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**A few facts about disability and the arts in Australia**

“The majority of Australians believe the ­­­arts help us express our identity, get different perspectives on an issue, and understand other people and cultures.1 For the arts to provide this value, it is important that our artists reflect the diversity of Australia.” – *Australia Council for the Arts, in their summary and response to Making Art Work, 2017.*

And yet…

# Artists are earning less than in previous years…

* Artists are earning 19% less from their creative work than in 2009, even though they continue to dedicate at least half of their working hours towards their creative practice.2
* Artists now report a lack of income from creative work as being the biggest barrier to professional development. In 2009, the biggest barrier was a lack of time.3,4

# And when it comes to artists with disability, they are earning even less!

* Artists with disability earn less than half that of artists without disability for their creative work, even though they have similar creative expenses.3

# And the situation is getting worse.

* In 2014/15 the total income disability pay gap for professional artists was 42%. In 2007/08, the gap was 9%.3,4

# Our artists with disability find it hard to get work…

* Nearly 60% of all arts and cultural organisations do not currently employ (or do not know if they employ) a person with disability.5
* Artists with disability are more likely to be unemployed than artists without disability (about one-third versus one-quarter), and to spend longer in unemployment.3
* Almost one in five artists with a disability indicate that having a disability has been the most important factor inhibiting their professional development, both throughout their career and at the present time.3

# And there is little support to improve employment for artists with disability.

* Less than 40% of arts and cultural organisations have a current Disability Action Plan in place.5
* People with disability experience workplace discrimination that is widespread, ongoing and systemic.6
* At least 50% of artists with disability are self-employed or freelance, yet there are limited protections for discrimination for people with disability who do not have a fixed employer.5 6

# Plus, barriers to accessing funding still exist.

* 9% of artists identify as having a disability3, yet:
* Only 4% of artists and personnel who were involved in projects that received funding from the Department of Communications and the Arts via their Smartygrants system (which has been in place since 2015) identified as having disability.7
* Only 7% of applications to Australia Council’s core grants programs (Individuals) identified as having disability.[[1]](#endnote-1)2

# So perhaps it isn’t surprising that people with disability are under-represented in the arts

* Just 9% of artists overall identify with disability – roughly half the proportion of the Australian population reporting disability.2
* And when broken down by art form, some areas have much poorer representation than others. For example, performing artists have the smallest proportion of artists with disability (6 or 7%), whereas community cultural development artists have the largest (14%).3

# But there’s still hope.

* Audiences are increasingly seeking out work from diverse perspectives, and there is increasing willingness from presenters and programmers to showcase work by diverse artists, including artists with disability.8
* Artists with disability are being recognised for creating art that pushes boundaries and opens new avenues of creative and aesthetic possibility.8
* The experience of disability in arts practice has the power to transform both the art form and the audience experience.8

*This research summary was published by Arts Access Australia on 4 February 2019.*

1. 1Australia Council for the Arts 2017, [Connecting Australians: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey.](https://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/workspace/uploads/files/connecting-australians-natio-59520692c614a.pdf)

2 Australia Council for the Arts 2017, [Making Art Work: A summary and response by the Australia Council for the Arts.](https://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/workspace/uploads/files/making-art-work-companion-repo-5a05105696225.pdf)

3 Throsby D & Petetskaya K 2017*,*[Making Art Work: An Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia](https://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/workspace/uploads/files/making-art-work-throsby-report-5a05106d0bb69.pdf)

4 Throsby D & Petetskaya K 2010, [Do you really expect to get paid?: An economic study of professional artists in Australia](https://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/workspace/uploads/files/research/do_you_really_expect_to_get_pa-54325a3748d81.pdf)

5 DADAA Inc and Arts Access Australia 2012, [Art Works: Employment in the arts for people with disability](http://www.dadaa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Art-Works-Full-Report-Web.pdf)

6 Australian Human Rights Commission 2016, [Willing to work: National Inquiry into Employment Discrimination against Australians with disability and older Australians](https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/WTW_2016_Full_Report_AHRC_ac.pdf)

7 Meeting of Cultural Ministers 2018, [Research Overview: Arts and Disability in Australia](https://www.arts.gov.au/sites/g/files/net1761/f/research_overview_of_arts_and_disability.pdf)

8Australia Council for the Arts, 2018. [Creating Pathways: Insights on support for artists with disability.](https://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/workspace/uploads/files/aca_225186_arts-and-disability-5ba339682cc18.pdf)  [↑](#endnote-ref-1)