

Report by Morwenna Collett, Churchill Fellow  
Awarded by the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust

# **Building a musically inclusive future for Australian artists, participants and audiences - elements and success factors.**

2018 Churchill Fellowship to explore inclusive music programmes, venues and festivals which actively engage disabled people.

## **Summary**



**Days**  
60



**Flights**  
7



**Long car journeys**  
10

**Train trips**  
2

**Training sessions**  
1

**Continents**  
2



**Organisations interviewed**  
72



**Interviews conducted**  
83



**Countries**  
3

**Conferences participated in**  
1



**Cities**  
17



**Individuals interviewed**  
124



**Performances viewed**  
10

**Formal presentations given**  
1

**Workshops attended**  
8

# Executive summary

## Music has the potential to mean something to everyone, and everyone should have the opportunity to engage with music.

This Churchill Fellowship set out to answer the research question:

### 'How can the Australian music industry include more disabled artists, participants and audiences?'

Being curious about opportunities for music to be more broadly enjoyed by disabled people, as both creative participants and makers as well as active audience members, I was not only keen to look at this through the lens of music specific organisations, but also organisations which programme music (festivals and venues). During my travels to the USA, Ireland and UK, I conducted 83 interviews with 124 people across 74 organisations. I met with music specific and multi arts festivals which programme music, music venues, other performing arts venues, arts and disability organisations, music organisations of a variety of genres, government organisations, access consultants, access service providers and disabled musicians. In addition, I observed workshops, attended performances, completed training and participated in a conference. It was the deepest learning experience of my life to date and it reinforced that the moment for Australia's music industry to become more inclusive is now.

### Key findings

There were four main reasons why a music organisation was interested in being inclusive – moral, economic, artistic and a funding and/or legislative requirement. Music is at a different place in its journey towards inclusion when compared with other art forms, and certain genres of music are ahead or behind the curve. The approach to disability is not as high on the priority list or as advanced in its thinking as other diversity areas, such as cultural background and gender. Intersectionality can compound barriers for people from multiple minority groups. Geographic differences also exist regarding what is prioritised access-wise across the music industry.

While not always easy to identify, disabled musicians have forged successful careers both within mainstream musical contexts and within the realm of arts and disability practice. They can face a range of barriers, including attitudinal, the need to 'prove themselves' in a mainstream context, inaccessible instruments and a lack of understanding of access requirements. Role models and critical review are important elements, and media play a part in sector and societal perceptions of their work. There is room to improve work practices across the music industry, by introducing access statements, including access lines in budgets and stronger representation on boards, leadership teams and other decision-making structures.

I identified a wide range of elements which contribute towards the inclusion of disabled people in musical activity, as audiences, artists and participants. Some elements were specific to music organisations who run programmes, others to festivals, others for venues and some for training institutions. However, many of the elements identified were applicable to any type of organisation programming music. These cross-cutting themes include:

- Involving disabled people in decision making via leadership positions and consultation processes
- Embedding inclusion in organisational culture and reflecting it in the workforce
- Organisations must continually learn to keep up to date with accessibility needs, opportunities and good practice
- Organisations are good at collecting data, but could improve its use in measuring impact and informing programme development
- Artist and audience access should both be considered, with organisations asking artists what they need and mentoring all artists on how to make their work inclusive
- Arguments for and against targeted, or disability-specific programming, are both valid
- There are a wide range of methods to provide audience access, with both dementia friendly and relaxed performances gaining popularity
- The same types of booking methods should be available to disabled people as non-disabled people, with online booking for access tickets being particularly important
- Technology can be a stronger enabler of access, both creatively and for audiences.

Music organisations which run programmes should engage skilled facilitators, work with strong partners, conduct regular evaluation, involve funders and family members, set high expectations and understand participant needs and access requirements. It's important to adopt a personal approach, use an accessible space and manage expectations.

Festivals play a key influencing role across the sector and can use this to ensure new commissions are inclusive and help educate artists to make their work accessible. Key access challenges for festival access can relate to the cyclical nature of staff teams (and potential loss of knowledge year on year), construction of temporary sites and venues, emergency evaluation procedures, weather and camping.

Venues should consider front of house, back of house and stage access. Non-physical accessibility features, such as access to information and inclusive programming strategies are also important factors. Access should be an important consideration at every step of the way for a new build or renovation. Where possible, venues should aim for beyond building code compliance and move towards best practice. Physical facilities, chill-out (or quiet) spaces are important, as well as temporary access solutions where permanent access is not yet an option.

Music training institutions can play a critical role in the development of all musicians, with support of individual teachers a key element to success. Training barriers for disabled musicians can include access to opportunities, progression pathways, representation within the music industry. Higher Education music institutions should consider access from the perspectives of understanding potential barriers, student outreach and support, teaching content, staff representation and collaboration.

## Recommendations

In addition to the elements listed above, there were five main success factors identified through this research:

1. Get started
2. Research, listen and seek feedback
3. Improve culture and responsibility
4. Plan and improve
5. Connect and keep learning

These recommendations are provided in further detail via an infographic on the following page.

In considering the current landscape of the Australian music industry and based on the findings of my Fellowship, I encourage Australian music organisations to adopt the success factors recommended above and also consider the cross-cutting elements identified to continue improving their own accessibility.

Inclusion is a journey, not a destination. It will only be achieved if we keep working together to remove as many barriers as possible, ensuring that everyone has equal access to make and enjoy the transformative and connective power of music.

**“Putting inclusion at the heart of the orchestra has been transformative. It has changed the way we look at our Company, our Art, our Audience and our role in the world.”<sup>1</sup>**

## Further details

The full report is available for download [here](#).

Please get in touch if you would like to find out more about this research at:

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<sup>1</sup> Sound Connections, *BSO Change Makers Report*, accessed 20 March 2020, <https://bsolive.com/participate/bso-change-makers-report/>.

# 5 success factors for inclusive music organisations

## 1. Get started

We all need to start somewhere with accessibility. Consider 'achievable accessibility' - what are the financially viable ideas you can put in place right now? Look for solutions to problems, think about Universal Design and consider all impairment types. You don't have to tackle everything at once - dive in and start wherever makes the most sense for your organisation.

## 2. Research, listening and feedback

Listen, get to know your audience and artists and find out what they need. Ask questions, don't make assumptions, consult widely and tune into the voices of those with lived experience. Ask about access requirements and get comfortable talking about disability. Pay people for sharing their expertise with you.

## 3. Improve culture and responsibility

Build organisation-wide commitment to and a positive culture around accessibility. Appoint a lead for access work but ensure that access is considered by the whole organisation. Include more disabled people in your workforce and volunteer base. Use internal champions and seek external expertise when required.

## 4. Planning and continuous improvement

Consider access right from the start and plan ahead. Include access in project plans and budget templates, develop a Disability Action Plan and start a Disability Advisory group. Collect diversity data, analyse it and use it to make informed decisions about your programmes.

## 5. Connect and keep learning

Don't work in isolation - learn from other organisations and share resources. Collaborate with partners and work with consultants. Join a networking group, attend a conference and put access on the agenda for your regular forums. Train your staff, understand your legislative requirements and stay up to date.



Morwenna with conductor James Rose

“If you’re looking for new and innovative ways of making art, an inclusive and diverse model will naturally increase this outcome” – Brighter Sound

“In order to successfully change the culture of an organisation, disability access, inclusion and equity should be centered as an intentional priority from the beginning rather than as an afterthought or accommodation, eliminating the need to play catch up” – Christine Bruno, Disability Inclusion Consultant to the entertainment industry



Inner Vision Orchestra rehearsal

“We need to train all our artists to make their work accessible..we should encourage them to see access as something creative” – Jo Verrent, Senior Producer at the Unlimited Commissions Programme



Access table and materials at Graeae Theatre production ‘One Under’

“It’s so important for bands and promoters to be aware of the access barriers that their fans face, so they can work with venues to solve them” - Hannah McKearnen, Live music and access blogger



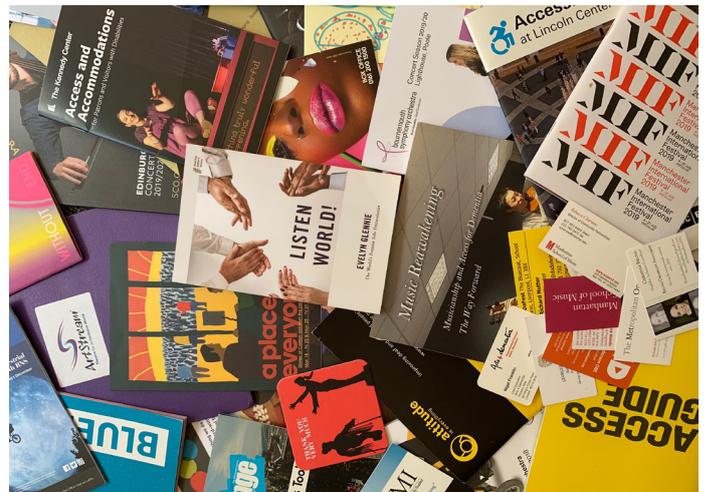
Dementia friendly concert, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra



New venue 'The Reach' at the John F. Kennedy Centre of the Performing Arts, Washington DC

“If non-disabled people are able to purchase tickets online, by phone and in person, the same options should be available to disabled people” - Attitude Is Everything, State of Access Report 2018 - Ticketing Without Barriers

“Inclusion isn't about making excluded people included, but about changing your work to be inclusive” - National Centre for Inclusive Excellence



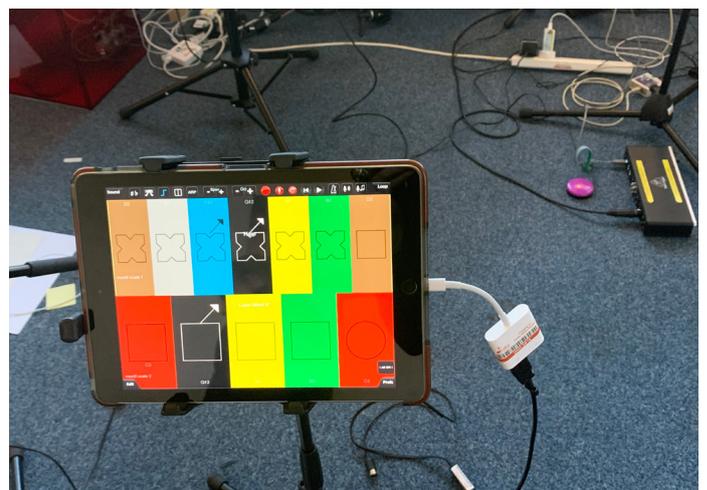
Research trip collateral and brochures



Morwenna playing a one handed flute from the OHMI Trust

“I think the biggest step was having an Access Coordinator to directly talk to customers, ensuring that wherever we have somebody with a requirement, we put something in place for them” - Glastonbury Festival

“This building is so vast that sometimes (you think)...where do we start? So, we're picking something and doing it really well. We're tackling it one area at a time” - The Barbican



ThumbJam software on an iPad during a Digital Orchestra rehearsal at Drake Music Scotland