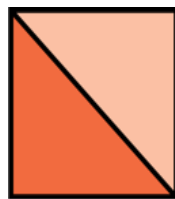


Arts Access 101

Regional Arts Resource

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Courthouse
Gallery+Studio

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1. Introduction

The Pilbara Creative Disability Inclusion Program is a social inclusion program for marginalised regional communities. Developed in partnership with regional disability service providers, the wholistic program will build individual and collective capacity and exchange of skills and knowledge for those living with a disability. In addition, the program will provide professional development for carers, families, and disability networks, alongside regional arts sector development.

This resource “Arts Access 101” is a beginner’s guide and intended for people with little or no experience with disability in the arts. It covers all artforms including performance, visual arts, music and multimedia and is specific to arts projects and programs. The information provided is transferable to arts programs, festivals and events in general. The aim is to equip you with some knowledge about working in the arts with people with disability in addition to upskilling you in best practice approaches for working inclusively with people with disability.

In this resource, we will be using the words “arts program/s” to mean arts workshops, arts activities, exhibitions and theatre programs; “events” to mean festivals or any event that does not fall into the category of “arts program/s”.

2. Who should use this guide

This regional arts resource is targeted at:

- Regional arts organisations
- Regional arts venues (theatres, galleries and museums)
- Artists/Artworkers working in regional and remote communities
- Artists with disability
- Disability support organisations and staff
- Promoters and touring companies

3. Definition of disability

Disability:

- is attributable to an intellectual, psychiatric, cognitive, neurological, sensory, or physical impairment or a combination of those impairments; and (b) is permanent or likely to be permanent; and
- may or may not be of a chronic or episodic nature and results in:
 - a substantially reduced capacity of the person for communication, social interaction, learning or mobility; and
 - a need for continuing support services;

4. Prevalence of disability

In Western Australia, one in five people or about 20% of the population have a disability, and currently, 68,000 Western Australians are the primary carer for a friend or family member with disability.

5. Types of disability

Some examples of common disabilities you may come across are:

- Vision Impairment
- Deaf or hard of hearing
- Mental health conditions
- Intellectual disability
- Acquired brain injury
- Autism spectrum disorder
- Physical disability

6. Disability standards

Human Rights

According to the United Nations Convention of Human Rights Article 30 - Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport states:

“Parties recognise the right of persons with disabilities to take part on an equal basis with others in cultural life, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities:

- a) Enjoy access to cultural materials in accessible formats;
- b) Enjoy access to television programmes, films, theatre and other cultural arts programs, in accessible formats;
- c) Enjoy access to places for cultural performances or services, such as theatres, museums, cinemas, libraries and tourism services, and, as far as possible, enjoy access to monuments and sites of national cultural importance.”

The Western Australian State Disability Strategy 2020-2030

“The National Arts and Disability Strategy's vision is for the artistic aspirations and achievements of people with a disability to be a valued and visible part of Australian culture.”

NDIS

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) was rolled out in WA in 2016. In the NDIS 2023 report, there were 50 994 people accessing NDIS funding in WA and there were over 8659 service providers. In the Kimberley-Pilbara and Midwest-Gascoyne areas, there were 2885 active participants.

For many Western Australians participating in the NDIS, their ability to access disability services has increased and their choice and control in what arts programs they choose to get involved in, including in the arts, has also been enhanced.

7. Medical vs Social Models of Disability

Medical Model

Disability is a health condition and where people are disabled because of their impairment. Disability is seen as a problem that belongs only to the person.

For example:

A wheelchair user is unable to enter an old heritage building because there are only stairs at the entrance and no ramp or lift. The medical model suggests that the fault lies on the person's physical disability and not the lack of a ramp or lift.

Social Model

According to the social model, 'disability' is socially constructed. It is the barriers, environmental and societal, that results in a person's disability.

For example:

Some galleries and museums have implemented a quiet hour on designated days for people with autism hence offering them a low sensory experience. It has been designed so that they are not overwhelmed by loud noises, bright lights and other stimuli which may cause the person distress.

So which model should you adopt?

The Social Model of Disability should inform how we should work in the arts and disability sector in order to understand and support the rights, health and wellbeing of people with disability.

8. What is inclusion?

Inclusion occurs when people of diverse backgrounds such as people with disability, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people of different genders, sexual orientation, age or race, who may otherwise be marginalised, are valued, respected and treated equally.

Inclusion ensures that everyone is able to fully participate in arts and cultural arts programs and events.

9. Why is accessibility important?

- Participation in arts and culture is a human right.
- Everyone can meaningfully and significantly contribute to the arts.
- The artistic voices of people with disability can often shift perceptions of the community.
- New audiences that include people with disability, their families and friends can be developed.

- A more inclusive, cohesive and resilient community is shaped.
- A requirement for legislations such as the WA government's Disability Access and Inclusion Plan to be implemented, monitored and reported against its KPIs.
- An inclusive workforce ensures equitable employment opportunities and a diversity of skills and perspectives in the workforce.

10. Why are some artists and arts organisation not embracing accessibility?

- Lack of funds to engage professional access services or resources to implement them.
- Lack of know-how – Unsure what access provisions are out there or even how to begin if starting from scratch.
- Fear of getting it wrong whether it is using the wrong language or interacting with people with disability without offending them.

11. Use of inclusive language

Every person with disability has a different preference as to how they would like to be addressed, that is, whether it is person-first or identity-first language.

Person-first language

Person-first language puts the person before their condition or disability. An example would be using the term "person with disability" instead of "disabled person". This puts the person first instead of focusing on their disability.

It is not uncommon to hear a person say for example:

"The wheelchair can go there" when explaining where a wheelchair user can sit in a theatre auditorium. By doing so, you are reducing the person to their mobility aid.

Common examples of what to say and what not to:

Say	Don't say
Person with disability	Disabled person
Wheelchair user	Wheelchair bound, Cripple
Person living with a mental illness	Mentally ill, suffering from a mental illness
Person who is blind or vision impaired	Blind person
Person with a physical disability	Cripple, handicapped, lame, deformed
Person with an intellectual disability	Spastic, retard
Person who is autistic/Autistic adult or child (some people prefer to be called an Austic adult or child)	Has autism, suffers from autism
Person who is hard of hearing, Deaf people (referring more to a Deaf culture)	The deaf, dumb

and belonging to a community rather than to their hearing status)	
Person with cerebral palsy	CP victim
Person who has multiple sclerosis	Afflicted by MS

Identity-first Language

This is the opposite to person-first language. Identity-first language puts a person's condition or disability before the person. For example, many people in the community prefer to be called Autistic, Deaf or Neurodiverse. They view their disability as an integral part of their identity and take pride in it.

If language is needed to separate a person from a trait of theirs, that is, their disability, it suggests that their disability is an impairment and has a negative impact on their lives. A person with disability may prefer to use identity-first language because they feel it validates them as a valued member of the community regardless of their disability.

So which language should you use?

As a rule of thumb, it is safer to use person-first language over identity-first language, as some people may take offence and feel that it is demeaning when putting their disability before them as a person. If unsure, always ask what their preference is.

12. Communicating strategies

The list below gives you a general idea of how to communicate with people with different disabilities. This is not an exhaustive list.

Some communication tips:

Speak to the person as though you are speaking to someone who does not have a disability. This way of communicating makes the person with disability feel heard and valued as an individual.

Always speak directly to the person and not to the carer or support worker* if the person with disability is able to communicate by themselves, they will. If not, the carer or support worker will assist them in their interaction with you.

* A carer is someone who provides unpaid care and support to family members and friends with disability. A support worker is paid by the person with disability or disability service organisations to provide support to them.

People who are blind or vision impaired

Remember they can't see you so:

- Introduce yourself before speaking to them and let them know if you are leaving the conversation so they don't continue talking after you have left.
- Speak clearly and in a normal voice and if there is too much noise around, move to a quieter area.

- Don't point. For example, don't say "the toilet is over there". They will not know where "there" is.
- Ask if they would like assistance to where they are going or what they are doing. Don't be offended if they reject your offer as they may be more than capable to find their way to their destination or do it themselves.

Deaf or people who are hearing impaired

- Get their attention before speaking by moving in front of them and look at the person while talking to them.
- Speak normally. Don't shout. Don't exaggerate your mouth movements when speaking.
- If the person has an Auslan interpreter with them, look at, speak to and communicate with them and not the interpreter.

People with an intellectual disability or Autism

- A person with an intellectual disability or Autism who is verbal does not necessarily mean that their cognitive function is high. Similarly a person who is non verbal does not mean they have a low cognitive function. Don't assume they can or can't understand what you are saying.
- Always speak in an age appropriate manner.

Unless you know the person, below are some generalisations:

- Address the person by their name.
- Use simple English and don't use convoluted sentences.
- Don't use abstract terms or acronyms.
- Use correct body language as they are visual cues and can confuse the person if contradictory body language is presented.

13. Motivations to participate

Understanding a person's motivation to attend a performance/event or participate in an arts program can aid in programming. This will reflect audience members and participants expectations and ultimately determine their experiences.

Recognising the motivations of people who attend arts events and programs in your community allows you to understand, build and diversify audiences and participants.

So why do people attend and participate in the arts?

- Socialise with friends or family.
- Make new friends.
- Creative self-expression.
- Learn new skills or gain knowledge.
- Experience high quality arts and culture.

- Interest in a particular arts event or performance.
- Support community arts organisations.
- Social duty in supporting a friend or family member who is exhibiting or performing.
- Celebrate own cultural heritage or exploring another culture.

Think of a recent arts program or event that you have recently attend. What motivated you to participate or attend?

14. Barriers for people with disability

Barriers are an impediment for people with disability to fully participate in arts and culture. In regional and metropolitan WA , there are many inaccessible heritage listed or older buildings where physical access was not factored in when they were constructed. This poses a significant physical barrier. Some examples of barriers:

Physical Barriers

- Access to the venue/Location of venue.
- Lack of ACROD bays/parking and drop-off points.
- Steps/ Stairs leading into the venue.
- Narrow doorways/entrances obstructing wheelchair users entry.
- Box office ticket counter or bar counter heights unsuitable for a person of small stature or a wheelchair user.
- Single type seating/chairs available in the venue.
- Unsuitable seating arrangements for people with dog guides, Deaf people, people who are blind or vision impaired.
- Furniture/obstacles in the venue impeding easy movement of people.
- Uneven flooring, carpeting or cables across flooring can be potential trip hazards.
- Accessible or unisex toilets unavailable.

Economic barriers

- Ticket/Admission costs prohibitive for people with disability to attend performance/event.
- Transport costs to attend arts programs, performance or events prohibitive.
- Support worker costs to accompany people with disability to the event.
- Self-funding an Auslan Interpreter can be unaffordable.

Social Barriers

- A lack of disability awareness and understanding of the requirements of people with disability.
- Attitudinal behaviours of staff and the wider community towards people with disability.

- Unable to find a companion to attend or participate in an arts program or event.
- Lack of child care or home care in remote regional areas may make it challenging for parents or carers to attend arts programs or events.

Sensory Barriers

- Being overwhelmed by bright lights.
- Negative reactions to certain noises or loud noises.
- Some smells may be aversive.
- Large crowds may be overwhelming.
- Some environments or objects in the environment may be overstimulating.

Communication Barriers

- Inaccessible websites.
- A lack of information in accessible and alternative formats.
- Inaccessible booking and ticketing options.
- Limited distribution channels to publicise arts programs or events.

In Appendix A, list down all the barriers you have encountered at an arts program or event that you can think of.

15. Solutions to eliminating barriers

The elimination of barriers allow inclusive participation of people with disability in arts and cultural programs and events.

Some of these will be straightforward to implement, whilst others require long term planning by senior management and funds to execute effectively.

Some solutions to eliminating barriers are:

Physical barriers

- Conduct events in accessible venues with ample public transport options.
- Select a venue accessible for people with mobility issues. If stairs are present, secure a portable ramp for venues without ramp access.
- Consider removing rugs, thick pile carpets or carpeting.
- Cordon off parking bays close to the venue for people with disability and ensure clear directional signage to the entrance.
- Ensure signage is clear with good contrast and installed at appropriate heights.
- If there is an Auslan Interpreter or Audio Describer for the event, ensure audience has good sightlines to the interpreter and the event.
- Consider layout of the venue and ensure placement seating and tables allow for ease of flow of people within the venue.

- Ensure that there is enough clearance under the table for a wheelchair user to sit comfortably.
- Reserve aisle seats for people who may need to access them in order to leave the venue quickly (for example people with autism, people with medical conditions).
- Provide a variety of seating for people. For example seats with armrests and backrests for people who have physical disability or mobility issues.

Economic barriers

- Promote companion cards^{*} being accepted at all events.
- ^{*} The Companion Card Program supports Western Australians with a significant and permanent disability who require support to participate at venues and events.
- Consider various ticket price options.

Let's see what Bunbury Regional Entertainment Centre (BREC) has implemented.

What is BREC Access?

BREC Access is a doorway to the arts that's always open! We want everyone to have the opportunity to see a show at BREC. So here's our offer: for some shows, we are making some seats available for those who need a good night out but who can't manage full price at the moment and we invite those who can to 'pay it forward' and choose a higher price. Just choose your BREC Access price when purchasing your ticket. BREC Access tickets for each show are strictly limited.

BREC ACCESS TICKETS

\$10.00 OPEN – I need a good night out but the cost of living is starting to bite!

\$25.00 ENTER – I need a good night out but can pay a bit more

\$70.00 FLING – I want to pay it forward and fling open the doors for someone else

- Set aside discounted tickets for limited seats or certain performances.
- For Deaf people and people who are blind or vision impaired who are accessing Auslan and Audio Description seated in premium rows, make the lowest price available for that particular performance.
- Relaxing ticket exchange policy may encourage people with disability to purchase tickets if exchanging them for another date due to unforeseen circumstances does not incur any financial penalty.
- Previews of performances can be offered free to people with disability, their families, friends and carers. This could encourage first time theatre goers to venture out of their comfort zone, experience theatre and potentially become return audience members.

Social barriers

- Choose event times and days where your target audience is more likely to attend.
For example:
 - after school and Saturdays for school aged young people
 - late mornings and before lunch for people who attend disability service organisations programs
 - school hours for stay at home parents
 - weekends for families
- Engage volunteers and volunteer groups to accompany people with disability to the arts program or event.
- Conduct disability awareness training for staff, management and volunteers so they better understand characteristics of more common disabilities and effective communication strategies.
- Have a dedicated staff member or volunteer assist people with disability when at the event. This may include accompanying them to the toilets, bar, or evacuating the venue in the event of an emergency.

Ensuring that your organisations staff are welcoming equates to people with disability feeling comfortable and becoming a return visitor.

Sensory barriers

- Create social stories or visual narratives for people with autism to prime them before attending the event.
- Consider relaxed performances to enable people with anxiety, autism or learning disability to attend.
- Design quiet areas for people to retreat to if they become overstimulated.

Communication barriers

- Ensure that information about your event is promoted in alternative formats (Braille, easy english, audio, digital, large print, captions). Most of these can be done affordably but it needs to be scheduled in for production to happen.
For example: Braille production time takes a minimum of 2 to 3 weeks for a short document.
- Universal access symbols need to be included in advertising, publicity and promotional materials to indicate types and levels of access provisions for both venues and events.
- Streamline booking systems so people with disability are able to book or sign up for an event like everyone else. Provide alternatives to booking for example via telephone, email and text message. If using a ticketing agency, confirm their systems are accessible for everyone including people who are blind using screen readers to read.

- Promote venue or program access on the homepage of your website and all publicity and marketing materials. If access is limited and can't be resolved, provide this information so people are aware of the venue or events limitations.
- Every persons access requirements is different and it is essential to ask people what their accessibility needs are whilst in the planning stages of your arts program or event. Continue to have monitoring systems in place throughout to ensure compliance.

In Appendix B, list down all the barriers in your venue or workplace that you can eliminate right now and any longer term modifications that can be made subject to funding or relevant approvals

16. Access provisions

Incorporate accessibility in your grant application. Accessibility should be in your budget line and not an afterthought.

If funding received is insufficient to cover all planned access provisions, consult with the community to determine which arts events they would be most interested in attending and focus on that until further funds can be acquired.

For arts organisations, schedule an annual program that includes as many various types of access provisions as possible. Timetable them evenly throughout the year.

Below are some access provisions to make your arts program or event more accessible.

- **Audio description** – is a narrated commentary for people who are blind or vision impaired that provides live or pre-recorded descriptions of the visual elements of artwork, performances or events.
- **Auslan interpretation** - Auslan Interpreters are highly sort after because of NDIS. Bookings must be made well in advance to secure one. If you are in a remote region or cannot secure an interpreter to attend in person, you can approach agencies who can also interpret remotely via personal smart devices or a monitor screen. Powerful internet connection is required for remote Auslan interpretation to be successful.
- **Hearing loop/Assistive listening** – for people who are hearing impaired who can access quality audio through their hearing aids.
- **Captioning** - improves access to Deaf and hard of hearing people, and anyone whose first language is not English. Captioning can be embedded or carried out live in both film and live performance.
- **Tactile tours** - involve participants exploring the exhibition or theatre set and props with a trained guide through informed discussion, touch and sound. The guide will offer verbal descriptions during the tour to participants who get to touch the artworks or objects. Tactile tours can be conducted for live performances, in museums and galleries
- **Technology**
Digital media

An online exhibition or a live streamed performance can be valuable for people who live remotely but only if they have access to the internet. They can also benefit

people who have no or limited access to transport or are too ill to visit the arts program or event.

It encourages artists to think out of the box and also allows people with disability and the community at large to engage, interact and respond to the arts in a virtual world.

Live streaming does not replace the intimacy of attending an exhibition but it can reach greater audiences. It is another way of further promoting the exhibition or performance.

During the first couple of years of covid lockdown, consider the various approaches artists, galleries and museums embraced digital technology to engage with their audiences.

3D Printing

The number of 3D printers available and the huge reduction in cost in purchasing the 3D printer and producing works has allowed artists to create artworks through 3D printing as well as replicating their own artwork that can then be transported to remote communities to experience.

Remember: For intellectual property purposes, you cannot 3D replicate another artists artwork without their permission.

Adaptive technologies and equipment

Some people with disability require adaptive technologies to create art. Below are some simple examples.

- Modify special grips for paintbrushes, pens, colouring tools for an people with limited hand mobility.
- Adjustable Ipad cradles can be attached to wheelchairs or tables for wheelchair users
- Digital switches, foot pedals or joysticks for smart devices for people with limited mobility

Have you or anyone you know accessed any of the above access provisions? If yes, what was the experience like?

17. Marketing strategies

Identify your target market segment in order to effectively strategise a marketing plan.

Take a multi-channel marketing approach by using more than just one marketing platform. Use a plethora of both digital and traditional marketing platforms to reach a greater audience, :

- **Email** - Utilise your email database and reach out to other organisations in the arts and disability sector to promote your arts program or event.
- **Flyers and posters**- This is especially advantageous in remote regional communities. Display your posters and flyers around town at high pedestrian traffic locations such as the library, grocery stores, supermarkets, local businesses and restaurants.
- **Local media outlets** - Get in touch with local newspaper, radio station for community service announcements and interviews, and community bloggers to help market your event.

- **Social media** - Creating a dedicated access social media Facebook page for your arts program or event. (eg Audio Description Events WA and Auslan Interpreted Events Perth).
- **Mail list** - Collate your own mailing list which can be segmented into different types of preference of type of arts programs and events that people are interested in.
- **Websites:** Promote your accessible events on websites including the arts organisations and local government in your community.

Case study: Sprung!! Integrated Dance Theatre Inc

Project description: “A Week of Silliness” - Five different days, five different tutors. Persons with and without disability were invited to leave their inhibitions behind and get together for a week of experimentation and belly laughs with experienced clown and physical theatre tutors.

Target audience: We ran a Facebook campaign and email out targeting previous Sprung!! workshop participants and others involved in theatre or dance in our region. We contracted high quality physical theatre tutors from Northern River and Brisbane and hoped that at a minimum, 8 regular Sprung!! dancers and eight local theatre enthusiasts might enrol. Our usual Sprung!! participants are persons with intellectual disability, predominantly Down Syndrome. One person with mild hemiplegia and no intellectual disability attended this workshop as a volunteer. Our tutors all had some experience teaching persons with disability, though some more than others.

Total budget: \$2200. We paid each tutor \$250 for the day, and paid one of the tutors another \$250 for concept and coordination. Other administration support and poster design, plus accommodation for tutors from Brisbane, was given in-kind. Rent was \$350, photographic documentation was \$250, and approximately \$100 was paid for Facebook campaign boosting and poster printing.

Aims of project:

- To expand our dancers skills with physical theatre training and to allow exposure to a range of different tutors and styles.
- Have fun!! Experience a more open-ended (not performance oriented) workshop.
- See what frisson might develop between Sprung!! dancers and various tutors and styles.
- Attract more participants with and without disability to Sprung!!
- Test the idea of clowning as an addition to Sprung!! repertoire.

Outcomes: The week was enjoyed by 12 paying participants and nine volunteers/tutors. We charged \$250 per week or \$75 per day for participants, giving \$2800 income and surplus of about \$600. Because of this excess, we were able to reimburse petrol costs for the tutors who had come from Brisbane, and contribute the residue to another project which needed it. Several tutors stayed for the entire week and contributed greatly to the quality of the experience for all. Despite significant efforts, we did not attract persons without disability who were not otherwise involved in Sprung!!

Particular successes: The week was an enormous success. We plan to start regular clowning workshops, and to integrate clowning into other aspects of our work. Everyone loves dress-ups. We rehearse in a 100y year old Arts building but had never used the tiny stage with its red velvet curtains and pastoral backdrop. Our tutors used the hall in new ways including maximising the performance experience of entering through the curtain and interacting with a “live audience” (of fellow participants). This enhanced the experience of being a real and special performer.

We always invest in documentation and this always pays off in the joy participants get from displaying the photos, in the material for future grant applications and to boost our digital profiles. This year and last we have scheduled a half day outside in our beautiful environs (coast or woodland). This allows for a change of pace and also for beautiful photographs.

Other feedback: Our success built on having a committed group of dancers with disability who attend holiday workshops regularly. This has built up over the last four years. The fact that our artistic director and president attended the entire week as voluntary unpaid participants allowed a stability for course attendees that would not have been there otherwise with the “different day, different tutor” model.

We have learned to run two simultaneous budgets: a minimalist and a wish-list budget. Tutors need to be very clear up front what is expected and what the pay is. We let them know that things like petrol and expenses re-imbursements were the top of a wishlist depending on course enrolments. We try to get everyone sharing the mailout/publicity. Some tutors don't like photography, and the deepest work often occurs without it- but you need a balance.

What would the most effective way of communicating and promoting an arts program or event to you?

18. Sector engagement

Where do you start when working in a remote or regional town?

- Engage with local regional disability service organisations to engage and reach new audiences.
- Most local governments employ an access and inclusion officer or a staff member in the cultural community development team who coordinates the access and inclusion portfolio. Reach out to them.
- Build relationships between arts organisations, disability service organisations, artists and artworkers. This can be done by conducting in person community meetings and consulting within the sectors to create meaningful partnerships.
- For arts organisations, develop an access and inclusion committees to consult on programming. Regularly meet to assess and monitor progress and outcomes.
Remember: It is important to pay people with disability on your access committee for their time and expertise.
- For artists and artworkers, work alongside arts organisations and disability service organisations to be supported or auspiced in arts projects.

- Gaining feedback from people with disability and the community at large is invaluable in giving people with disability agency and bettering the arts program or event.
- Leveraging your arts program or event on existing events and festivals can also maximise audience reach, especially in remote regional regions where transient population numbers can rise considerably during certain periods of the year.

19. Cultural protocols

Cultural Protocols are ethical principles which guide behaviours and the way we work in the arts and culture in the community. It governs how we treat and work with people respectfully.

Cultural Safety is an approach we use when working with the community to look at how our opinions and actions can affect the cultural identity and wellbeing of the people we work with.

At an organisational level, Cultural Safety requires us to be conscious of the whole context within which we operate, and to work collaboratively and inclusively with difference as it is perceived on a societal level and to be mindful of the fact that everyone deserves access to arts and culture.

“There is no word for disability in Aboriginal languages, so disability is not a word that Aboriginal people are familiar with using the word disability. This may help us to understand the more inclusive nature of Aboriginal communities where people with disability are generally not excluded from or stigmatised in their communities”

https://www.peerconnect.org.au/files/3815/0596/6665/Life_Issues_Aboriginal_Perspectives_on_disability.pdf

Many artists have a disability but they may not see it that way so they will engage and participate the same way as everyone else. Some artists may need extra assistance in terms of focus and following through on tasks so when there is limited staff around to assist this can be a barrier to them creating work.

A Conversation with Zoe Martyn (an artist and artsworker)

About Zoe

I have worked in the arts for over 10 years as an arts worker, project co-ordinator and arts administrator. From working in Perth with DADAA to the Western desert with Martumili Artists and in Roebourne with Juluwarlu Art Group. I have a Bachelor of Arts and Visual Arts from Monash University and a graduate certificate in Community Development from Murdoch University. In 2019 I was an exhibition attendant at the Australian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale as part of the Australian Council for the Arts Professional Development program. I am currently working for Martumili Artists as a project and administration officer with occasional arts facilitation work based on specific projects.

What draws you to work in regional remote WA?

I was drawn to work in remote WA for many reasons. I was interested in the incredible creativity and projects coming out of the art centres, the unique perspectives and work

connected to themes of environmentalism, history, ways of living pre - colonial settlement. I was also drawn to the land, the remoteness, the colour and the heat. I was also interested in what was being created outside major cities. It all added up to an intoxicating mix!

How do you engage the community to participate in your arts workshops/projects?

Below is a description of what and how aboriginal art centres run. This is important to note as community participation is often driven from the artists or from their families. Art centres are well established within many communities with children growing up watching family members paint.

Aboriginal art centres are many things to many people. They are cultural connectors; artistic work-spaces; art marketplaces; income generators; training facilities; professional workplaces; community hubs, and above all, places where culture is celebrated and continued.

Despite the differences, each art centre has something important in common: they are all art enterprises 100% owned and governed by Aboriginal people. Because of this, they provide their communities with many important economic, social and cultural benefits.

“When an artwork is sold from an art centre, an agreed percentage of the sale price is paid to the artist, while the remainder is allocated to the art centre to support its continuation and growth. This distribution of income is decided by the Aboriginal artists working in the art centre with advice from the art centre manager. This structure marks an important point of difference in the Indigenous art trade and is vital to Aboriginal self-determination in relation to the art market.”

<https://aachwa.com.au/art-and-art-centres/>

Because art centres are so embedded within communities many people will turn up if the door is open. They are trusted spaces. When other art organisations or artists come to work with Aboriginal artists, one of the key things art centres offer is that facilitation of relationships. These existing relationships can help get projects off the ground.

When a project has been bought in and sits outside the scope of normal operation it is important to explain the project in a way the person can understand being mindful that English may be a second, third or fourth language. Many people will want to know:

Are they being paid for their participation?

Where is the work going?

Who is the work for?

The person is then able to make an informed decision if they want to participate or not. There also may be many reasons why someone want engage, from cultural obligations, other commitments or perhaps they have an avoidance relationships with someone else who is involved in the project and who is in the room. When working in a cross cultural environment there may be many things happening under the surface that you are unaware of that may impact someones involvement.

It is also important to know as an arts facilitator when to motivate and encourage someone and when to back off!

What are some challenges?

When working remotely you need to be extremely flexible. There are many factors that can delay, change a project. Rain can close roads for days or weeks, funerals, medical appointments and cultural reasons are just a few things that can pop up and mean

community members are not around. People can also get stuck in major towns and may struggle to find transport to get back out to their remote community.

You also need to be extremely prepared. It can take days to drive to some remote communities. Ensure that you have all of your art materials that you will need. Ensure the vehicles you driving to those communities have safety gear and are mechanically sound. In the communities I worked in, a mail plane would fly out once a week. This meant you could get materials sent out if needed but sometimes they are too full so you would need to wait another week before you could get materials. This makes you resourceful and work with what is on hand.

What are some highlights?

Too many to say! The people and the landscape continually pull me back to working remotely. My favourite times have been on country trips and working on large scale collaborative canvases.

What is one advice you would give someone who wants to work in regional WA?

If you are interested in working remotely I would look at volunteering at an arts centre. Martumili Artists offer a one month volunteer opportunity which is a great way to see if it is something you'd like pursue further. A little taster! It also then opens doors for potential future employment should you wish to do that.

20. Final thoughts

Accessibility needs to be embedded in the arts programming of individual artists and strategic business plans of arts organisations.

“What we have to be doing all the time is work towards democratising access to our artistic product, grow our audience and adapt around the unique needs of all our different audience segments. One of the fears the arts sector often has working with disability or mental health communities is how to respond and deal with the unique issues that they come up with. I think the critical thing that the entire arts sector needs to recognise is that there is no expectation that you will become the specialist disability or mental health provider. Really the best strategy to do is to partner with key mental health and disability arms of government and providers because they will do that work for you. Inclusion is not asking you to become an expert in disability, it is simply asking you to reach out and develop really meaningful partnerships with those who specialise in these population groups.”

David Doyle, Executive Director, DADAA.

Appendix A – Barriers

Physical Barriers	Economic Barriers
Social Barriers	Sensory Barriers
Communication Barriers	

Appendix B – Solutions to eliminating barriers

What you can do now	Long term planning solutions

Appendix C – Test your knowledge

Question 1

You are a front of house staff and are standing behind a high counter in your venue. A wheelchair user and their companion enter and approach you. What do you do?

- a) Greet them and speak to the companion only
- b) Move from the back of the counter and approach them and speak to them normally
- c) Just nod
- d) Ignore them and carry on with your work

Question 2

You are at the bar and are approached by someone who is blind. What do you do?

- a) Ask them what they would like to drink
- b) Read them the drinks menu
- c) When serving their drink, indicate where their glass is in relation to where they are
- d) All of the above

Question 3

You are a workshop facilitator and are conducting a public program of workshops where community members can walk in to participate. What do you do?

- a) Set up your tables and seating so that there is even space for people to move about and places where wheelchair users can sit to participate
- b) Set up your tables and seating so that there is even space for people to move about and a separate table for wheelchair users to sit away from the group
- c) Place your water and urn on a high table so that it will not get accidentally knocked over
- d) Hold your workshop in a venue without an accessible toilet

Question 4

You are a festival program manager in a regional town. What should you do?

- a) Ensure that all festival venues are wheelchair accessible
- b) Consult with local Elders in the planning stage of program
- c) Consult with community members and ask for their input
- d) All of the above

Question 5

When communicating with someone who has an intellectual disability or an autistic person, you should :

- a) Talk to the person like a child unless they are a child
- b) Ask them to repeat your instructions to see if they understand you
- c) Talk to them instead of their support staff or carer
- d) All of the above

Question 6

Someone who is blind using a white cane is at your venue looking lost. What do you do?

- a) Grab their cane and take them to where they need to go
- b) Speak loudly to them and ask them where they need to go to?
- c) Point to where they need to go
- d) Introduce yourself and ask if they need any assistance

Question 7

To create a 'quiet area' for an event, what do you need to do?

- a) Situate the marquee in a high pedestrian flow area
- b) Play loud music in the marquee
- c) Ensure lighting is bright so people can see what they are doing
- d) None of the above

Question 8

Who does Audio Description benefit

- a) Deaf people
- b) People who are blind or vision impaired
- c) People with intellectual disability
- d) Wheelchair users

Question 9

What are some alternative formats?

- a) Large Print
- b) Audio Files
- c) Braille
- d) All of the above

Question 10

When organising an event, consider the following:

- a) Provide alternative format information only when requested
- b) Choose any booking system platform for people to make a booking
- c) Assume that all staff and volunteers understand the various needs of people with disability who are attending your event
- d) None of the above

Appendix D – Universal Access Symbols



Accessible Toilet Symbol

For people with physical disability



Assistance Animal Facilities Symbol

Availability of water or grass area or that the animal can be left with staff when viewing a performance or exhibition



Assistive Listening Symbol

Augmented hearing or hearing loop) available for people who are hard of hearing.

Audio Description Symbol



Audio description enhances live performance, film and visual art for people who are blind or vision impaired. This can be delivered live or pre-recorded.

Auslan Symbol



This service is for Deaf people This symbol can be used to indicate access for people who are blind or have low vision, including: a guided tour, a path to a nature trail or a scent garden in a park; and a touch/tactile tour or a museum exhibition that may be touched.



Braille Symbol

Braille indicates that written materials are available in Braille. This could include labelling, marketing, publications and signage at the venue.



Captioning (open/closed)

Captioning is available at selected performances, movies, TV shows and online. During the performance, presentation, forum or film, the captions are displayed on a screen, enabling the audience to read what is being said, without obstructing the actors. Open Captioning is always in view, and cannot be turned off. Close Captioning can be activated or deactivated by the viewer.



Companion Card Symbol

Indicates that the provider is a Companion Card Affiliate. The Companion Card is issued to people with disability who require lifelong attendant care support, to enable participation at events, arts programs and venues without incurring the price of a second ticket for their companion. www.companioncard.gov.au



Easy Read Symbol

Indicates Easy Read is available. Easy Read documents have short, simple sentences with pictures.



Guide Dog Symbol

Guide dogs assist people who are blind or vision impaired. This symbol also refers to assistance animal.

Large Print

Large Print Symbol

Large Print is printed in 18 point or larger text. As well as indicating that large print versions of books, pamphlets, museum guides and theatre programs are available, you can use the symbol on conference or membership forms to indicate that print materials can be provided in large print. Sans serif with good contrast is highly recommended as well as following clear print guidelines for readability.



Quiet Space Symbol

A space to facilitate the calming or alerting of senses as needed. Quiet spaces are used to avoid or recover from sensory overload or to provide sensory input to meet a sensory need (e.g. tactile, auditory or visual stimulation). Also known as a chill out area or zone.



Registered Assistance Animals welcome Symbol

Indicates that only registered assistance dogs are welcome. This symbol also refers to Guide dogs.



Relaxed Event Symbol

Relaxed performances, screenings or events are designed to reduce anxiety and create a supportive atmosphere for people with autism spectrum conditions, learning disability and other sensory and communication disorders. There is a relaxed attitude to noise and movement among the audience and some small changes made to the light and sound effects. Audience members can enter and exit the venue throughout the show.



Visual Story Symbol

Using both words and pictures, a visual story introduces people on what to expect during an outing to the theatre, cinema or other arts programs. They should be short, factual, offer positive options to help with fears about triggers such as loud sounds, tell the story briefly, and share any big surprises.



Wheelchair Accessible Symbol

Indicates access for people with limited mobility, including wheelchair users. For example, the symbol is used to indicate an accessible entrance, bathroom or that a phone is lowered for wheelchair users. Remember that a ramped entrance is not complete access if there are no curb cuts, and an elevator is not accessible if it can only be reached via steps.

Appendix E – Resources

Accessible venues

<https://vimeo.com/767958655/b65f18bf9e?share=copy>

Adaptive technologies

<https://www.spectronics.com.au/catalogue/ablenet>

Braille and Tactiles

<https://www.visability.com.au/about-visability/vision-resources/braille/>

Blind and vision impairment

<https://www.visionaustralia.org/technology-products/resources>

Communication strategies

<https://www.afdo.org.au/resource-communication-with-people-with-disabilities/>

Deaf and hard of hearing

<https://accessplus.org.au/>

Human Rights

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-30-participation-in-cultural-life-recreation-leisure-and-sport.html>

Social story/visual narrative

<https://www.zealousproductions.com.au/relaxed-show>