

**3 December 2018**

National Arts and Disability Strategy  
GPO Box 2154  
Canberra ACT 2601

By email: [Arts.Disability@arts.gov.au](mailto:Arts.Disability@arts.gov.au)

Dear Cultural Ministers,

### **LPA Submission to National Arts and Disability Strategy**

Live Performance Australia (LPA) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the important development of a renewed *National Arts and Disability Strategy*.

#### **About LPA**

LPA is the peak body for Australia's live performance industry. Established 100 years ago in 1917 and registered as an employers' organisation under the *Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009*, LPA has over 400 Members nationally. We represent commercial and independent producers, music promoters, performing arts companies, venues (e.g. performing arts centres, commercial theatres, stadiums and arenas), arts festivals, music festivals, and service providers such as ticketing companies and technical suppliers. Our membership spans from small-medium and not-for-profit organisations to large commercial entities.

#### **Engagement with the live performance industry by people with disability**

Organisations in the live performance industry are committed to strong engagement with all sectors of our diverse society, including people with disability. Many LPA Members have delivered innovative initiatives and programming that engages people with disability as professionals, participants and audience members. A number of these initiatives and productions are highlighted in the accompanying research paper that supports the Strategy renewal. Our broad industry, both in the subsidised and commercial sectors, engages people with disability in the following ways.

- **Professional artists and arts workers**

Organisations in live performance employ and engage professional performers and arts workers with disability. This includes creative/artistic, administrative and technical roles in emerging, mid-career, established and leadership positions. For example, Restless Dance Theatre's 2017 production "Intimate Space", which showcased performance artists with disability, was nominated for a Helpmann Award for Best Dance Production and was presented as part of Adelaide Festival, Bleach Festival, 2018 Commonwealth Games Arts and Cultural Festival and the Australian Performing Arts Market.

- **Participants**

Many live performance organisations provide people with disability opportunities to engage in artistic and creative practice. This includes encouraging creative engagement such as in collaborative workshops or other recreational programs. For example, the 2017 Desert Song Festival in Alice Springs undertook a workshop development initiative as part of its festival program which provided an opportunity for local central Australian artists with disability to engage in choral skills development, work collaboratively with established music professionals and perform during the festival. Another example is Queensland Ballet's "Dance for Parkinson's" initiative, in which the Queensland Ballet runs weekly dance classes for people affected by Parkinson's.

- **Audience members**

The primary means through which live performance organisations engage people with disability is as audience members. All sectors of the industry implement initiatives to maximise accessibility for audiences with disability to live performances. Accessible measures for people with disability are established all the way through the audience experience, from ticket purchasing to accessing venues and enjoying the performance. For example, ticketing companies dedicate significant resource to providing easy and accessible ways for purchasing event tickets. Venues also commit considerable resource to providing accessible facilities. For example, Canberra Theatre Centre received an accolade from Better Hearing Australia in 2016 in recognition of its dedication to improving accessibility, particularly through providing captioned performances for the deaf and hearing-impaired community.

As the peak body for the live performance industry, LPA provides best practice guidance to our membership on measures for providing access to people with disability. We have developed an arts access information kit for our membership that provides useful information on catering for audiences with disability, including providing building access, the companion card scheme, theatre captioning, use of AUSLAN interpreters and tactile tours. LPA intends to further our work in this area by updating our access guide to include more best practice case studies and guidance on accessibility issues that affect the different sectors of our industry.

### **National Arts and Disability Strategy**

LPA commends the MCM for undertaking the renewal of the National Arts and Disability Strategy. This is an important initiative for determining and implementing measures for enhancing accessibility in the live performance industry and arts more broadly.

While many organisations in the live performance industry are committed to engaging with people with disability as arts practitioners, participants or audience members, it must be recognised that these engagement initiatives are often resource intensive and costly to deliver. As such, organisations in the live performance industry should be supported and adequately funded to deliver initiatives in support of this Strategy. LPA also supports the commitment of funding and resources to filling the gaps in data and research identified in the *Arts and Disability Research*

*Overview* issued in accompaniment with the Discussion Paper.

We look forward to working with the MCM and Department of Communications and the Arts throughout the development of this Strategy. Please do not hesitate to contact us at any time for further information.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this submission for consideration.

Yours sincerely,



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