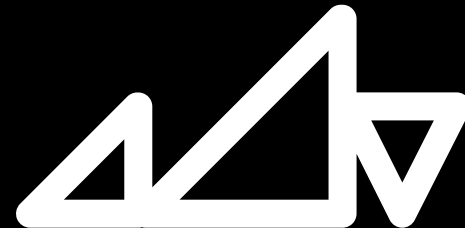


# Youth Advisory Committee Manifesto



**ARTS ACCESS VICTORIA**



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# About Arts Access Victoria

Established in 1974, Arts Access Victoria (AAV) is the state's peak body for arts and disability.

As a disability-led arts organisation, AAV is at the forefront of innovative disability arts practice, access and inclusion. We aim to achieve cultural equity for Deaf and Disabled Victorians.



Capturing the City, 2022. Photo by Kate Disher-Quill



# About the Youth Advisory Committee

The Youth Advisory Committee is comprised of eight young, proud, Deaf and Disabled artists. Each of us bring our intersectional identities and personal experiences. Since forming in 2022, we have been advising AAV on programming and long-term goals.

The Youth Advisory Committee was formed to ensure that AAV programs for young people involve young people. That young people's perspectives are represented in all our programs. The Youth Advisory Committee has influenced AAV and we hope to extend that influence across the arts industry.

What the Youth Advisory Committee consulted and advised on:

- How to make online/hybrid programs accessible, welcoming and intentional.
- What young Deaf and Disabled people need during the transition years after school.
- How to support young Deaf and Disabled people starting work.
- Professional development programs.
- Ways to create inclusive spaces to create meaningful connections.
- How to improve our marketing and communication to include young people.
- Our work can be seen in action with programs like Snug Rock, Nexus, Maker Space, Capturing the City and more.

## **The founding members are:**

- Ash Hem
- Anna Zhang
- Raquel Fasano
- Zac Chu
- Natalie Williams
- Sam Martin
- Paige Harrington
- Michel Spargo-Ryan

We'd like to thank the access staff who made these meetings and this manifesto possible. This includes Auslan interpreters, live captioners, moderators and AAV staff.



# The Future of the Arts

As Arts Access Victoria celebrates their 50th anniversary in 2024, we took this moment to dream about the future of the arts for Deaf and Disabled artists. This manifesto is a time capsule. The arts industry, as is society, is constantly evolving and so too shall this manifesto. As we achieve our goals and continue our advocacy this manifesto will continue to guide the way. Our dedication to the future of arts for Deaf and Disabled artists extends beyond the current Youth Advisory Committee. It includes the next generation. We extend our warm welcome to the new CEO of AAV and to all those who wish to engage with our brighter future.

This manifesto represents the legacy of this inaugural Youth Advisory Committee. It is also a guiding light for the future of the arts industry. Young artists will always be a part of the community. We advocate for a more sustainable, accessible and welcoming arts industry for everybody. The Youth Advisory Committee has spent two years dreaming about the future and sharing the changes we would like to see. We thank and give our appreciation to our funders; VicHealth, Victorian Government Engage! and Cassandra Gantner Foundation. Without their generous support, this wouldn't have been possible.





## Culture of Respect

The arts industry must acknowledge and celebrate diverse lived experiences. We do this with an open mindset to all intersectional identities. There is beauty that rests within our accessibility requirements just as there is beauty in our lives. The Youth Advisory Committee advocates for an arts industry that is free from discrimination. The future of our industry needs a culture of respect and a commitment to positive action. All artists deserve to have their inner artistic children nurtured. Through supporting and uplifting each other, we can cultivate a community of inclusion, where everyone is welcome to participate in a way that makes them feel welcome. Different opinions are okay and bring value to our community.

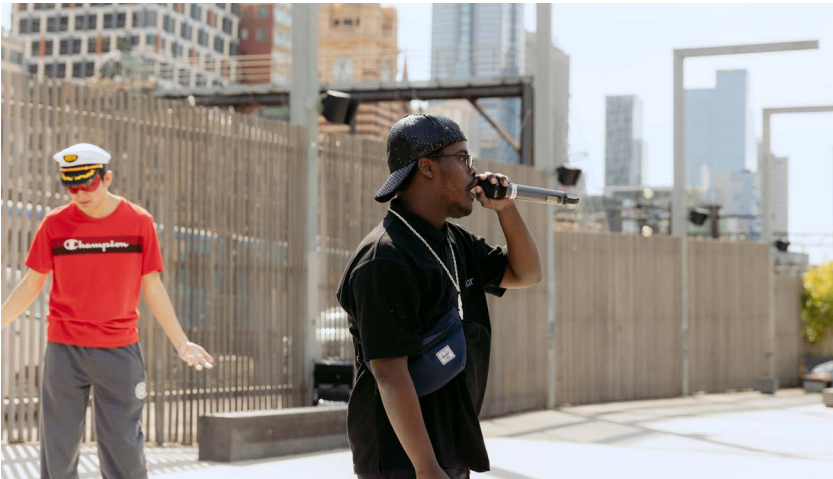


Capturing the City, 2023.

## Change the Narrative

There is too much focus in the “mainstream” on disability as a barrier. We want to see more representation for the positive influences that disability can have on our artistic projects and an acknowledgement of the social model of disability. We can share how art is not just a career, but it also provides therapy and self-care. It is a way for healing, self-love and pride in our practice and our identity.

- Exhibit more positive representations of Deaf and Disabled artistic processes – share how our disability has influenced our art in a positive way.
- Create opportunities for Deaf and Disabled artists to share their process (not just the outcome).
- More incentives given to mainstream audiences to attend Deaf and Disabled arts events.



Capturing the City, 2023. Photo by Kate Disher-Quill.



## Embedded Access and Cultural Safety

Our ideal future would allow Deaf and Disabled artists to express ourselves in our own way. It will take the time that it takes. Cvertime needs to be properly understood. This means a deep understanding of what a “fair go” means and the complexities of making this “go” fair for every artist. At its core, we ask for a culture of compassion – for ourselves and for our community. This is true empowerment.

- The inaccessible shackles of strict timelines need to be relaxed into a more flexible and open schedule.
- Accessibility and cultural safety must be at the core of every arts project, workshop, event etc.
- The onus for accessibility accommodations should lay on the organisers and not on the participants.



Maker Space Taster, 2023. Photo by Laura Du Vé

## Advocacy and Peer Support

Peer support and advocacy go hand-in-hand. So, how can we help young people advocate for themselves while they fight for inclusion? We must support each other as a community of peers on every level. We must strive for visibility on a mainstream level by supporting each other.

- Promote our art and experiences in a way that draws others in, be they Deaf and Disabled or not.
- We need safe spaces for everyone to gather and create together as human beings. This would allow us to learn from each other, encourage each other, and form new friendships.
- Keep track of any common issues that need to be addressed in our community.



Snug Rock, 2022. Photo by Laura Du Vé

Cultural Equity for Deaf and Disabled People.



## Inclusion, Compassion, Joy

We want to create a community that goes beyond appreciating art. We are building a supportive arts community. We celebrate each other and reject the competitive arts culture. Although there are limited opportunities, together we can create new opportunities. The value is in the journey, not the destination.

- We need to encourage a mindset of being each other's biggest cheerleaders. Uplift one and we uplift all.
- Foster appreciation of each other's accessibility requirements. Be it big or small, access needs are a thing of joy because it allows everyone to participate.
- Evolve our thinking beyond networking events being a "drink and dinner" with strangers.
- Provide young artists with events that will actually stimulate conversation. Instead of feeling like a nerve-racking challenge of inserting yourself into a pre-established dynamic.
- Encourage the joy of creating art without the pressure of a completed outcome.

## Community Spaces for Deaf and Disabled Artists

As Deaf and Disabled artists it's important to have safe spaces to be vulnerable and create from our most authentic selves. For young artists fresh out of the confines of school without any concrete guidance on how to pursue a career. The rules are unclear, artistic institutions are inaccessible and our art is often labelled 'unprofessional'. Art can be a healing resource for our souls and can help us grow as individuals, learning who we are on a deeper level. Achieving these goals requires a united community. We are stronger together than apart.

- We need a commitment to nurturing emerging careers and opportunities for growth.
- We must advocate for greater arts funding, university courses to not be cut, and reasonable pay for artists and art workers.



Mini Snug Rock, 2023. Photo by Kate Disher-Quill

Cultural Equity for Deaf and Disabled People.





## Increased Representation

Deaf and Disabled artists need to be normalised in our society. Despite being the largest minority there is still little representation in art. There is also stigma attached to us as Deaf and Disabled artists. This often means young artists feel like they cannot be their authentic selves – that openly identifying somehow harms their career as artists.

- To break this barrier, we want to normalise seeing Deaf and Disabled artists everywhere.
- Sharing space with established Deaf and Disabled artists helps us develop our own roadmap to a successful artistic life and career.



Snug Rock, 2022. Photo by Laura Du Vé

## Audience Communication

Keep diverse experiences and needs in mind when developing programs for diverse participants. Be flexible and open as what works for one person might not work for another. Give your audiences access information front and centre.

- It is important to share all information about a program so we can make an informed decision on if it's a fit for us or not.
- Give us information on the vibe of the event: what to expect, what others might be doing, what we can do, the pacing of the event.
- Clear signage and clearly defined rules and expectations makes events way less stressful.
- This includes online spaces, don't assume people know what the rules are when it comes to online spaces.
- We ask that you treat online events and spaces with intention. It goes a long way when you have an online moderator.
- Have different ways for people to interact.



## Remove Financial Barriers to Art

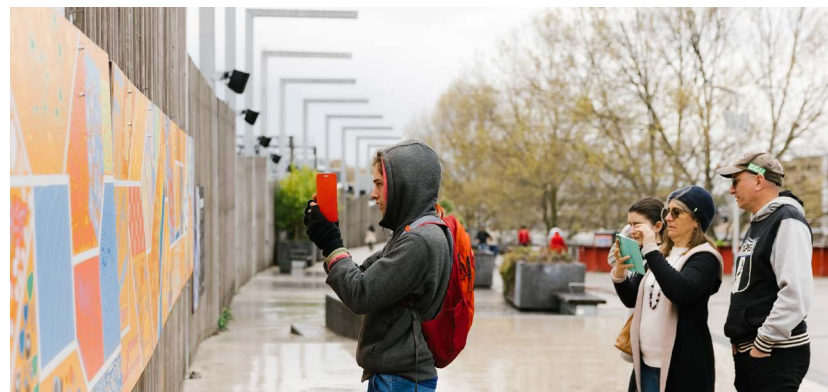
Financial viability is one of the largest barriers to a career in the arts. Art shouldn't be blockaded behind a paywall. It is hard to enter the arts industry for those without industry connections, especially for those that don't have financial security. We call for a cultural shift on the value of arts within our society. Not only in an aesthetic way, but in a strategic, collaborative, and human way.

Everyone consumes art. It is one of the biggest reliefs under the stresses and pressures of capitalism – art makes up the “good things” that we cling to. Art isn't beside us, it's within us and all around us. Art offers new ways for us to connect as people. It teaches empathy, collaborative ways of working, adaptive thinking, and can transcend language. This is why it's disappointing that creating and sharing art is often locked behind financial barriers.

- Give us training on how to obtain and use grant funding.
- We want accessible education on how to complete creative project through the grant funding criteria.
- Professional training on the networking social etiquette. To remove the stress of participating in unfamiliar scenarios.
- We'd like to see more arts courses and supplies provided in a more affordable way. So those struggling financially can participate and all lived experiences get a seat at the table.

## New Ways, New Art

We want to see more spotlights on Deaf and Disabled artists, not just in the disability arts industry, but also in the mainstream. This means removing the misconception that Deaf and Disabled artists solely create around their identity. Deaf and Disabled artists should be recognised as intersectional artists with a wealth of experiences and interests. We are not the token “diverse” person in an otherwise non-diverse showcase. Achieving this means developing new ways to showcase our art. Beyond the traditional goal of “get in a gallery or on a stage”. We need more innovative ways to show our art to open up greater representation of diverse lived experiences. Our goal is for a future where we don't feel required to “out” ourselves as disabled to have our access needs met. Access should be the default.



Capturing the City, 2022. Photo by Kate Disher-Quill

Cultural Equity for Deaf and Disabled People.



## In Summary:

We acknowledge that not all our suggestions will work for every young Deaf and Disabled artist. Our focus is on clear and inclusive education. Giving us clear information about events can help us decide if the event is appropriate for us or not. The most efficient way to make an event inclusive to all is to have an open dialogue with participants. Access needs should be the responsibility of the event organiser and never the burden of the participants. Keep in mind, not every artist wants their art to be a career – for some, it's a healing tool or a lifestyle. But for those that do want a career in the arts, financial viability is often one of the largest barriers.

Spotlighting emerging and established Deaf and Disabled artists. And, providing young artists the opportunity to connect with them can do a lot to boost our confidence as an artist. When we see Deaf and Disabled artists represented in the arts industry, it tells us that we belong and that there is a place for us in the arts. Our biggest desire is to foster a compassionate and uplifting community for all Deaf and Disabled artists to be a part of.

Snug Rock,  
2022. Photo by  
Laura Du Vé

