 2020-22, the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions highlighted existing barriers with a great need for action concerning access and inclusion. Therefore, in 2023, after more than three years of navigating the initial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and, working with the ongoing challenges, we recognised the need for this DIAP to be reviewed and implemented and thus began the process of finalising our DIAP for implementation.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the continued challenges placed upon everyone, especially people living with disability, has shed light on the multitudes of barriers to access and inclusion. As one of the first actions of our inaugural Strategic Plan, this DIAP sets out the pathway and commitment to addressing and removing identified barriers to improving accessibility and inclusion at our Centres.



Consultation Summary

In 2018 – 2019, A+G received a grant from the ACT Office for Disability to engage in research, consultation, and awareness training with the aim of drafting our DIAP. From these funds, Ruth O'Brien, who identifies as an artist and arts worker living with disability was engaged to assist in project management and provided professional development. Accessible Arts provided accessibility and inclusion awareness training to staff and residents, as well as research, consultation, and advice.

We engaged in a significant consultation process conducted over 12 months using six key methods:

1. Convening of a Resident Working Group
2. Convening of a Disability Advisory Committee
3. Survey Consultation
4. Training and summary of actions
5. Access Audits
6. DIAP Development



1. Convening of a Resident Working Group 2018 - 2019:

This group met throughout 2019 and involved representatives from six resident organisations including Ausdance ACT, ACT Writers Centre, Pro Musica/Canberra International Music Festival, Canberra Contemporary Art Space, Music For Canberra, and Canberra Youth Theatre.

The Resident Working Group recommended:

- Increasing awareness, clarity, and transparency around access and inclusion policies and procedures.
- Embrace our advocacy role in improving access and inclusion opportunities with and for residents, venue hirers, visitors, users and stakeholders.
- Find and create opportunities to support residents with awareness training, research and advice.

2. Convening of a Disability Advisory Committee 2018-2019

The committee was led by Ruth O'Brien and included Daniel Savage, Hanna Cormick, Cara Matthews, Imogen Clarke, Ceilidh Dalton, and Alexander Hunter. The wider committee consisted of local artists and individuals with lived experience, or who worked with or cared for people who live with disability and were paid to provide feedback and advice on our facilities and services.

The Disability Advisory Committee was instrumental in helping identify key actions that we could take to improve accessibility, including:

- Continued consultation with people living with disability in all aspects of our operations.
- Ensuring there is professional engagement with people with disability within the Centre's operations at all levels.
- Improving accessibility of information provided by the Centres across all levels of operation.



3. Survey Consultation 2019

The survey was designed for feedback to be used as a benchmark in measuring the successful implementation of our DIAP. We acknowledge that our DIAP would not be possible without the invaluable time, experiences and input provided by all who have contributed to this consultation process. We thank those who took part in our survey which was conducted between June – August 2019, with the summary of findings delivered in September 2019.

From this survey, it was found:

- Almost all respondents believe that staff are welcoming and respectful towards people with disability, however, social and physical barriers to access and inclusion require actioning where they exist within our buildings.
- Physical accessibility is the strongest barrier to access within the Centres and its residents, with A+G also requiring improvement to the accessibility of information.
- While A+G staff, Board, residents and volunteers indicate they understand the concept of accessibility and inclusion there is benefit in improving organisational access and inclusion policies and procedures.
- There is a strong benefit in enhancing engagement and partnerships with people with disability within all A+G operations.
- There is a need for improved engagement with people with disability within A+G staff and Board.

4. Training and Summary of Actions

The review included the following:

- Hosting a one-day arts conference: Disability and the Arts: Contemporary Approaches to access, representation and inclusion for A+G's International Day for People with Disability.
- Review of the post-event report and participant feedback the conference for identifiable actions.
- Review of event services and feedback for Suono Italiano, a performance held at the Ainslie Arts Centre in August 2019 and attended by staff and members of the Disability Advisory Committee.



- Three Disability and Inclusion Awareness Training sessions were provided by Accessible Arts to selected A+G staff and resident organisation staff and board members.
- A+G staff attendance at the Arts Activated Conference 2019 presented by Accessible Arts, and Meeting Place 2019, presented by Arts Access Australia.
- Ongoing research, materials, advice and feedback were provided by Accessible Arts.

5. Access Audits

Several accessibility-focused audits have been conducted over the last few years, including:

- Australian Network on Disability conducted as part of membership services to Life Without Barriers Venue Accessibility Report for the Ainslie Arts Centre 2019.
- Work Health and Safety Slips, Trips and Falls conducted by Greencap in March 2019.
- Website Audit, conducted by Accessible Arts 2019.
- artsACT Site Inspection Checklist and Report conducted by artsACT July 2020.
- Student assessment, Building Access Audit Report for Ainslie Arts Centre, conducted by Neets Pluschke, 2022

These audits have identified several specific access barriers to our online and on-site facilities that will inform plans for future building works, renovations, and website improvements.

The various venue audits have continued to show that A+G's physical facilities have significant accessibility barriers. A+G will continue to work with the ACT government to improve the physical access challenges at the Centres. With an ACT Government commitment to much-needed renovations of the Gorman Arts Centre for its centenary in 2024.

6. DIAP Development

In 2022 and 2023 the Arts Capital team and Board worked closely to review the above surveys, best-practice research to develop this DIAP. This was a highly iterative process as the Arts Capital team sought advice, guidance, and contribution of several leaders in the accessibility and inclusion space within the arts, resulting in this inaugural document. This DIAP as a living document and we will continue seek advice, listen, and apply feedback from our many art centre stakeholders. We are committed to assessing, measuring, and updating the outcomes identified below moving forward.



Accessibility Strategy Outcomes

Arts Capital's DIAP consists of a series of actions grouped under four key outcome areas, as per the NSW DIAP planning guidelines. At the time of publishing, no ACT DIAP planning guidelines are available.

The key outcome areas are:

1. Attitudes and Behaviours
2. Liveable Communities
3. Employment
4. Systems and Processes

Together, the actions under these outcome areas seek to remove or reduce the social, economic, physical and behavioural barriers that prevent people living with disability from fully engaging with our Centres.



Outcomes

Outcome 1 - Attitudes and Behaviours

Arts Capital acknowledges that active learning and development of accessibility and inclusion principles and practices are integral to improving our operations. We are dedicated to taking effective actions in supporting our Board and staff in developing a high level of awareness of accessibility and inclusion principles and practices.

- 1.1** Board and staff have a high level of awareness of accessibility and inclusion principles and practices.
- 1.2** Feedback and consultation are sought to identify and remove barriers to accessibility and inclusion.
- 1.3** Grow our resource base to increase our accessibility and inclusion work

Outcome 2 - Livable Communities

Arts Capital is dedicated to ensuring our buildings and facilities are accessible to everyone, as are our programs, events, and services.

- 2.1** A program of comprehensive improvements to the centres is funded and delivered by the ACT Government.
- 2.2** Deliver near-term facility improvements within our means to ensure facilities, programmes, and events (physical and online) are inclusive and accessible.
- 2.3** Our programming, production and venue hire processes reflect our commitment to accessibility and inclusion.



Outcome 3 - Employment

Arts Capital will continue to strive for workforce equality and inclusion, we acknowledge that this is closely linked to successful organisational outcomes. Taking actions to enhance the visibility and representation of people living with disability within our workplace settings, programs and activities, and governance.

- 3.1 Provide an inclusive workplace and employ people living with disability.**
- 3.2 Advocate for better accessibility with contractors, service providers and suppliers.**

Outcome 4 - Systems and Processes

Arts Capital is committed to ensuring people with disability are supported and included in accessing and navigating our systems and processes. All our systems and processes will be designed with access and inclusion in mind.

- 4.1 DIAP is adopted, resourced and integrated into Arts Capital's strategic and business plans.**
- 4.2 Arts Capital governance structures and processes are modified to support and promote access and inclusion.**
- 4.3 Arts Capital communications, both internal and public will be modified to support and promote access and inclusion.**
- 4.4 Arts Capital meetings and reporting processes are modified to support and promote access and inclusion.**



Endnotes

- 1 United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Disability <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-1-purpose.html>, accessed July 2019.
- 2 National Disability Services, <https://www.nds.org.au/disability-types-and-descriptions>, accessed January 2024.
- 3 <https://dcj.nsw.gov.au/documents/community-inclusion/disability-inclusion/nsw-diap-guidelines.pdf>, No ACT DIAP Guidelines available as of February 2024.
- 4 <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/disability/people-with-disability-in-australia/contents/people-with-disability/prevalence-of-disability>, accessed July 2022.
- 5 abs.gov.au/statistics/health/disability/disability-ageing-and-carers-australia-summary-findings/2018, accessed January 2023.
- 6 ABS 4714.0 - National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2014-15.
- 7 A+G internal survey, October 2022.



Cover Image: Untitled, 2023
Fiona Longhurst.

Courtesy of the artist and [Arts Project Australia](#), Melbourne

Fiona Longhurst is an established artist whose work is characterised by a sensitive use of colour and intricate pattern making.

Arts Project Australia, a creative social enterprise that supports artists with intellectual disabilities, promotes their work and advocates for their inclusion in contemporary art practice.

