



# **Geelong Arts Centre Disability Action Plan 2023 - 2025**

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1. **Acknowledgement of Country**

At the Geelong Arts Centre, we acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we are located, the Wadawurrung people of the Kulin Nations, and pay our respects to elders, past, present, and emerging. We recognise their continued connection to land, water, culture, and community. We acknowledge the traditional custodians and recognise that twice as many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are d/Deaf and Disabled as non-Aboriginal Australians.

2. **Alternative Formats**

Our Disability Action Plan is available in alternative formats on our website:

<https://geelongartscentre.org.au/about-us/policies/disability-action-plan/>

3. **Welcome and Introduction**

We are pleased to present to you the Geelong Arts Centre Disability Action Plan 2023-2025.

The Geelong Arts Centre acknowledges the importance of providing equitable access to all visitors and workplace participants. We acknowledge and celebrate the invaluable work of d/Deaf and Disabled creatives, as key contributors to our community.

We reflect on the history of the Centre which first opened its doors to the Geelong community in 1981. The previous Little Malop Street building, designed in the late 1970's, lacked the universal access that we promote today. Retrofitting initiatives over the years included small-scale lifts and stair climbers, to stage level for performers, platform lifts for patrons, and stair climbers to reach offices.

We celebrate our achievements to date and will continue to identify and reduce the barriers that impede access for the d/Deaf and Disabled people. We are thrilled with the Centre's Redevelopment and the impending transformation of our business, as a central hub within our community. We encourage and are receptive to all feedback on this plan, our programs and experience at the Centre. We strive for continuous improvement and maintaining access to the Centre, empowering all people to be both creators and consumers of arts and culture.

Consistent with our core values, this plan builds on our achievements to date and adopts a strategic approach to addressing access across the whole organisation for the next three years. The Centre has aligned this plan's objectives with the Inclusive Victoria: State Disability Action Plan and terminology aligned with Arts Access Victoria and the Social Model of Disability.

I am excited about the opportunities it offers and commend this plan to you.

Joel McGuiness

Chief Executive Officer and Creative Director, Geelong Arts Centre

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#### 4. **Application**

Demonstrating our organisation-wide commitment to inclusion and accessibility, the Geelong Arts Centre Disability Action Plan 2023-2025 reaffirms our goals from previous plans to promote our vision for the future. Our four overarching objectives include:

1. **Access to spaces and services**  
Identify and reduce barriers to enable universal access to physical and online spaces and services.
2. **Inclusion and participation**  
Encourage and welcome all d/Deaf and Disabled people to participate in our programs and events, from performers and presenters to workshop participants and audience members.
3. **Access to and quality of employment**  
Reduce the barriers for d/Deaf and Disabled people obtaining and maintaining employment.
4. **Leadership and culture**  
Maintain the Centre's push for inclusive practice through consultation, proactive leadership and developing positive attitudes.

#### 5. **Consultation, Collaboration and Review**

This Disability Action Plan (DAP) has been developed in collaboration with key internal stakeholders and Arts Access Victoria to ensure effective commitment, goal setting, and use of appropriate terminology.

This plan complements and extends to relevant goals within our Gender Equality Action Plan, Reconciliation Action Plan and Child Safety and Wellbeing Framework, with the understanding and promotion of an intersectional approach to diversity and inclusion here at the Geelong Arts Centre.

The Centre ensures oversight of these goals by reporting progress to the Geelong Performing Arts Centre Trust's Governance, Nominations and Remunerations Subcommittee (GNRSC) on an annual basis and provides the necessary updates to Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR). Following the annual progress reports to the GNRSC, an outcomes report update will be uploaded to the dedicated Disability Action page on the Centre's public website.

The progress towards and achievement of this Plan (alongside the Centre's other Diversity and Inclusion Plans/Frameworks) is overseen and monitored by the Gender Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Working Group. Participants of this group are representatives of the Centre's various business areas, who champion access within their teams and our broader

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community. Membership is also strongly encouraged from across business areas to promote diverse engagement and representation. This working group convenes on a (minimum) quarterly basis, ensuring the goals and strategies of our Plans/Frameworks are actioned and effectively recorded for the aforementioned reporting process.

This plan is governed by the following pieces of legislation:

- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*
- *Disability Act 2006 (Vic)*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)*
- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)*

## 6. Definitions

<b>Accessibility</b>	The degree to which products, services, and environments are designed to be used by d/Deaf and Disabled people.
<b>Accommodation</b>	A change or adjustment made to a product, service, or environment to make it accessible for d/Deaf and Disabled people.
<b>Barrier</b>	Anything that prevents or makes it difficult for a d/Deaf or Disabled person to access a product, service, or environment.
<b>Impairment</b>	refers to any permanent or temporary condition which affects a person's bodily or mental function.
<b>Disability</b>	<p>In line with the Social Model of Disability, disability is defined as the result of the interaction between people living with impairments and barriers in the physical, attitudinal, communication and social environment.</p> <p>d/Deaf and Disabled people can be defined as people who have physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory differences that, when interacting with inaccessible communities and environments, prevent full and equal community participation.</p> <p>As highlighted by Arts Access Victoria, the use of capitalisation is in line with Disability Pride.</p>
<b>d/Deaf</b>	<p>Can be defined as a hearing impairment, inhibiting the ability to process linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification. People who are profoundly Deaf and use Auslan (Australian Sign Language) often don't think of their deafness as a disability, but rather culture with its own language and history. However, where some do not align with this, we cater to both groups with the use of 'd/Deaf.' As highlighted by Arts Access Victoria, the use of capitalisation is in line with Disability Pride.</p>

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<b>Equity</b>	Refers to fairness and justice, recognising that we do not all start from the same place and must acknowledge and make adjustments to imbalances.
<b>Inclusion</b>	The act of making all people feel welcome and valued, regardless of their differences, and creating an environment where everyone can participate fully.
<b>Reasonable accommodation</b>	An accommodation that can be made without causing undue hardship to an organisation, such as providing assistive technology or modifying work schedules.
<b>Universal Design &amp; Access</b>	The design of products, services and environments that are accessible and usable by as many people as possible, regardless of their abilities.
<b>Workplace participants</b>	means an individual who performs work in any capacity for the Centre including Geelong Arts Centre employees, Trust and subcommittee members, contractors, subcontractors, apprentices, hirers, performers, trainees, work experience students, interns, and volunteers.

○ **Objective One – Access to spaces and services**

The Centre is committed to identifying and reducing barriers, to enable universal access to physical and digital services. Our commitments are outlined as follows:

- Ensure that the principles of universal access, inclusion and participation are embedded and championed for our Redevelopment and includes audience, performers, and team.
- Engage with disability networks and organisations across a range of access needs to assess and seek feedback on Centre facilities, both physical and online.
- Ensure that accessibility is clearly communicated across the Centre's online channels.

**Responsible Teams:**

- Redevelopment
- Operations and Experience
- Development and Marketing

○ **Objective Two – Inclusion and participation**

The Centre seeks to encourage and welcome people from the d/Deaf and Disabled community to participate in our programs and events, from performers and presenters to workshop participants and audience members. Our commitments are outlined as follows:

- Foster and maintain relationships with local networks to identify opportunities for d/Deaf and Disabled people.

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- Investigate partnership opportunities and community engagement programs to enhance the Centre experience for d/Deaf and Disabled people.
- Maintain our longstanding relationship with Back-to-Back Theatre, as well as expanding to include other artists and practitioners who are a part of the d/Deaf and Disabled community.
- Continue our engagement with and programming of disability-led organisations.
- Investigate and increase access services at the Centre to engage and include our diverse audiences more effectively.

Responsible Teams:

- Production and Presenter Services
- Programming

○ **Objective Three – Access to and quality of employment**

The Centre aims to reduce the barriers to employment for d/Deaf and Disabled people. Our commitments are outlined as follows:

- Equitably support and accommodate d/Deaf and Disabled employees to thrive at work;
- Measure and maintain workforce diversity insights to encourage employee-led priorities;
- Promote inclusion and accessibility from the induction stage of employment at the Centre;
- Engage with disability recruitment specialists to assess barriers and identify strategies for progress; and
- Promote the engagement of businesses who employ d/Deaf and Disabled people.

Responsible Teams:

- People and Culture
- Procurement

○ **Objective Four – Leadership and culture**

The Centre is determined to promote inclusive practices through consultation, proactive leadership and developing of positive attitudes. Our commitments are outlined as follows:

- Promote awareness and competence of Centre staff through dedicated training opportunities, to effectively empower and address the needs of d/Deaf and Disabled people.
- Embed the principles of this Disability Action Plan across the organisation's plans, strategies, and agendas to promote proactive discussions of access and inclusion.
- Foster a culture of inclusivity within our community by celebrating diversity across our work, programs, and events.

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Responsible Teams:

- Executive Leadership Team
- Programming
- People and Culture
- Governance
- Geelong Performing Arts Centre Trust

**7. Acknowledging our progress**

Since the establishment of our first Disability Action Plan in 2011, we have made considerable progress in our pursuit of access and inclusion here at the Geelong Arts Centre. We celebrate our efforts and determination to continuously improve and be able to empower community members to be involved in our programs and events. Acknowledging the multitude of barriers to access, the Centre has invested in more accessible arrangements that promote more inclusive experiences with the Centre; such as livestreaming, relaxed performances, wheelchair accessibility, hearing loops, AUSLAN interpretation and website functionality.

Additionally, we are thrilled to highlight the following projects and partnerships that are central to the Centre's progress and development:

- Victorian Government Major Capital Works
  - Ryrie Street Redevelopment
  - Little Malop Street Redevelopment
- Programming of and engagement with Back-to-Back Theatre, Sensorium Theatre and Kate Hood (workshops)
- Creative Learning, our inclusive and accessible education program
- Geelong Inclusion Network
- Establishment of the Gender Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Working Group

**8. Feedback**

We welcome and encourage all feedback on this Disability Action Plan, as well as your experience at the Centre – our programs and events. Please follow this link (<https://forms.office.com/r/7YzH1ZcXPP>) to do so anonymously. This feedback will be reviewed by the Gender Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Working Group, which will allow for the Centre's continuous improvement and further develop our understanding of community needs.

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