

NDIS resources

Make art a priority in your NDIS plan

PREMIUM CONTENT

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The NDIS is the most significant social reform in recent years and there are numerous resources to help you prioritise the arts in your plan.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is one of the most significant social and economic reforms in Australia. Introduced into parliament by former Prime Minister Julia Gillard in November 2012, the NDIS was officially rolled out on 1 July 2016.

An insurance scheme, the NDIS promises to provide long-term support to Australians with a disability, their families and carers, and is being rolled out in stages. It's expected to be available to all eligible Australians by July 2019. With an annual budget of approximately \$22 billion per year, it's reported that 120,000 people have already registered for the scheme, with 460,000 eligible Australians expected to be registered by 2020.

The sector has demonstrated strong support for the new scheme, which will enable thousands of Australians access to funding for community services and individual support. The scheme gives individuals the opportunity to determine the kinds of support they need. For artists and arts lovers, it has the capacity to unlock barriers to participation by enabling individuals to make art, experience art and work in the arts.

'NDIS has the power to transform lives, cultivate afore-hidden talent and revolutionise the arts sector,' said Ailey Ball, Arts Access Victoria NDIS coordinator.

Ball said 'making and experiencing art is associated with people living longer, healthier lives. Physical creative activities like singing, dance and playing instruments improve heart health and fitness, as well as brain health.'

Gaëlle Mellis, Access2Arts Creative Director, told ArtsHub: 'There are ways that the arts can be included in areas such as capacity building and mentoring. The arts as such have been quite low on the NDIS agenda and we all need to keep championing the arts within the NDIS.'

'A disability perspective is important to the evolution of the arts and arts practice. It is platform for experimentation, multiple narratives, new ways of working. Disability exposes another aspect of the lived human experience and it deepens the richness of artistic and creative language; the arts are lesser without it,' Mellis said.

Read: Neurodiversity takes centre stage

However, more needs to be done to ensure employment opportunities for artists with disability are provided for by the NDIS.

Australia's peak national body for arts and disability, Arts Access Australia (AAA) released a statement earlier this month highlighting the need for more support for employment outcomes. Recent research conducted by the Australia Council for the Arts [found artists with disability earn 42% less than artists without disability.](#)

Meagan Shand, AAA CEO, said: 'We are concerned that a lack of understanding of professional career and employment pathways, and what constitutes quality arts practice, will mean that artists with disability will not get the support they need to access professional arts programs and reach their career and employment goals.'

HOW TO INCORPORATE ART IN YOUR NDIS PLAN

Some people with disability, and disability service providers, are experiencing confusion and concern when it comes to incorporating art into an NDIS plan. Art and cultural participation are not mentioned directly in the NDIS, with art falling under the categories of social and community participation; skills development; pathways to employment, and health and wellbeing.

There are many providers able to help people one-on-one with their [NDIS Pathways](#), and some providers offer to have a representative attend NDIS Pathways Meeting sessions along with the applicant.

There are online guides to help you along your journey. [Art & You: A Planning Guide](#) (shortlisted for the Vic Health Awards) is a self-advocacy tool-kit and available for free download on the Arts Access Victoria website. The guide outlines the process of becoming an NDIS participant, what people need to prepare, and how to begin talking about arts and cultural participation in a way that aligns with the NDIS.

Arts Access Victoria outlined what you will need to think about at your first meeting, when an individual's support requirements and funding are determined:

- Bring a statement of your goals, specifying the inclusion of arts experiences and arts practices;
- Prepare a statement of the value that art has in your life;
- Have a list of existing supports and activities;
- Think beyond your current supports; and,
- Be aware that your support team (family, friends, trusted service providers) can attend the planning meeting and help you to advocate for the inclusion of art in your NDIS plan.

Ability to access the scheme will depend on where eligible individuals live. Each state has pledged to gradually bring people into the scheme over time to ensure operations are delivered effectively.

RESOURCES IN YOUR AREA

National

Established in 1992 and with a board comprising of at least 50% identifying as a person with disability, [Arts Access Australia \(AAA\)](#) is the national peak body for the arts and disability.

AAA's role is to increase national and international opportunities and access for people with disability as artists, arts-workers, participants and audiences through information, research and advocacy. Individuals are welcome to [contact AAA](#) directly for opportunities or advice.

'People are welcomed to contact AAA if they have or would like to create a professional development opportunity for an artist with disability, artists with disabilities are looking for opportunities,' Shand told ArtsHub.

VIC

[Arts Access Victoria \(AAV\)](#) is on hand to answer any questions you might have about the NDIS. Based in South Melbourne, AAV runs award winning arts programs for people with disabilities. Programs range from youth zine workshops *Connecting the Dots* (Shortlisted for the Vic Health Awards) to monthly NDIS information meetings and an online tool.

Connecting the Dots is a workshop for young people aged 16-27 who experience mental health issues or are passionate about mental health. Project officer, Linda Studena, has been coordinating the *Connecting the Dots Project* for two years.

'During discussion sessions, participants stated that art was their form of connection to the world, so we honoured that by introducing a collaborative process where art making was the vehicle for unpacking concepts around advocacy, choice, and control,' she said.

AAV coordinator, Ball added, 'Working with facilitator Eloise Grills, we invited young artists to collaborate with Arts Access Victoria by exploring imagery around the role art making has in their lives and how this supports their health, well-being and social and community connections.'

'The final zine, to be launched in February, will be an advocacy tool for young people interested in the arts to self-advocate for their arts participation in an NDIS planning meeting, with members of their family or mental health provider.'

AAV also offer support through monthly [Art, NDIS & You: NDIS Information Sessions](#) for participants, families and carers, where you will have access to a wealth of accessible NDIS information.

Another tool available is [ARTfinder](#), an online searchable portal to help you find accessible arts programs and services. Anyone with disability (including people with lived experience of mental illness) can access these programs.

WA

[DADAA](#) is a leading arts and health organisation that creates access to cultural activities for people with disability or a mental illness. Working within a Community Arts and Cultural Development (CACD) framework, DADAA offers targeted programs that include a broad range of traditional and new media projects in Western Australian communities.

DADAA offer up to up to eight hours per client of customised NDIS planning. If you have already enrolled with the NDIS, then you can request that DADAA be written into your plan. If you are eligible but have not yet enrolled, you can talk to DADAA about providing information about an arts component to your plan. Contact the organisation for more details.

NSW

Accessible Arts is the peak arts and disability organisation for New South Wales. Their mission is to provide leadership in arts and disability through information, advocacy and the facilitation of excellence in arts practice. Accessible Arts provide a wide range of initiatives and programs that are inclusive for all, including *Delineate*, a program that seeks to add to the Don't DIS my ABILITY campaign run by Family and Community Services (FACS). In partnership with Accessible Arts, the program is designed to boost and foster arts and disability practice within NSW by distributing grants.

Morwenna Collett, CEO Accessible Arts, told ArtsHub: 'We want all arts opportunities to be inclusive for people with disability, whether they are artists, volunteers, workers, participants or audience members. We have two main components to our work: connecting and brokering opportunities for artists with disability to have professional careers in the arts and; working with arts/cultural organisations to help them improve the accessibility of the programs and services they provide.'

SA

Access2Arts is a disability-lead arts development agency. Access2Arts' work focuses on Disability Arts, Arts and Disability and Deaf Arts. They are not a service provider of NDIS as yet, but they are currently undergoing transitional training and planning that has been provided by the state government.

Gaëlle Mellis, Access2Arts Creative Director said, 'Our approach to what do is simple: we believe in equality. We bring our unique perspective and integrity to the arts landscape to remove barriers to the arts and arts opportunities and explore the inter-relationships between arts practice and disability.'

Access2Arts started the first professional live Audio Description Service in Australia in 2011. They have delivered professional training in audio description and created an online platform, *Collude*, combining arts with technology to create new and exciting ways of making art. Each project is led by an artist with disability.

A current initiative underway at Access2Arts is **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** a participatory arts project that asked deaf and disabled people what they considered 'reasonable and necessary in their lives.'

Another of the organisation's initiatives is *30x30 – 30 free accessible events*. The initiative aims to better prepare participants for engagement in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport. Mellis mentioned the name 30x30 was used to reflect Article 30 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: the participation and inclusion of people with disability in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport.

Access2Arts encourages individuals to reach out to them if they are seeking advice.

QLD

In partnership with Queensland arts, **Access Arts** teams up with cultural organisations to support a high level of accessibility and disability awareness within the arts and cultural sector. Access Arts' ethos is to encourage inclusivity and equal access to the arts for all.

ACT

In ACT, [artsACT](#) is the ACT Government's arts agency. ArtsACT provide policy and funding advice to government; manage the ACT Arts Fund and a range of other arts development and funding initiatives, and maintain links with other arts and cultural organisations in Australia and internationally. Contact artsACT directly to find about NDIS opportunities in your area.

MORE WORK AHEAD

'Many people Access2Arts work with are only now starting to get plans,' said Mellis. 'Anecdotal evidence tells us that for some people, plans are working well, particularly is they are self-managing, but due to a backlog here there is also a lot of confusion.'

'The roll out of the NDIS in SA started with children. Five to 17-year-olds started entering on 1 January 2017. Adults aged 18 to 64 years, started from 1 July 2017 with timing depending on where you live. The final roll out for some areas will begin in April 2018. There is also concern here that the roll out will be delayed.'

The Honourable Kelly Vincent MLC recently stated that the number of disability-related complaints in SA have grown by 42% in the past year. [Vincent said](#) in a statement: 'While I am a strong supporter of the NDIS, it is clear that South Australians are getting a raw deal when it comes to responsible management and collaboration between the State and Federal Governments.'

Providing a NSW perspective, Collett added: 'The general premise behind the introduction of the NDIS is strong – it's all about providing individuals with disability choice and control over what support they need to live an everyday life. However, the implementation of the scheme has been inconsistent and confusing, so it is not yet working in the way in which it was originally conceived.'

'The NDIS is a program with a lot of potential, and when it's working well, it has the capacity to be life-changing for some people. However, until the inconsistencies are improved, the process becomes easier and more education is provided about what is possible through the scheme, it will remain difficult to navigate for many people with disability and service organisations wanting to support them, including in the arts,' she emphasised.

On a national scale, [the AAA National Disability Insurance Scheme Working Group](#) (NDISWG) is working collaboratively with the Department of Communications and the Arts (DCA) and the Australia Council for the Arts to address issues of concern regarding the NDIS and the Arts and Disability Sector.

Meagan Shand said work is underway to address several concerns, including:

- Ensuring the distinctiveness of the arts is represented in the NDIS. This in turn will enable the better understanding of the artistic journey and what constitutes quality arts programs.
- Bridging the gap to ensure that artists with disabilities are getting the support and services they need to reach their artistic goals.

- Stopping the loss of our existing professional arts and disability services and programs. Our arts and disability sector has been building quality arts programs for over four decades. The Government cannot afford to lose this valuable asset.
- Investing in disability-led innovation and start-ups, ensuring artists with disability are getting the right support to create new connections, partnerships and enterprises; and that their rights are protected in this new free market.
- Working with us to create better social and economic outcomes for artists with disability. Arts Access Australia is calling for a representative from the NDIS to join our nationwide Working Group.

As a community, the Australian arts sector can do so much to help our fellow artists on their NDIS journey. Shand recommends the sector, ‘champion their work, attend their exhibitions and performances, promote and invest in their art. Connect to an artist with disability, meet them for coffee, ask if and how you can assist.’

She also said the community can invite artists with disabilities to participate in programs, events, activities or better yet create a professional development, residency or employment opportunity for an artist or arts worker with disability – and pay them fairly.

For advice on your NDIS journey, or if you want to learn how to develop inclusive programs and partnerships and create accessible events, visit: www.artsaccessaustralia.org

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