



Signal Disability Action Plan (DAP)

Plain Language Version

2023

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land. Signal is on the lands of the Bunurong Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation. We pay respect to their Elders past and present. 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 make sure that Signal acts to reduce barriers for Disabled young people
- To ensure Disabled young people guide Signal on how to address barriers against them
- To ensure that Disabled young people who might want to engage with Signal know about the amount of access at Signal
- To develop a model of best practice for inclusion of Disabled people based on solidarity and Disability Justice
- To recognise the many intersecting oppressions Disabled people face
- To recognise the knowledge, creativity, and expertise in Disabled communities
- To ensure Signal is accountable and responsive to Disabled communities

Contributors

This plan follows the principle of *nothing about us without us*. It is based on an understanding that Disabled knowledge and expertise are at the centre of all good access work. This plan was co-designed 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 queer, Disabled Jewish writer, educator, and activist.

Dr. Margaret Mayhew (she / her / they / them) is a queer visual artist and academic living with chronic pain. They 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 Signal Disability Action Plan (DAP) has many suggestions for change. Signal has an Access and Inclusion Working Group to support this plan. The working group members have different skills in management, creativity and production. They all promote access in their areas of work. The group meets each three months to check that Signal follows the strategies and goals of the DAP. The group will also check and update on the actions of the plan.

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. Signal gives opportunities and spaces to explore, develop and present creative work.

Signal supports and engages young people in many different art forms and practices. Signal supports young people to share creative outcomes with the public. These 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. Signal also provides supported opportunities for young and emerging artists through an expression of interest processes.

Signal programs 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. Young Curators work with and learn from experienced artists and curators. They work together to plan and deliver projects.
- Screen and Sound Commissions program for young people 16 to 25 years. Signal selects participants through an expression of interest process. We show final works at Signal screens, soundwalk and beyond.
- Young Creatives Lab program for young people 18 to 25 years. Signal selects participants through an expression of interest process. We show works at Signal and beyond.
- Special projects partnering with arts and community organisations

Language

This plan uses the term Disabled person/Disabled people. We ran a survey for Disabled young people asking what language they'd like Signal to use. We got 28 responses. 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. 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. Disability includes physical, intellectual, cognitive and sensory disability. It also includes neurodivergence, mental illness, chronic illness and deafness.

Alternative Formats

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

Ongoing Feedback

We value your feedback on how we are going as we work to meet the goals and actions in this plan. We encourage individuals and organisations to share their thoughts and experiences. This is how we keep improving.

You can give your feedback in the following ways:

- Completing an anonymous online survey - [Signal Accessibility Survey](#)
- Leaving a voicemail on the phone
- Emailing signalaccess@melbourne.vic.gov.au outlining your feedback
- Emailing signalaccess@melbourne.vic.gov.au and asking for a Signal staff member to call you back to hear your feedback

When giving your feedback, please let us know if you would like a Signal staff member to respond.

Signal will review all feedback at weekly staff meetings and respond to it as needed. Signal will collate and review all feedback and responses at quarterly DAP working group meetings. The advisory group will be able to view this information 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 presence 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. We recognise when Disabled people bring their knowledge of Disabled culture. We also value the connections of Disabled people with disability arts communities.
- Work with City of Melbourne’s People and Culture Branch and Disabled people to review our hiring process and remove barriers. Signal will address barriers like long application processes, text-only applications and 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. Signal will commit to reserving at least one spot for a young Disabled artist every second 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 multiple identities will be equally supported to apply for a reserved spot under either identity.
- All Signal Young Creatives Lab projects will have at least \$1,000 access funding available. This will provide interpreters, support workers, captioning, transport, access equipment. It can support other needs as required by the artist.
- Accessibility consultation will be available to all artists in the program. Signal will support all artists 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 that Signal hires, and if this is increasing.
2. Number of artists, staff, or guest facilitators who declare access needs.
3. If we have made hiring processes more accessible. We will use feedback external Disabled consultants to find out which have worked.
4. Feedback in Young Creatives Lab on changes to access funding and consultation. Noting observed impact of changes in response to access funding and consultation.
5. Number of young Disabled artists successful in Signal Young Creatives Lab program.
6. Young Creative Lab assessment panel made up of at least 20% Disabled artists.

Ongoing education

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

Signal will have 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. This includes different types of disabilities, multiply-marginalised Disabled people. We will use 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. It's not enough for an organisation to involve Disabled people if non-Disabled people are making the decisions.

When deciding if an organisation is appropriate to engage for training we will

- Always seek out and prioritise Disabled-led organisations and Disabled individual educators.
- Think beyond *representation* and ask about who has *power* in the organisation.

Type of training relevant to Signal includes but is 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

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. Feedback from Disabled young people and artists, indicating most relevant training.

Communication

Accessible communication is accurate, clear, and honest. This is the first step to creating an accessible space and organisation.

Signal will be honest and specific about where we are in our access work. We will provide details about accessibility and inaccessibility in our venues, programs, and events. Signal will give Disabled young people the information they need to make an informed choice about what works for them. Signal is 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. We respect the autonomy of Disabled young people, by providing as much information as possible.

Access keys

Signal will work with a Disabled access consultant to develop access keys for Signal venues. Signal will put an access key for the main venue on our website and in links on digital and print marketing. Signal will develop access keys tailored for offsite events and programs as needed. Signal will update Access keys 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. Staff will be able understand the information they cover and can support people to use them.

Timeline: 2023

Who's responsible: DAP Implementation Coordinator with Venue Manager

Accountability:

- Signal will get feedback after developing access keys. Signal will pay Disabled young people to test them and provide feedback. We will 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 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.

Often each Disabled participant has to contact an organisation to get enough information about an event. This extra work is itself a barrier even if the event is otherwise accessible.

Flexibility is at the core of accessibility. We know that every Disabled person's needs and preferences are different.

Signal will include **detailed event information** in our promotional material and registration forms.

This includes:

- **Descriptions** of what an **event involves**
- Links to our access key (see **communication**: access keys)
- Describing the activities
- Describing other elements of the event in detail
- Describing what materials and tools will be used

This information will help give context and share the information we already have. It also shows 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

Accountability:

Signal will get feedback after developing event description templates. Signal will pay Disabled young people to test them and provide feedback. We will review the change made to the access keys based on their feedback.

Review our use of event descriptions quarterly, looking at

1. Are we including descriptions of all our events and opportunities? Are these successful?
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. Include transcripts with all audio content. Release captions and transcripts 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 know 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

We want to design and plan accessible, inclusive events. We aim to think about Disabled needs and experiences from the very start of our event planning. We know that when accessibility is added on at the end we get an event that’s primarily for non-Disabled people. Even if Disabled people attend the event, they may be at the margins. We imagine Disabled participants as part of our core audiences and community. We recognise that accessibility is relevant to every step of planning and delivery. This way we will create events and programs that are really for everyone.

Minimum standards for accessible events

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

The guide should:

- Be available on Signal’s website so people attending 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.). These will support staff to learn more if they don’t know how to put something in place.

Signal will give paid time for staff and guest facilitators to read the minimum standards.

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 helping artists to apply the minimum standards in their planning and delivery of workshops and other events?
 2. What feedback have we received on the minimum standards and event accessibility?

Complaints and feedback process

Signal will have a feedback process that is directly linked to taking action:

1. People who want to or who do attend an event can give feedback in writing, over the phone, or a direct conversation.
2. People who give feedback can be anonymous or they can use their name. They can ask for a response from Signal. Signal will aim to respond within 7 days.
3. Signal will actively seek feedback. We will make it easy to find information about this feedback process.
4. Signal will create a central record of complaints/feedback that staff can access. Signal will check this record to find the areas that most need improving.
5. When Signal receives feedback about a problem or barrier staff will look at what we can do 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 feedback did people give to Signal? What action did Signal take? Was this recorded?
 2. Has Signal contacted the people who gave the feedback (if they asked)?
 3. Are the numbers of feedback or complaints getting higher or lower?

Online programs

COVID lockdowns created many challenges for many people. But they increased the amount of online access to events. Many organisations delivered their work or programs online. More Disabled people were able to be part of online programs. As restrictions eased, many online programs have also ended. Signal will not take that step backwards. We understand that online events provide access to community and culture for young Disabled artists.

Signal will make sure that we develop online programs by consulting with people who need them.

By 2025 Signal will ensure that we deliver 10% of our programs online. E.g. Online workshops, at least one Signal summer intensive being delivered online.

We will review how we can increase that percentage to at least 20%.

Online programs will not just be live streams or recordings of events designed for on-site delivery. We will design programs to run online.

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

Who's responsible: Creative Producers with help from DAP Coordinator

Accountability:

- Review the data each six months, looking at
 1. Percentage of programs delivered online
 2. Participant numbers in programs delivered online
 3. We will collect and analyse participant feedback for programs delivered online. So we can identify and put in place 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. This includes the following:
 - 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
 - Taps (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
- Number of improvements made
- Any changes to access standards that need to be part of the next DAP.
- Conduct new venue access audit every 5 years
- Feedback from users

Ongoing process

Implementing this Disability Action Plan will be an ongoing process. As long as Signal exists, we will engage with disability culture and knowledge as part of our work. Signal will continue to work with a group of Disabled young people:

Timeline: 2023-2027

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

Accountability:

Review the progress every 12 months:

- Signal will pay members of the Co-design group will to review progress of the plan each year.
- Signal will consider the Co-design group feedback on the current plan, and act on it where possible.
- At the end of this plan, we will engage a new co-design group of Disabled young people. We will ensure they have a range of disability experiences and ages, and a range of arts experiences, both independent and with Signal.
- Signal will embed our commitment to disability culture and knowledge in all our strategic plans
- Signal will have a clear way for people to contact Signal with ongoing feedback