



Signal Disability Action Plan (DAP)

2023

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land, the Bunurong Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation and pay respect to their Elders past, present and emerging. Their sovereignty was never ceded and this always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

Purpose

The purpose of this Disability Action Plan is:

- To guide Signal's work to ensure it's accessible, inclusive, and anti-ableist
- To ensure that Signal commits to actions that reduce barriers for Disabled young people and is guided by Disabled young people on what that looks like
- To let Disabled young people who might want to engage with Signal know what commitment to accessibility they can expect
- To develop a model of best practice for inclusion of Disabled people that is based in solidarity and Disability Justice, recognising both the multiple intersecting oppressions Disabled people face, and the knowledge, creativity, and expertise in Disabled communities
- To ensure Signal is accountable and responsive to Disabled communities

Contributors

Following the principle of nothing about us without us and understanding that Disabled knowledge and expertise are at the centre of all good access work this framework was developed through a co-design process with young Disabled people and facilitated by Disabled facilitators. Young people refers to people aged 14-25.

Our thanks to:

Co-design:

Aoife Ryall (they / them) is a queer neurodivergent chronically ill student who enjoys textile and visual arts.

Amy Marks (she / her) is a disabled filmmaker, advocate and media creative based in Naarm and is particularly interested in using film, video and projection to influence and change mindsets towards inaccessibility. Amy also frequently works as a public speaker and leadership facilitator for various organisations in and out of the disability sector.

And other young Disabled co-design members who chose to remain anonymous.

Co-design facilitators:

Kochava Lilit (zey / zir or they / them) is a non-binary Disabled Jewish writer, educator, and activist. Zir disability access work includes training, consultation, and codesign projects.

Dr. Margaret Mayhew (she / her / they / them) is a queer visual artist and performer who has lived with ableism and chronic pain for 35 years. They teach at university and work at Arts Access Victoria.

Peer reviewers:

Percy Aides (ae / aer or she / her) is a proudly Queer, Deafblind and disabled Aboriginal writer, artist, and activist.

Ash Hem (they / them), disabled visual artist and lived experience worker.

Arlo Carracher (they / he) is an autistic transmasculine gardener and artist with cerebral palsy.

Access and Inclusion Working Group

The implementation of the Signal DAP will be maintained by the Signal Access and Inclusion Working Group who represent different skills across Management, Creative and Production, and champion access within their respective areas. This group meets quarterly to ensure the DAP strategies and goals are actioned and updated according to the timeline.

This group includes:

Creative Producer (Signal)

Venue and Production Manager (ArtPlay and Signal)

Front of House Coordinator (ArtPlay and Signal)

Operations Coordinator (ArtPlay and Signal)

Program Manager (ArtPlay and Signal)

To be appointed - DAP Implementation Coordinator (ArtPlay and Signal)

About Signal

Signal is a creative studio for young people 14 to 25 years providing opportunities and spaces for investigation, development and presentation of their work.

Signal supports and engages young people across a range of art-forms and practices to showcase creative projects with public outcomes for both young and broader audiences. Outcomes include workshops, exhibitions, installations, live events and performances.

Signal offers free programs open to young people from all walks of life and artistic ability; as well as supported opportunities for young and emerging artists through expression of interest processes.

These include:

- Studio workshops for young people 14 to 25 years held on Saturdays and school holidays
- Curators' program for young people 16 to 25 years who work together to plan and deliver projects whilst learning from experienced artists and curators
- Screen and Sound Commissions program engaging young people 16 to 25 years through an expression of interest process, with works shown at Signal screens, soundwalk and beyond
- Young Creatives Lab program engaging young people 18 to 25 years through an expression of interest process, with works shown at Signal and beyond
- Special projects partnering with arts and community organisations

Language

This plan uses the term Disabled person / Disabled people. As part of the co-design process we ran a survey for Disabled young people asking what language they'd like Signal to use. We got 28 responses and overall most young Disabled people told us we should say Disabled person in this plan, so that's what we did.

We know that different people use different language for themselves and their communities and we will always respect people's self-identification when they're describing themselves.

In this plan and in our work we recognise a broad definition of disability, including physical disability, intellectual disability, neurodivergence, mental illness, chronic illness, deafness, cognitive disability, and sensory disability.

Alternative Formats

Please see our webpage for links to this plan in alternative formats.

Ongoing Feedback

Signal values community feedback on our progress in meeting the goals and actions outlined in this plan. We encourage individuals and organisations to share their thoughts and experiences to ensure our continued improvement.

You can give your feedback in the following ways:

- Completing an anonymous online survey - [Signal Accessibility Survey](#)
- Leaving a voicemail on the phone
- Emailing the below email address outlining your feedback
- Emailing the below email address and requesting that a Signal staff member calls you back to hear your verbal feedback

When giving your feedback via a phone message or email, please let us know if you would like a Signal staff member to provide a response.

All feedback will be reviewed and actioned as appropriate by being highlighted at weekly staff meetings, collated and reviewed at quarterly DAP Working Group meetings and be available to the Advisory Group at the annual review.

Phone: (03) 9658 7808

Email: signalaccess@melbourne.vic.gov.au

National Relay Service

Call the NRS help desk: 1800 555 660

Go to the NRS website: <https://www.accesshub.gov.au/about-the-nrs>

Culture and employment

“Accessibility that’s technically provided, but provided grudgingly, is still a barrier. It makes it clear that we aren’t welcome, or that we are being seen as and treated as burdens.” -Aoife Ryall, Disabled young co-design member

“Creating accessible, inclusive, flexible groups and spaces is an opportunity to reimagine how our society could be. Disabled people have been at the forefront of this work because we have to be creative, we have to be interdependent, we have to rely on each other in a society that isn’t built for us, and we’re amazing at it.” - Disabled young co-design member

Who we hire and engage

Our culture is driven by who is part of our organisation and who we hear from most. Signal will increase the representation of Disabled people among our staff, commissioned artists, and guest facilitators. Signal will:

- Actively seek out Disabled people for these roles.
- Recognise the lived experience of Disabled people as a qualification itself - especially when Disabled people bring their engagement with and knowledge of Disabled culture and connections with disability arts communities.
- Work with City of Melbourne’s People and Culture Branch and Disabled people to review our hiring process in order to remove barriers and bias. E.g. long application processes, text-only applications, ableist selection criteria.

Young Creatives Lab

- Signal’s Young Creatives Lab is our major opportunity for young artists to receive support for new work development. Signal usually supports four to five projects per year and will commit to reserving at least one spot for a young Disabled artist every alternate year. The other year - a spot will be reserved for an artist from another under-represented community. Signal will encourage Disabled applicants to apply every year.
- Artists that have intersecting identities can apply for a reserved spot under whichever identity and will be equally supported.
- All Signal Young Creatives Lab projects will have a minimum of \$1,000 access funding available (e.g. interpreters, support workers, captioning, transport, access equipment, and other needs as required by the artist). Accessibility consultation will be available to all artists in the program, and all artists will be supported to make as many elements accessible as possible.
- Signal’s Young Creatives Lab will ensure that a minimum of 20% of the assessment panel members are Disabled.

Timeline: starting in 2023 and ongoing

Who’s responsible: Program Manager with People and Culture (hiring new staff); Creative Producers (contracting creatives)

Accountability:

- Review the progress every 6 months, looking at
 1. Number of Disabled artists, staff or guest facilitators have been engaged and how it is tracking over time i.e. % increase

2. Number of artists, staff, or guest facilitators who declare access needs
3. Any accessibility improvements to hiring process that have been made and which ones have been effective based on feedback from an external Disabled accessibility consultant
4. Feedback and observed impact or changes in response to access funding and consultation being implemented as part of Signal Young Creatives Lab
5. Number of young Disabled artists successful in Signal Young Creatives Lab program
6. Young Creative Lab assessment panel made up of minimum 20% Disabled artists

Ongoing education

We know that it's not enough to just encourage staff to learn more- as an organisation we have a collective obligation to find Disabled-led sources to learn from and to support staff to have the time and resources to dedicate to that learning.

Signal will engage training on disability and accessibility at least twice a year. We will ensure our staff hear from a range of different perspectives from different Disabled communities, including different types of disabilities, multiply-marginalised Disabled people, and a mix of trainers from Disabled-led organisations and independent Disabled trainers.

We recognise that organisations that focus on disability are not always led by Disabled people. We will always seek out and prioritise Disabled-led organisations and Disabled individual educators. It's not enough for an organisation to involve Disabled people if the decisions are made by non-Disabled people: we will think beyond representation and ask about who has power here when deciding if an organisation is appropriate to engage for training.

Type of training relevant to Signal include but not limited to:

- Disability justice
- Accessibility
- Competing access needs
- d/Deaf Awareness Training
- Basic Auslan
- Augmentative and Alternative Communication (e.g., communication boards, text to speech devices, etc.)
- Neurodiversity in the arts
- Mental health and trauma-informed work

Timeline: 2023-2027

Who's responsible: Program Manager with Branch Director and City of Melbourne Learning and Development team

Accountability:

- Review the progress every 12 months, looking at:
 1. Training that has been completed
 2. Positive and negative feedback from staff
 3. Observed impact or changes in response to training

4. Planning for most relevant training to schedule and refresh taking into account feedback from Disabled young people and artists

Communication

Accurate, clear, honest communication is the first step in creating an accessible space and organisation.

Signal will be **honest** and **specific** about where we are in our access work. Providing details about accessibility and inaccessibility in our venues, programs, and events gives Disabled young people the information they need to make an informed choice about what works for them. While we're always working to be more accessible and address barriers, we will never shy away from being upfront about the barriers we haven't addressed yet. Providing as much information as possible is part of how we respect the autonomy of Disabled young people.

Access keys

Signal will work with a Disabled access consultant to develop access keys for Signal venues. An access key for Signal's main venue will be available on Signal's website and linked to in digital and print marketing. Access keys tailored for offsite events and programs, will be developed as needed. Access keys will be updated as needed throughout the year and reviewed yearly.

An access key is a description of access features and barriers in a venue, and include:

- Descriptions of the space
- Video and photos of the space
- Accessibility features (what they are and where they are)
- Sensory map
- Information about the area around the venue (public transport, parking, etc.)

Signal will also ensure that staff are familiar with the access keys, understand the information they cover, and can support people to use them.

Timeline: 2023

Who's responsible: DAP Implementation Coordinator with Venue Manager

Accountability:

- When access keys are developed Signal will pay Disabled young people to test them, provide feedback, and review the change made to the access keys based on their feedback.
- Review our use of access keys every six months, looking at
 1. Are we successfully including access keys with all our events and opportunities? Do these access keys work well?
 2. What feedback have we received on our access keys?

Event descriptions

In a society designed for non-Disabled people the mental load of accessibility falls on Disabled people far too often. When Disabled participants each have to contact an organisation to get enough information about an event, that extra work is itself a barrier even if the event is otherwise accessible.

Signal will include **detailed descriptions** of what an **event involves** in promotional material and registration forms. This includes linking to our access key (see communication: access keys) and describing the activities and other elements of the event in detail, including what materials and tools will be used.

Flexibility is at the core of accessibility. We know that every Disabled person's needs and preferences are different. The info we provide upfront in our access keys and event descriptions will help give context and share the info we already have and the things we know we might need to provide. **Signal will also include contact details so people can reach out with other questions or needs.**

Timeline: 2023

Who's responsible: DAP Implementation Coordinator with Creative Producers and Front of House Coordinator and City of Melbourne Strategic Communications

Accountability:

- When event description templates are developed, Signal will pay Disabled young people to test them, provide feedback, and review the change made to the event descriptions based on their feedback.
- Review our use of event descriptions quarterly, looking at
 1. Are we successfully including descriptions of all our events and opportunities?
 2. What feedback have we received on our event descriptions about accessibility?

Multiple communication methods

Supporting a wide range of communication methods is vital to include everyone in the conversation. Signal will:

- Include image and video descriptions on all visual content online
- Include manual closed captions on all our videos and transcripts with all audio content, to be released at the same time as the video/audio content itself
- Develop Easy English and Plain Language descriptions of our programs and forms
- Develop descriptions in Auslan of our programs
- Ensure staff are familiar with how to communicate with participants who use AAC devices, communication boards, Auslan, visual frame, tactile sign, or writing

Timeline:

2023: Image and video descriptions, captions

2024: Program descriptions in Easy English, Plain English and Auslan; forms in Plain English

2025: Staff are familiar with how to communicate with participants who use AAC devices, communication boards, Auslan, visual frame, tactile sign, or writing

Who's responsible: DAP Implementation Coordinator with Marketing Content Coordinator, Digital team and Creative Producers

Accountability:

- Review our use of information in multiple formats including Auslan and Easy English annually, looking at:
 1. Are we successfully and consistently using multiple communication methods?
 2. What feedback have we received?

Events and programs

Designing and running accessible, inclusive events means thinking about Disabled needs and experiences from the very start. We know that when accessibility is tacked on at the end we get an event that's primarily for non-Disabled people even if Disabled participants are there. When accessibility is recognised as relevant to every step of planning and delivery and Disabled participants are part of how we imagine our core audiences and community, we create events and programs that are really for everyone.

Minimum standards for accessible events

Signal will work with a Disabled access consultant and young Disabled people to develop a set of minimum standards for accessible events at Signal. The annual operational budget will include funds to ensure these standards are met. This resource will outline the basic requirements for all events and will be available to all staff and guest facilitators to provide consistency for attendees and clear expectations for staff and guest facilitators. Events will not go ahead if they don't meet the minimum standards.

The guide should:

- Be publicly available on Signal's website so attendees know what they can expect
- Include information on physical venues, online events, and facilitation styles
- Be clear, detailed, and practical
- Include links to resources (training, external guides, internal staff support, mentors, etc.) to support staff to learn more if they don't know how to implement something

Signal will allocate paid time for staff and guest facilitators to read it.

Timeline: 2024

Who's responsible: DAP Implementation Coordinator with Creative Producers and Operations Coordinator

Accountability:

- Review our use of the minimum standards quarterly, looking at
 1. Are we successfully supporting artists to implement and embed the minimum standards in their workshop or event planning and delivery?
 2. What feedback have we received on the minimum standards and event accessibility?

Complaints and feedback process

Signal will have a feedback process that's directly tied to taking action:

1. Attendees and potential attendees will have the option to give feedback in writing phone, or a direct conversation.
2. They can give feedback anonymously online or by phone.

3. They can give feedback by phone or email with their name attached, and can ask for a response from Signal. Signal will aim to respond within 7 days.
4. Signal will actively seek feedback, including making it easy to find information about this feedback process.
5. Signal will create a centralised record of complaints/feedback that staff can access, and will review it regularly to find patterns and identify areas that are most in need of improvement.
6. When Signal receives feedback about a problem or barrier staff will look at what can be done to avoid that problem next time. This might include:
 - Updating the access key
 - Updating the minimum standards for accessible events
 - Educating and upskilling staff

Timeline: Started 2023 and developed further 2024

Who's responsible: DAP Implementation Coordinator, City of Melbourne Customer Service and Front of House Coordinator

Accountability:

- Review the feedback we have received quarterly, looking at:
 1. What was the feedback and what action has been taken (and has this been recorded)?
 2. Has the person who gave the feedback been updated (if requested)?
 3. What is the trend in regards to number of complaints or feedback?

Online programs

Although lockdowns created many challenges for many people, we saw one area of accessibility increase dramatically: online access. Organisations that had long insisted that their work, events, or programs could not be delivered online suddenly found that they had to adapt. As restrictions have eased, we've seen some of that accessibility disappear: Signal will not take that step backwards. We understand that for some Disabled young artists online events are necessary to provide access to community and culture.

Signal will ensure that those who need online programs are being consulted in the development of intentionally online programs.

By 2025 Signal will ensure that 10% of our programs each year are delivered online (e.g., online workshops, at least one Signal summer intensive being delivered online), and will review how we can increase that percentage to at least 20% to provide more access beyond the timeline of this plan. These programs will be designed to run online and will not be limited to zooming in to events designed for on-site delivery.

Timeline: 2023 – 5%; 2024 – 7.5%; 2025 – 10%

Who's responsible: Creative Producers with Operations Coordinator and assistance from DAP Coordinator

Accountability:

- Review the data six-monthly, looking at
 1. Percentage of programs delivered online
 2. Participant numbers in programs delivered online

3. Participant feedback for programs delivered online is aggregated and analysed to identify and implement improvements

Venue

Signal will have an access audit of the venue and develop a timeline for enacting any recommended changes. The audit should include:

- Building structure (door sizes, door types (automatic, push, pull, etc.), door opening (button, sensor, automatic, handle, etc.), hallway sizes, turning circles around corners, rails etc.)
- Bathrooms (e.g., automatic doors / locks, hoist availability, changing tables for both adults and children, type of tap (whether is automatic, twist, or lever), type of soap dispenser, availability of hand towels, etc.)
- Sensory-friendly design (e.g., how does noise carry, is lighting adjustable, etc.)
- Access-specific equipment (e.g., hearing loop)
- Temperature control
- Furniture (range of seating types and sizes available, relevant furniture dimensions, height of benches / tables if applicable, etc.)

Timeline:

2023: Audit

2024 – 2027: Implement improvements

Who's responsible: Led by ArtPlay Signal Venue and Production Manager and delivered by Facilities Management in consultation with the Design Team and with the support of the DAP Coordinator

Accountability:

- Review the progress of audit delivery every 6 months, looking at
 1. Number of improvements made
 2. Any changes to access standards that need to be incorporated into new DAP (new venue access audit required every 5 years)
 3. Feedback from users

Ongoing process

Implementing this Disability Action Plan will be an ongoing process, and engaging with disability culture and knowledge will be part of Signal's work for as long as Signal exists. Signal will continue to work with a group of Disabled young people in implementing this plan and reviewing and re-developing future plans and will ensure that decisions about disability inclusion are made by and for Disabled people.

Timeline: 2023-2027

Who's responsible: Program Manager with Branch Manager and Signal team

Accountability:

- Review the progress every 12 months:
 1. Co-design group will be paid to review progress of the plan annually

2. Co-design group feedback on the current plan will be considered and implemented where possible
3. When this plan expires a new co-design group of Disabled young people with a range of disability experiences and ages; and arts experiences (independently and with Signal) will be engaged for the following plan
4. Commitment to disability culture and knowledge will be embedded in all Signal strategic plans
5. A clear way for people to contact Signal with ongoing feedback