

NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY ACCESS ACTION PLAN 2018-20



The National Portrait Gallery presents a broad picture of Australian life.

We aim to present the diversity of the national identity through portraiture, and to reach out to engage Australians from all geographies and walks of life.

The National Portrait Gallery Access Action Plan has been developed as part of our commitment to best practice ideals, such that the Gallery site, the collection, exhibitions and public programs are accessible to as many people as possible.

Our Access Action Plan represents an organisation-wide commitment to address barriers to access encountered by visitors with disabilities, and outlines our priorities and goals for the years 2018 to 2020.

Our vision: Increase access, representation in the collection and temporary exhibitions, promote inclusion and be part of a change in attitude towards disability.

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‘As I always bring my profoundly intellectually disabled daughter with me, I always find the staff really understanding and welcoming. Thank you.’

Gallery visitor, April 2015



1. Gallery overview

The National Portrait Gallery is an award-winning building situated within Canberra's Parliamentary Triangle, the symbolic centre of Australia's capital city. The Gallery began its life in 1998 with the idea that the story of Australia could be told through portraits of our most remarkable citizens. The current building opened in 2008, featuring nine galleries arranged on one level providing exhibition space for approximately 500 portraits for our visitors to engage with.

OUR MISSION

The purpose of the National Portrait Gallery is to increase the understanding and appreciation of the Australian people – their identity, history, culture, creativity and diversity – through portraiture.

To achieve its purpose the Gallery will:

- Develop the collection.
- Reach out and engage Australians.
- Build our resource base.
- Create a supportive culture.
- Maintain and enhance our signature building.

OUR VALUES

We aim to inspire	In everything we do we strive to be an inspiration to the individual, the community and the nation.
We are inclusive and accessible	We are approachable, friendly and welcoming of our visitors and each other. We strive to ensure that the Gallery, the collection and our programs are accessible to all.
We operate with integrity	We are accountable, responsible for our actions and act with honesty and empathy, remaining true to our purpose. We respect the focus of our collection, the sitters and their stories, the artists, our visitors and each other.
We strive for excellence	We continue to strive and challenge ourselves through our initiatives. We are innovative and seek to lead in everything we do.

OUR VISITORS

National Portrait Gallery visitors include:

- The general public, who attend informal learning programs, visit the site and collection and frequent the café and book shop. They include domestic and international tourists and the local residents of Canberra.
- Corporate and function event attendees and presenters who hire venue spaces.
- Education groups participating in facilitated and self-guiding programs.



2. Our accessibility commitment

In accordance with our Corporate Plan 2015–19, the National Portrait Gallery is committed to engagement with and access for diverse audiences of all abilities.

The National Portrait Gallery is committed to the following accessibility principles:

- We regularly consult with and are informed by our Access Advisory Group.
- We invite accessibility audits; these may cover physical access points, facilities and exhibition spaces, from the perspective of an increasingly broad experience of disability.
- We explore new technologies to provide diverse access points to the collection, both onsite and in outreach programs to the community.
- For all our initiatives we strive to comply with relevant standards and legislation.
- We welcome staff with different experiences, cultural heritage and educational backgrounds, with employment conditions covered by the National Portrait Gallery Enterprise Agreement 2017–20.

With these principles we seek to promote social equity, acknowledge the exceptional contributions people with disability make, and encourage positive community attitudes.

3. Defining disability

Disability is an evolving concept and results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. (Universal Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities).

According to the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, a disability includes:

- Total or partial loss of a bodily or intellectual function.
- Total or partial loss of a part of the body.
- Presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness.
- Presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness.
- Condition which results in a person learning differently.
- Disorder, illness or disease that affects a person's thought processes or which results in disturbed behaviour.

According to the report commissioned by Australian Network on Disability, and conducted by Deloitte Access Economics in 2012 and the 2015 Australian Bureau of Statistics:

- In 2015 over 4.3 million Australians reported living with disability. Added to which there is a 'ripple' effect impacting families, carers and the broader community. 1 in 3 people in Australia either has a disability or is likely to be close to someone with a disability.
- The majority (78.5%) of people with disability reported a physical condition as their main long-term health condition. The other 21.5%, over 90,000 people reported mental and behavioural disorders. Most disabilities are not visible.
- There were around 3.5 million older Australians in 2015, representing 1 in every 7 people. The average age of a primary carer was 55 years, over one-third of whom were living with disability themselves.
- Vision Australia estimates that there are now over 350,000 people who are blind or have low vision. Projections by 2030 are for 564,000 people.
- About 1 in 6 Australians are affected by hearing loss. Projections for 2050 are 1 in 4. There are approximately 30,000 Deaf Auslan users with total hearing loss.
- People with disability were more likely to have lower levels of income than those without disability. In 2015, 49.4% of people with disability lived in households in the lowest two quintiles for equivalised gross household income
- In 2015, there were 2.1 million Australians of working age with disability. However only 53.4% of working age people with disability were in the labour force, which compares to 83.2% of people with no disability. It has been estimated that Australia's GDP could be increased by \$43 billion over the next decade if the employment rate of 64% for people with disability was achieved.
- Almost 1 in 12 Australians with disability reported they had experienced discrimination or unfair treatment because of their disability. Over one-third of women and over one-quarter of men aged 15 years and over had avoided situations because of their disability.



4. Where we fit: social policy context

Australia currently does not have a national policy for arts and disability issues. The National Portrait Gallery's Access Action Plan 2018–20 reflects our commitment to implementing social policy and frameworks in this sphere. The Plan is informed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the National Disability Strategy 2010–20 and the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*.

UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

- Ratified by Australia in 2008.
- Removing barriers: acknowledges that people with disability have the same human rights as those without disability. Participating governments need to ensure these rights can be exercised and that barriers to exercising such rights are removed.
- Rights based approach: Participating governments are required to provide specialist and mainstream services to people with disability.
- Access to information: Recognises that access to information, communications and services, including the internet, is a human right.

NATIONAL DISABILITY STRATEGY 2010-20

- A national plan for Australians with disability, their families and carers developed by the Commonwealth, states, territories and local governments in partnership.
- Policy and change: Designed as a guide for public policy and to bring about change in mainstream services.

DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT 1992

- Building an inclusive community: Agencies must ensure that people with disabilities have the same fundamental rights to access information and services as others in the community.

Other relevant legislation and guidelines informing the National Portrait Gallery's Access Action Plan include:

- *National Portrait Gallery Corporate Plan 2015–19*
 - Goal 2: Reach out to and engage Australians from all geographies and walks of life in innovative and distinctive ways.
 - 2.1 Devise programs that are innovative and reach a diverse national audience.
 - 2.3 Maintain high quality visitor service.
 - 2.4 Create new and ingenious ways of providing access to the Collection and programs via technology.
 - 2.6 Strive to communicate on different levels to resonate with our national and international audience.
- ICOM Code of Ethics legislation.act.gov.au/a/1991-98/current/pdf/1991-98.pdf
- Web Guide webguide.gov.au/accessibility-usability/accessibility/
- Disability Access to Premises Standards legislation.gov.au/Details/F2010L00668
- World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) w3.org/TR/2008/REC-WCAG20-20081211/
- ACT Inclusion Council: Involve Canberra Disability Commitment, involvecbr.com.au/
- *Disability Services Act 1991* legislation.act.gov.au/a/1991-98/current/pdf/1991-98.pdf
- *Discrimination Act 1991* legislation.act.gov.au/a/1991-81/current/pdf/1991-81.pdf



5. Our history and achievements

The National Portrait Gallery has introduced many initiatives addressing relevant issues in the lead up to the development of this Access Action Plan. We have aimed to be inclusive in our delivery of programs, visitor experience and the navigation of our physical spaces and facilities.

PHYSICAL SPACES

- Made alterations to the building, including the addition of a hand rail on the stairs in the Liangis Theatre and improved access to the public car park.
- Added braille signage and access ramps to lifts.
- Added hearing loops in the Liangis Theatre and Terrace rooms.
- Provided disability parking in staff and visitor car park.
- Provided free parking for visitors displaying disability permit.

PROGRAMS AND EXPERIENCES

- Provided free wheelchairs, walkers and walking sticks.
- Created a Museums and Galleries National Awards (MAGNA) award-winning Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program in 2012–13 for Canberra students and their teachers, with modest funding from the Australian Decorative and Fine Arts Societies. This successful program continues to be delivered annually.
- Trained staff to develop a free audio description guide, in collaboration with Imogen Yang of Insightful, to be made available online and on our free-to-hire iPads.
- Trained staff in blind and cultural awareness with ACT Blind Society.
- Delivered vision impaired tours and developed resources to be used across all ages and abilities.
- Screened captioned programs.
- Introduced sign language interpreted events and videos, such as annual lectures, video content on display in exhibitions and curatorial talks.
- Facilitated tailored programs in the Gallery and workshop space for students with autism.
- Facilitated tailored programs for adult groups with brain injury, mental health issues and other special needs.
- Introduced monthly Art and Dementia tours for people living with dementia and their carer, and regular booked tours with Dementia Australia social groups. Training for staff has been provided through Dementia Australia and the National Gallery of Australia.
- Developed virtual excursions that are being rolled out nationally in Starlight Foundation rooms. We piloted at Canberra Hospital and continue to facilitate sessions monthly.
- Updated our website to be more accessible with reviews in place.
- Created an App, *Portrait Stories*, that features different access point such as videos, enlarged text and beacon function.



6. Our accessibility vision

The National Portrait Gallery's Access Action Plan 2018–20 builds on existing programs and policies in consultation with the National Portrait Gallery's Access Advisory Group, and will continue to initiate new access strategies.

OUR VISION

- To increase public access to the collection, programs and facilities.
- To promote inclusion, representation, recognition and participation of persons with a disability.
- To be part of a change in attitudes towards disability.

General visitor feedback and consultation with the Access Advisory Group has identified barriers still to be removed in the following areas, to be a priority for 2018–20:

- Exhibition design and experience.
- Online engagement.
- Audience development and marketing strategies.
- Programs and visitor services.
- Staff training.
- Building access.

7. Consultation process

Internal and external stakeholder consultations have informed our Access Action Plan. Consultation revealed areas where barriers to access remain, and research has been undertaken to address these issues.

We thank our Access Advisory Group for their participation and their ongoing support to advance access at the National Portrait Gallery.

We thank Sancha Donald, CEO of Accessible Arts, Emma Bennison, Co-CEO of Arts Access Australia, and Matthew Bowden, People with Disability Australia Incorporated, for their feedback on the policy.

8. Review and evaluation

The Access Action Plan will be monitored by staff working in relevant sections across the Gallery. Evaluation on attendance numbers to events, decrease in complaints, and reporting based on formal surveys and informal oral feedback will be undertaken to measure progress in reaching the goals of this plan.

The National Portrait Gallery will continue to:

- Seek out and build on existing relationships with groups in the disability sector.
- Consult our Access Advisory Group.
- Ask for feedback from visitors and people with disability.
- Address barriers to access.

9. Access Strategic Plan

EXHIBITION DESIGN

GOAL:

- Design exhibitions that are more accessible to a wide range of people with disabilities and all users in general.

STRATEGIES:

- In consultation with our Access Advisory Group, create a checklist of elements to consider in exhibition design for people with disability. This should include design, seating and physical access to exhibition spaces.
- With minimal exceptions, follow recommendations and guidelines on exhibition design where applicable.

ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

GOAL:

- Make the Gallery's website more accessible to a wider range of people with disabilities and all users in general.

STRATEGIES:

- Comply with the WCAG requirements for an AA rating.
- Ensure that our web content is written in plain English, with illustrations wherever possible, and explanations provided for any specialised terms.
- Make our audio description guide available online.
- Develop more virtual learning excursions and related online materials that will continue to broaden its scope to facilitate to:
 - Hospital schools/Starlight Foundation rooms
 - Dementia clinics and aged care facilities

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING

GOALS:

- Increase awareness of the Gallery's commitment to accessibility among relevant stakeholders.
- Increase engagement and awareness of the Gallery's programs and exhibitions, in relation to accessibility, among carers, and those with disabilities and other accessibility requirements.
- Conduct research and evaluation to gain a greater understanding of how to develop relationships, increase participation and build an audience of people with disability.
- Conduct research and evaluation to gain a greater understanding of accessibility issues with all Gallery communications platforms.
- Extend existing and establish new relationships with disability support and advocacy groups.

STRATEGIES:

- Identify and build a communications database of relevant individuals and organisations who are interested in access for people with disability.
- Develop a newsletter promoting programs and exhibitions that are relevant to carers and people with disability.
- Evaluate and, where possible, incorporate additional communication methods to reach individuals who would otherwise be unable to access Gallery content.
- Continue to utilise and further harness a variety of communication methods (social media, online, print media, posters, flyers, community outreach, radio and television) to ensure information about the Gallery is accessible to a variety of individuals.
- Ensure communications about accessibility to programs and exhibitions are clear and readily available for individuals and groups to access.

PROGRAMS AND VISITOR SERVICES

GOALS:

- Continue to create a welcoming and inclusive environment through communication strategies that ensure visitors with disability experience the same, or as close as possible to, what is experienced by our general visitors.
- Review regular and newly established programs.
- Continue to tailor programs to meet the individual needs and goals of people with disabilities.
- Develop hearing-impaired drama and art making workshops for students in Canberra and the region.
- Complete and maintain an audio descriptive tour for vision-impaired visitors.
- Develop sensory workshops and tailored programs for local schools with students with intellectual and physical disability.

STRATEGIES:

- Research and explore new technologies, resources and current best practices to improve existing programs and create new initiatives.
- Complete visitor surveys, collect anecdotal evidence and develop other methods to evaluate visitor experience.
- Foster new partnerships and formalise existing relationships with local schools, organisations and individuals that are involved in the disability sector. Through this we aim to further the development of tailored programs for people with disability, create potential professional development and training opportunities for National Portrait Gallery staff, and create information and resource exchange networks.

STAFF TRAINING

GOALS:

- Increase staff awareness and attitudes to eliminate practices that discriminate against people with a disability.

STRATEGIES:

- When possible, staff will seek out and engage in training and development opportunities to engage visitors with disability in a meaningful and appropriate manner to ensure they experience the same, or as close as possible to, the experience of our general visitors.
- Promote internal training of disability awareness to increase understanding and acceptance between staff members.

BUILDING ACCESS

GOALS:

- Enhance the accessibility of the National Portrait Gallery's building.

STRATEGIES:

- Protect vehicles and infrastructure from damage. The National Portrait Gallery's car park is available for vehicles under 2.2m high. This limits parking options for some wheelchair accessible buses. The National Portrait Gallery will develop a procedure to provide access for over-height wheelchair accessible buses with prior arrangement.
- A number of capital projects are scheduled during the life of this Access Action Plan. The National Portrait Gallery will consider the accessibility implications of capital works projects in the planning stages to ensure accessibility is maintained as far as practicable during building works.

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