

# THE UNCONFORMITY

## ACCESS AND INCLUSION ACTION PLAN

Organisation:	The Unconformity Inc.
Document Date:	30 June 2021
Document Status:	V4

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*It was clear from the submissions that too many people with disabilities in the community are isolated and lonely. For some, the barriers in the built environment limit their ability to participate fully in community life. But for others the barriers are social and attitudinal. It is these barriers that have proved the most difficult to overcome. (Shut Out, 2009)<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> National Disability Strategy 2010–2020, pp.31.

## INTRODUCTION

The Unconformity is an arts organisation that produces a biennial contemporary art festival and explores new cultural commodities on the wild and mountainous Western fringe of lutruwita/Tasmania.

Previous events have focused upon inclusivity and removing accessibility barriers on a case-by-case basis without the guidance of an overarching policy. This Disability Action Plan (DAP) represents a concerted shift towards a whole of organisation culture of ensuring equitable communication, access and involvement for our participants. It outlines our legal responsibilities, challenges, key focus areas, and maps out our intention to monitor, evaluate and remain accountable to this policy to ensure that we respond to the varying needs of our local and visiting audience, artists, staff, volunteers and stakeholders.

This iteration of the DAP is a draft. Future consultation with our audience aims to better inform the scope of this policy; informing longer-term priorities, actions, resourcing, timeframes, and strategies for increasing the participation of people with disability with our organisation.

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### Who We Are

Some years ago, through a municipal survey, the Queenstown community identified an arts event as the best way to confront local challenges. From this modest beginning and through this mandate, the Queenstown Heritage and Arts Festival evolved into a significant Tasmanian cultural event authentically engaged with its community.

The festival celebrates West Coast life, attracts state and national audiences, generates significant economic benefits to the region and has won major awards for artistic quality, social inclusion and cultural tourism.

Consequent to evaluation of the 2014 festival, the organisation was re-defined as The Unconformity, with festivals held in 2016 and 2018 with a 2021 festival currently in production. Inspired by a unique local feature – a geological unconformity – this trilogy of festivals explores the profound spirit of place and the cultural paradoxes of Queenstown and Western lutruwita/Tasmania.

The Unconformity festival is now a mature permanent presence and, through the directions of the organisation's 2021–2025 Strategic Plan, is ideally placed to creatively lead regional Tasmania in standards of inclusivity, accessibility and participation.

### Vision and Mission

#### Vision

Mining new cultural commodities at the edge of the world; let our nonconforming spirit redefine yours.

#### Values

We value:

- The palawa Aboriginal community, their continued connection to the land and to this place
- Our West Coast: our community and our spirit of place
- Artists, their art, and their power to transform individuals and communities
- Our volunteers, our staff, and our supporters in government, business and community
- Ethical organisational conduct

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## DISABILITY ACTION PLAN

### Principles

The development of this DAP has been informed by strategies within the *National Arts and Disability Strategy 2009*.

The Strategy identifies the following goals, which have been adopted by The Unconformity:

1. Access and participation

Address the barriers which prevent people with a disability from accessing and participating in the arts and cultural activities, both as audiences and participants.

2. Arts and cultural practice

Address the barriers which prevent emerging and professional artists and arts/cultural workers with a disability from realising their ambitions.

3. Audience development

Strategies for developing and growing audiences for work created by artists with a disability and disability arts organisations.

4. Strategic development

Strategies aimed to improve coordination and collaboration, empower people with a disability to have a stronger voice in policy development and planning, and support informed decision making.<sup>2</sup>

### Responsibilities and Legislation

The *Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992* makes it unlawful to discriminate against someone on the basis of their disability or a disability of any associates of that person, aims to promote equal opportunity and access for people with disabilities, and to educate the community about the rights of people with disability.

### Definition

The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)* defines 'persons with disabilities' as:

*Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.*<sup>3</sup>

The Unconformity adopts the social model of disability, a model developed by people with disability, which distinguishes between an individual's impairment and disability. It recognises that people are disabled by barriers created by society, with these barriers limiting opportunity and creating disadvantage.

The Unconformity acknowledges that not all individuals who encounter such disabling barriers identify as a person with disability, and may instead identify as a member of a cultural and linguistic or other group.

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<sup>2</sup> National Arts and Disability Strategy, p.12.

<sup>3</sup> Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability, Article 1.

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## **Challenges**

Given The Unconformity's remote location in lutruwita/Tasmania, the organisation may face challenges in the implementation of this DAP, such as:

- A lack of resources
- The inaccessible qualities of heritage buildings and industrial, cultural and natural environments that are used as event spaces
- The limited number of accommodation options without physical access barriers
- Limited accessibility services in the Queenstown area (such as Auslan interpreters)

## **Key Focus Areas**

Key focus areas that have been identified through previous event research, and acknowledgement of the above challenges, are to be implemented in the development and operations of all of our events.

These include:

### Communications

The Unconformity seeks to support self-determination in participants, arming them with enough information to direct their own experience.

1. The use of people-first language in all communications.
2. All event marketing material to include universal access symbols for relevant events.
3. The Unconformity website adheres to W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.
4. Detailed accessibility information for each venue, event and program item on the website as well as a dedicated accessibility page centralising this information.
5. Plain-text versions of key marketing material (such as the festival brochure) available on the website.
6. Captions (open or closed) on all video content.
7. Image descriptions on all social media posts.
8. Direct marketing to disability service providers in the West Coast region to target, and more meaningfully engage with, community members with disability.
9. Outreach to artists with disability and arts access groups to increase awareness of The Unconformity's residency and Seed Funding programs.

### Venue and Facility Access

10. All controlled outdoor venues have dedicated accessible parking spaces or designated drop off areas and accessible viewing areas for patrons with disability.
11. Clearly signed accessible toilets and a volunteer assigned to assist patrons with queries.
12. Quota for number of universally-accessible venues used at the festival to ensure prioritisation during planning stages.
13. Dedicated quiet/sensory-friendly space available at the festival.
14. Permitting Therapy / Support Dogs into all event and festival venues.
15. Prioritise the use of accommodation providers with universally-accessible options and establish relationships with homeowners with universally-accessible properties, for use as artist residency houses.

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## Ticket Purchase

16. Event bookings for people with access needs are made directly with the ticketing and customer service office in-person or by telephone or email.

## Ticket Options

17. Support for the Companion Card program with companion ticket offered at no cost.

18. Offering discounted tickets to West Coast locals.

19. Where tiered-price seating is in effect, designated wheelchair spaces are sold at the lowest price band.

## Training

20. Explore Tasmanian disability awareness training sessions for staff and Board members to ensure understanding of access and disability and to help inform the further development and implementation of this DAP.

## Inclusion

21. Establish a target for inclusion of artists with disability in future iterations of The Unconformity festival program, as well as The Unconformity's artist residency and Seed Funding programs.

## **ACTIONS AND TIMEFRAMES**

Actions and timeframes for The Unconformity DAP beyond the 2021 festival will be identified mid-2022 through a second stage research and consultation process. The final draft of the DAP will be produced in late 2022 following this consultation.

## **MONITORING, ACCOUNTABILITY, EVALUATION AND REVIEW**

This is a living document that relies upon information that is current at the time of writing.

The DAP will be updated following each festival and will be evaluated in January of each year thereafter during which further analysis, consultation and disability-led contributions will be incorporated.

In order to remain accountable to the principals and focus areas outlined in this DAP, The Unconformity will make a copy publicly available on its website and following each festival, the organisation will thoroughly assess how well it has adhered to this DAP.