



NIDA Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) 2026–2028



REGISTERED OFFICE
215 Anzac Parade
Kensington NSW 2033 Australia

POSTAL ADDRESS
NIDA
UNSW Sydney NSW 2052 Australia

TEL +61 2 9697 7600
FAX +61 2 9662 7415
EMAIL info@nida.edu.au
WEB nida.edu.au

AUSTRALIAN COMPANY NUMBER	000 257 741
AUSTRALIAN BUSINESS NUMBER	99 000 257 741
PROVIDER ID	PRV12052
CRICOS PROVIDER CODE	00756M
RTO CODE	90349

NIDA is registered by the Australian Skills Quality Authority under the National Vocational Education and Regulator Act 2011 as an NVR Registered Training Organisation (RTO); ID number 90349.

Acknowledgement of Country

NIDA acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands on which we learn and tell stories, the Bidjigal, Gadigal, Dharawal and Dharug peoples, and we pay our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past and present.

Alternative formats

Our DIAP is available in alternative formats, including PDF and word (both available on our website). Hard copy formats (in both large and standard print) and other alternative formats are also available upon request.

CONTENTS

Message from the CEO	3
Who we are	4
Disability in Australia	4
Our Disability Inclusion Action Plan	6
Methodology and consultation	7
Plan commitment, vision and goals	7
Governance, monitoring and review	8
Action Plan	8
Our achievements to date	13
Next steps	15
Contact us	16
Other acknowledgements	16

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

I'm pleased to share with you our inaugural NIDA Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) 2026-2028. At NIDA, our vision is to be the source of the world's most wanted storytellers, and our commitment to access and inclusion is fundamental to this ambition. We are dedicated to cultivating generations of artists and storytellers who authentically represent the diversity of Australian experiences. This Plan is an active step towards removing barriers so that everyone can reach their potential and thrive - whether they are students, our workforce, audiences that attend our shows, community partners or other stakeholders we engage with.

We are proud of the work our community has already undertaken in this area, through recent initiatives such as Neuro-Kin, joining the Sunflower Program and introducing a scholarship for a student with disability (thanks to support from the Dylan Alcott Foundation). A high proportion of our students also utilise a Study Access Plan, a testament to students feeling comfortable to ask for support, highlighting the wonderful diversity of our current cohort.

We know there is still more work to be done. NIDA staff with disability – including myself – understand the vital need for change and a cultural shift. We see real opportunities to embed access and inclusion into all of our practices across the organisation, including in the curriculum, application processes and our productions. Our Plan provides a blueprint for meaningful improvements to accessibility both online and on-site, across 4 key pillar areas. It aligns closely with our Strategic Plan and our Equity and Inclusion Strategy, as well as wider sector work such as Equity: Arts and Disability Associated Plan (released by OFTA in 2024).

I want to thank all our Plan development participants whose time, honesty and guidance have been invaluable in designing our roadmap ahead. Our DIAP is ambitious, whilst being realistic and achievable. We look forward to working together to realise the actions within this Plan and to play a part in building a more inclusive Australian creative industries and cultural sector.

Liz Hughes

Chief Executive Officer

Our vision is to be the source of the world's most wanted storytellers, driven by our purpose to unlock the power of the performing arts across all performance platforms.

WHO WE ARE

Founded in 1958, The National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) is Australia's national dramatic arts educator and innovator, recognised as the country's leading stage and screen arts educator. It was established as Australia's first professional theatre training school, and we are dedicated to delivering unparalleled rigour, industry connections, and practice-based learning to cultivate the full suite of creative workers necessary, to create and deliver entertainment experiences across stage, screen, future media, and beyond.

Our vision is to be the source of the world's most wanted storytellers, driven by our purpose to unlock the power of the performing arts across all performance platforms.

What sets us apart are the strong practice-based elements of our courses that align to trends in theatre and screen, and prepare our students for the realities of the workforce they are entering. This is reflected in the manyfold successes of our alumni of actors, writers, directors, designers, and technical specialists, who have gained access to international networks and industry links and NIDA, and gone on to win awards including Academy Awards.

As a national institution, we aim to be a leader in equity of access and recognise that equity, inclusion, and diversity go hand in hand with artistic excellence. As such we work to enhance the representation of Australia's diverse communities, empowering our creators to share their distinctive voices, stories, and cultures. This includes dismantling the systemic barriers that have perpetuated exclusion on stage and screen.

DISABILITY IN AUSTRALIA

NIDA subscribes to the social model of disability that recognises the difference between a person's individual condition or impairment, and the barriers they experience which are created by the environment and society around them. The social model of disability focuses on these 'barriers' as what creates disadvantage by limiting opportunity, participation, autonomy and self-expression.

We understand that disability is diverse and no one's experience of disability is the same as someone else's. It can be visible or non-visible, temporary or permanent, something someone is born with or acquired later in life and can come with all types of access support needs. We also acknowledge that disability is intersectional and many people with disability may also belong to other marginalised groups, meaning experiences of marginalisation and discrimination can compound.

As the Australian Institute of Health & Welfare notes, 'Disability may affect people directly or indirectly, and may have large or small effects on people's daily lives. Increasingly, disability is recognised as something that affects most people, to varying degrees and at different life stages.'¹ While over 21% of Australians have disability,

¹ People with disability in Australia (AIHW 2024) <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/disability/people-with-disability-in-australia/contents/summary>.

When it comes to arts and culture, a national survey revealed that people with disability were more likely than those without disability to recognise the many benefits of arts and creativity such as their power to connect communities and their vital role in society.

NIDA acknowledges not everyone chooses to identify as a person with disability and we understand that identity and disclosure in the context of disability is complex and personal. We also understand the principles of universal design, that one size does not fit all.

Key statistics

One in five Australians are people with disability (21.4% or 5.5 million people).²

Disability is a broad under-represented group and is commonly experienced across our community, with people either directly identifying themselves, being a carer for someone else, or having a family member or close friend with disability. It is also the only demographic group any of us can join at any moment in time.

When it comes to arts and culture, a national survey revealed that people with disability were more likely than those without disability to recognise the many benefits of arts and creativity such as their power to connect communities and their vital role in society. They were also more likely to value public funding for the arts and the contributions of artists.³ Additionally, people with disability were more inclined to give time or financial support to the arts, to attend events for wellbeing or self-expression, to take part creatively, and to engage with the arts online, highlighting a deep appreciation and active participation across all forms of cultural life.⁴

When it comes to arts employment, 16% of Australian artists have disability, and their unemployment is significantly worse across all indicators than artists without disability.⁵ Artists with disability also earn significantly less than artists without disability in non-arts work. Only 3% of leadership positions in the arts organisations are held by people who identify with disability.⁶

2 Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings (ABS 2024) <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/disability/disability-ageing-and-carers-australia-summary-findings/latest-release#:~:text=In%202018%20there%20were%204.4,years%20and%20over%20had%20disability>

3 Creating Our Future: Results Of The National Arts Participation Survey (Creative Australia 2020) <https://creative.gov.au/research/creating-our-future-results-national-arts-participation-survey>

4 Creating Our Future: Results Of The National Arts Participation Survey (Creative Australia 2020) <https://creative.gov.au/research/creating-our-future-results-national-arts-participation-survey>

5 Artists as Workers (Creative Australia 2024) <https://creative.gov.au/sites/creative-australia/files/documents/2025-03/Artists-as-Workers-An-Economic-Study-of-Professional-Artists-in-Australia-2%20%281%29.pdf>

6 Towards Equity: A research overview of diversity in Australia's arts and cultural sector (Australia Council for the Arts 2020) <https://creative.gov.au/sites/creative-australia/files/documents/2025-04/Towards-Equity-Report.pdf>

People with disability consulted in the development process of this Plan underscored a need for genuine partnership with the disability community, strong student advocacy, transparency, and meaningful involvement in shaping both the Plan itself and any systemic decisions it informs.

Legislation And Policy

This Plan aligns with international, national and NSW policy and legislative frameworks including:

- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006 (UNCRPD)
- Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1992
- Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031
- Disability Standards for Education 2005
- Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010
- Disability Inclusion Act 2014 (NSW).

Equity: the Arts and Disability Associated Plan

In November 2024, the Office for the Arts released **Equity: the Arts and Disability Associated Plan**, which was an action in Revive, the Australian Government's National Cultural Policy (2023-2027).

People with disability consulted in the development process of this Plan underscored a need for genuine partnership with the disability community, strong student advocacy, transparency, and meaningful involvement in shaping both the Plan itself and any systemic decisions it informs. This reflects and reinforces the core principle of the disability rights movement: "Nothing about us without us."

The Equity Plan identifies three priorities:

- **Priority 1:** Recognising d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers as central to our vibrant arts and cultural sector.
- **Priority 2:** Strong and inclusive governments and organisations.
- **Priority 3:** Engaging the audience: fair, open and equitable access to arts and culture.

These principles have informed the development of the NIDA's DIAP.

OUR DISABILITY INCLUSION ACTION PLAN

NIDA's Disability Inclusion Action Plan sets out the clear steps required to meet our legal obligations while also addressing the tangible improvements that will make a meaningful difference to d/Deaf and disabled students, staff, artists and audiences. The plan highlights priority capital works - such as improving accessible seating in theatres, upgrading hearing support systems, ensuring all teaching and public spaces are physically accessible, enhancing wayfinding and signage, and creating flexible and responsive learning environments - that must be embedded into the future-ready campus master plan. By committing to consultation and co-creation with d/Deaf and disabled people, and allocating necessary budget, NIDA can ensure these upgrades are not only compliant but genuinely transformative.

This DIAP also acknowledges the importance of equitable pathways into the industry, supported through strategic partnerships and inclusive training opportunities. By articulating these needs and solutions clearly, our DIAP

In developing this Plan, we worked in partnership with Access Consultant Morwenna Collett and invited a wide range of staff, students, and stakeholders both with and without disability, to share their vital perspectives, feedback, and ideas.

provides a strong foundation for advocacy—ensuring that future investments are grounded in evidence, aligned with compliance requirements, and tied to critical improvements that deliver real, material benefits for our whole community.

Methodology and consultation

In developing this Plan, we worked in partnership with Access Consultant Morwenna Collett and invited a wide range of staff, students, and stakeholders both with and without disability, to share their vital perspectives, feedback, and ideas that have informed and shaped its direction and priorities.

The consultation and fieldwork phase of this Plan's development included:

- Presentation at a NIDA all staff meeting
- Interviews, focus groups, drop-in sessions and written submission opportunities with students, staff and external stakeholders
- Workshopping session with the Equity and Inclusion Committee
- Training session with staff

All consultation methods were accessible.

The types of consultation processes used throughout the development of this Plan will continue throughout its implementation and beyond, to ensure we are receiving feedback directly from people with lived experience to inform the thinking and design of our future work.

Plan commitment, vision and goals

We are committed to increasing disability confidence and competence within our organisation and our sector. We are working to create an environment where everyone can engage with us on an equal basis.

To do this, we have set ourselves actions underneath four different goal areas to achieve over the next three years. These goal areas are aligned with the NSW Disability Inclusion Act and its recommended pillars for DIAPs.

Our goals are:

1. **Attitudes and behaviours** - build staff and student confidence and competence. Embed a culture of belonging at NIDA and become an advocate of change across the sector.
2. **Liveable communities** - improve accessibility of physical and online spaces and venues for staff, students and audiences. Review the curriculum and teaching supports to provide a more accessible and inclusive experience for all students.
3. **Meaningful employment** - embed inclusive and accessible recruitment and retention processes for staff. Create an environment to welcome more staff with disability in the future.
4. **Systems and processes** - ensure policies, systems and processes are inclusive and accessible to students and staff and align with best practice.

Each of these areas seeks to remove or reduce the social, economic, physical, behavioural, communication and attitudinal barriers that can prevent people with disability fully engaging with our programs and activities.

Our internal Equity and Inclusion Committee, led by NIDA's Head of Equity and Inclusion, will have overarching duties to monitor the implementation of this Plan.

Governance, monitoring and review

Internal monitoring and review

Our internal Equity and Inclusion Committee, led by NIDA's Head of Equity and Inclusion, will have overarching duties to monitor the implementation of this Plan. This committee was formed in 2025 and includes staff from a range of different areas across the organisation. This Committee will continue to meet quarterly and will monitor this Plan as part of its remit. Updates will be provided through to the Plan's Project Sponsor and to the Senior Leadership Team, and Board as appropriate.

Reporting

We will report on DIAP progress annually, through our Annual Report, which is shared widely with all our stakeholder groups. We will use a range of measures and measurement tools to track progress against targets.

Action Plan

The actions in our DIAP are organised into four guiding pillars, each with their own goals and objectives:

- Attitudes and Behaviours
- Liveable Communities
- Meaningful Employment
- Systems and Processes



GOAL 1

Build staff and student confidence and competence. Embed a culture of belonging at NIDA and become an advocate of change across the sector.

ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS

GOAL 1	
Build staff and student confidence and competence. Embed a culture of belonging at NIDA and become an advocate of change across the sector.	
How?	
Objectives	
Staff & student confidence and competence:	Ensure staff and students are appropriately skilled in accessibility and inclusion
Sector leadership:	Advocate for change across the wider industry
Staff and student support:	Continue to review and increase support available for students and staff with lived experience of disability

GOAL 2

Improve accessibility of physical spaces and venues for staff, students and audiences. Review the curriculum and teaching supports to provide a more accessible and inclusive experience for all students.

LIVEABLE COMMUNITIES

GOAL 2	
Improve accessibility of physical spaces and venues for staff, students and audiences. Review the curriculum and teaching supports to provide a more accessible and inclusive experience for all students.	
How?	
Objectives	
Accessibility in the curriculum and presentation of services:	Embed accessibility into the curriculum and consider ways of improving the experience of students and audiences with disability
Meeting student needs:	Improve access and services for students with disability
Accessible facilities:	Improve accessibility across the NIDA site
Online access information:	Improve internal and external communications
Partnerships & Relationships:	Build collaborative relationships and partnerships to advance disability inclusion
Innovation in education & training:	Ensure NIDA considers accessibility and inclusion within its innovation work
Marketing & Branding:	Ensure that NIDA's brand and communications are accessible and inclusive

GOAL 3

Establish inclusive and accessible recruitment and retention processes for staff. Develop and promote accessible career pathways for students.

MEANINGFUL EMPLOYMENT

GOAL 3	
Establish inclusive and accessible recruitment and retention processes for staff. Develop and promote accessible career pathways for students.	
How?	
Objectives	
Pathways:	Provide accessible pathways into creative industry careers
Inclusive recruitment and retention:	Ensure all recruitment processes and retention strategies are inclusive
Flexible Learning & Reasonable adjustments:	Consider improvements to increase accessibility for staff and students with disability

GOAL 4

Ensure policies, systems and processes are inclusive and accessible to students and staff and align with best practice.

SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

GOAL 4	
Ensure policies, systems and processes are inclusive and accessible to students and staff and align with best practice.	
How?	
Objectives	
Policies and procedures:	Ensure all policies and procedures are reviewed with a disability access lens
Resourcing:	Ensure appropriate levels of resource are available to support access and inclusion work
Continuous improvement:	Embed regular feedback and evaluation mechanisms to enable regular improvements to be made
Procurement:	Ensure access and inclusion is a consideration in all relevant procurement processes

Midnight Feast is a resident company at NIDA, and a central pillar informing the organisation's equity and inclusion journey.

OUR ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

While this may be our first Disability Inclusion Action Plan for our organisation, it is building on some strong and foundational work we have undertaken over many years. The three case studies below illustrate some of the practice that has already been taking place across our company.

Case study 1: Midnight Feast, Resident Company at NIDA

Midnight Feast is a transformative performance company that redefines artistic inclusivity. The company champions artists with high support needs, providing them with a platform to showcase their talents and embark on fulfilling professional journeys. Midnight Feast is a resident company at NIDA, and a central pillar informing the organisation's equity and inclusion journey.

Since 2018, NIDA has provided weekly rehearsal space in the NIDA rehearsal rooms at our Kensington campus to Midnight Feast. This has supported the company to ensure they have access to a regular space to continue development of their groundbreaking work.

It has been critical for NIDA to ensure that the artists of Midnight Feast feel a strong sense of belonging in the building, and so there have been increased viewings of Midnight Feast's work in front of NIDA's audiences. For example, Midnight Feast now performs for incoming students at NIDA's "Welcome Week" — the first week of the academic year.

"NIDA is an internationally renowned performance training institution who have the capacity to model best practice at a national and international level. NIDA facilitating weekly studio space for Midnight Feast to train and work has enabled us to develop as an arts organisation across all levels of organisational and artistic development. This partnership has transformed what is possible for the training and development of marginalised stories." - Kylie Heart, Midnight Feast founder and Creative Producer.

NIDA is proud to support the work of Midnight Feast, and in turn recognises the value that the company brings to NIDA's own reputation for artistic excellence.

Case study 2: incremental building improvements enhancing accessibility at NIDA

In 2020, Accessible Arts conducted a comprehensive Report for NIDA, identifying key areas for improvement in accessibility across its facilities. Since 2022, we have been steadily implementing these recommendations, embedding accessibility considerations into routine maintenance and upgrade discussions.

This incremental approach has allowed NIDA to make meaningful changes without requiring large-scale renovations, demonstrating a commitment to inclusive design and continuous improvement.

Rather than treating accessibility as a separate or one-off initiative, NIDA has integrated it into everyday decision-making. Whenever maintenance or upgrades are planned, accessibility is considered as a core component of the scope. This strategy ensures that improvements are both practical and sustainable.

Some of the notable accessibility enhancements made since 2022 include:

- **Foyer lighting upgrade**
Improved lighting design enhances visibility of stairs, increases contrast, and provides a brighter, safer environment for all visitors.

- **Handrail addition in café foyer**
A new handrail was installed on the carpeted stairs, improving support and safety.
- **Contrast nosing on café stairs**
High-contrast nosing was added to stair edges to assist individuals with low vision.
- **Lowered stage door sign-in desk**
The desk was modified to be accessible from a wheelchair, promoting independence and dignity.
- **Reinstallation of Playhouse Auditorium handrails**
Handrails were located and reinstalled for the front row, improving access and safety.
- **Parade Theatre door handle replacement**
Round handles were replaced with square ones to improve grip and usability.
- **FM hearing systems**
Assistive listening systems are available in venues to support patrons with hearing impairments.
- **Accessible building maps**
Maps were lowered to a height suitable for wheelchair users.
- **Lowered wall-mounted phones**
Corridor phones were repositioned to be within reach of all users.
- **Accessible toilet enhancements**
Push-button operations and duress alarms were added, allowing wheelchair users to operate doors independently and signal for assistance if needed.
- **Accessible water station**
An accessible water station was installed in the NIDA foyer.
- **Accessible kitchen facility**
A DDA-compliant kitchen facility for NIDA students was developed.



NEXT STEPS

NIDA is currently undertaking several initiatives to enhance accessibility across its facilities:

- **Upgrades to bathroom facilities on Level 1**, ensuring they meet accessibility standards.

NIDA continues to monitor feedback and identify further opportunities for improvement. The incremental model ensures that accessibility remains a living priority, adaptable to future needs and technologies.

Case Study 3: Dylan Alcott Foundation Scholarship

NIDA is proud to partner with The Dylan Alcott Foundation to provide a major scholarship to a NIDA Bachelor of Fine Arts student with disability. The Dylan Alcott Foundation Scholarship was established in 2024 to support a student aged 26 or under, living with disability or long-term medical condition, commencing their studies in any three-year Bachelor of Fine Arts course at NIDA in 2025.

At NIDA's Major Scholarship Celebration on Tuesday 25th February 2025, The Dylan Alcott Foundation Scholarship was first awarded to a student who will receive \$20,000 per annum for three years during their course to cover their tuition fees and some living expenses.

The Dylan Alcott Foundation Scholarship continues the Foundation's commitment as a charitable organisation to empower young Australians living with disability to chase their dreams and break down barriers. By matching the Foundation's support of \$10,000 per annum towards this Scholarship through the NIDA Foundation Trust, NIDA is thrilled to continue their commitment to making the dream of studying as accessible and rewarding for talented, creative students as possible.

“This scholarship represents NIDA’s commitment to addressing the barriers young people with disability face in accessing opportunities in the creative industries. It’s exciting to partner with the Dylan Alcott Foundation to continue working at this.” - Dr Alexia Derbas, NIDA's Head of Equity and Inclusion

CONTACT US

Our Plan is available to the public through our website and accessible formats are available on request. This plan is also registered with the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC).

NIDA values community feedback on our progress in meeting the goals and actions outlined in our DIAP. We encourage individuals and organisations to share their thoughts and experiences with us to ensure our continued improvement.

Please contact Head of Equity and Inclusion Dr Alexia Derbas on:

Email: alexia.derbas@nida.edu.au

Phone: +(02) 9161 6838

OTHER ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The NIDA would like to acknowledge those people who contributed their time and expertise to participate in the development of this plan, including:

- All of our staff and students and other stakeholders who contributed ideas
- Our internal Project Manager Dr Alexia Derbas, Hugh Baldwin (Project Sponsor) and Mike Worner (previous Project Sponsor)
- Access consultant Morwenna Collett.



NIDA

National Institute of Dramatic Art