

Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP)

July 2025 to June 2028



Acknowledgement of Country

The MSO respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of all the lands upon which the Orchestra works and creates music. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and honour the continuation of the oldest music practice in the world.

Alternative Formats

Our DIAP is available in alternative formats, including PDF and word (both available on our website). Hard copy formats (in both large and standard print) and other alternative formats are also available upon request.



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Message from the CEO

I am proud to share the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra's first Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP).

As an organisation, we recognise the responsibility and opportunity in improving access across our organisation, performances and programs. We believe that a thoughtful, responsive and inclusive accessibility strategy can support and improve everyone's experiences of the MSO, not just those living with disability.

We believe that inclusive design and accessibility programs provide opportunities for innovation, new ways of engaging audiences and supporting our artists and our employees - all so we can share more widely the enduring value of music in people's lives.

This Plan is part of our longer-term commitment to meaningful change around accessibility, building on the learnings and work we have already undertaken with projects such as the MSO's Auslan Choir, improvements to our Box Office processes, and collaborations with organisations such as e.motion21.

In its first iteration, our DIAP presents clear actions and next steps under three focus areas: culture and employment within the MSO; creative experiences; and community. We look forward to building on these as the Plan and company continues to adapt and learn.

This Plan has been shaped by more than just legislative and funding expectations. It has been informed by data and deep research, the perspectives of people living with disability, internal evaluation and external consultation.

On behalf of the MSO, I thank all those who have contributed to and supported this work. Your insights, expertise and guidance has been invaluable, and we look forward to continuing this work and engagement over the course of this Plan and beyond.



Richard Wigley
Chief Executive Officer

Who we are

The Melbourne Symphony Orchestra is Australia's preeminent orchestra, dedicated to creating orchestral music that matters. Through the shared language of music, the MSO is where orchestral legacy meets bold artistry, with a vision to define contemporary Australian sound through artistic innovation and a deep commitment to the artists of tomorrow.

Woven into the cultural fabric of Victoria and with a history spanning more than a century, the MSO reaches five million people annually through performances, TV, radio, and online broadcasts, as well as critically acclaimed recordings from its newly established recording label.

In 2025, the MSO celebrates 75 years performing in Geelong while our MSO Chorus marks 60 years of creating inspiring musical moments. As the first Australian orchestra to perform overseas in 1965, our proud history of international touring and engagement also includes partnerships across the globe and in 2025, a major tour to Europe and the United Kingdom.

Our commitment to showcasing the rich and diverse talents of Australian artists remains at the heart of our work. In 2024 we showcased 21 commissions by Australian composers and continue to support emerging creatives through our MSO Academy and dedicated in-residence Young Composer and Assistant Conductor positions.

First Nations artists and narratives form a major part of this commitment and through dedicated programming, commissions and artistic collaborations we work to ensure that First Nations voices are heard and celebrated on our stages.

Driven by the belief that music is a universal right, the MSO brings music to all corners of the community. Regional Victorian performances, Neighbourhood concerts, accessible performances, and free events ensure that everyone, regardless of background or location, can share in the transformative power of music. This access also extends across generations, with a proud commitment to nurturing a lifelong love of music through our MSO Learning Programs.

Whether performing on world stages or in the heart of Victoria, the MSO continuously tunes into our community to build connections that bring joy and belonging.

Disability in Australia

The Melbourne Symphony Orchestra subscribes to the social model of disability that recognises the difference between a person's individual condition or impairment, and the barriers they experience which are created by the environment and society around them. The social model of disability focuses on the 'barriers' that create disadvantage by limiting opportunity, participation, autonomy and self-expression.

Disability can be both permanent or temporary, and visible or non-visible. We include mental health within our definition of disability, as well as members of the d/Deaf community (who may not choose to identify as people with disability, but instead as part of a cultural and linguistic minority, with their first language being Auslan).

As the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare notes, 'Disability may affect people directly or indirectly, and may have large or small effects on people's daily lives. Increasingly, disability is recognised as something that affects most people, to varying degrees and at different life stages.'¹

While 1 in 5 Australians live with disability, the MSO recognises that not everyone who faces these barriers chooses to identify as a person with disability and we understand that identity and disclosure in the context of disability is complex and very personal. We also understand the principles of universal design, that one size does not fit all and the complexities of intersectionality within disability.

¹ AIHW [People with disability in Australia report](#). Accessed 7 May 2025



Key statistics

Disability is a very broad diversity group and is very commonly experienced across our community – with people either directly identifying themselves, being a carer for someone else or having a family member or close friend with disability. It is also the only demographic group any of us can join at any moment in time.

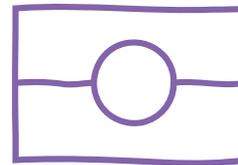
These statistics demonstrate how widespread disability is across every geographic, demographic and socio-economic level of the community.



1 in 5 Australians are people with disability (21.4% or 5.5 million people)²



More than **1 million people** with disability are from **non-English speaking** backgrounds³



Just under half (45.1%) of **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people** aged 15 years and over, experience disability⁴



People with disability are twice as likely to be in the **bottom 20% of gross household incomes**⁵

2 ABS '[5.5 million Australians have disability](#)' media release

3 National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA) People from NESB with disability in Australia: What does the data say? March 2010

4 ABS 4714.0 - National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2014-15

5 ABS 4430.0



1 in 2 (48%) (aged 5 and over and not in care accommodation) had a **schooling or employment restriction**⁶



45% of the population will experience a **mental health condition** at some point in their lives⁸



45% of those with disability in Australia are living either **near or below the poverty line**, more than double the OECD average of 22%⁷



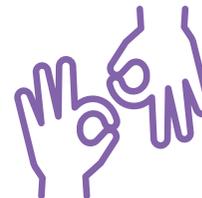
3.4 million (15%) of Australians have a **physical condition**⁹



An estimated **30-40%** of Australians are **neurodivergent** (Job Access, 2023)



Vision Australia estimates there are currently **357,000 people** in Australia who are **blind or partially sighted**



1 in 6 Australians are impacted by **hearing loss**. There are approximately **30,000 Deaf Auslan users** with total hearing loss.¹⁰

6 AIHW [People with disability in Australia report](#)

7 Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2011. 'Disability expectations - Investing in a better life, a stronger Australia'.

8 ABS 4326.0 - National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing: Summary of Results, 2007

9 Australian Network on Disability [Disability statistics](#)

10 Deaf Victoria ['Why Auslan Interpreting Matters'](#)

Participation in Cultural Life

- An Australia-wide survey in 2019 found that people with disability were more likely than people without disability to recognise the positive impacts of arts and creativity across all areas; to agree that the arts allow them to connect with others; to believe that the arts should receive public funding; and that artists make an important contribution to society.¹¹
- People with disability were more likely than people without disability to give time or money to the arts; be motivated to attend the arts; to improve their wellbeing and to express themselves; to creatively participate in the arts; and to engage with the arts online.¹²

In the arts:

- 16% of professional artists identify as having disability (Creative Australia, 2023)
- Artists with disability earn 42% less overall than artists without disability (Australia Council for the Arts, 2017)
- 3% of leadership positions in the arts organisations are held by people who identify with disability (Australia Council for the Arts, 2020).

Legislation And Policy

This Plan aligns with international, national and Victorian social policy and legislative frameworks including:

- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006 (UNCRPD)
- UN Sustainable Development Goals (2017)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA)
- Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031
- Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010
- Disability Act 2006 (Victoria)

¹¹ Creating our future: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey (2020). The Australia Council for the Arts.

¹² Ibid.

Equity: The Arts and Disability Associated Plan

In November 2024, the Office for the Arts released Equity: the Arts and Disability Associated Plan, which was an action in Revive, the Australian Government's National Cultural Policy (2023-2027).

In the development of this plan, people with disability and disability advocacy bodies consistently emphasised the importance of the Plan being co-designed, implemented and evaluated in partnership with people with disability, particularly d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers, reflecting the key principle of the disability rights movement:

'Nothing about us without us.'

The Equity Plan identifies three priorities:

Priority 1

Recognising d/Deaf and disabled artists and arts workers as central to our vibrant arts and cultural sector.

Priority 2

Strong and inclusive governments and organisations.

Priority 3

Engaging the audience: fair, open and equitable access to arts and culture.

These principles have informed the development of the MSO's DIAP.

The MSO Disability Inclusion Action Plan

This Plan outlines our strategy to embed access and inclusion principles across all aspects of our work and will shape how we engage artists, audiences and employees across the organisation – both online and in person.

We recognise that this is ongoing work and that the Plan will evolve as challenges, opportunities, and insights arise. We look forward to realising the objectives, goals, and actions outlined in our DIAP and to making the MSO a more equitable, accessible and diverse place to experience music.



Plan Commitment, Vision and Goals

We are committed to increasing disability confidence and competence within our organisation and our sector. We are working to create an environment where everyone can engage with us on an equal basis.

To do this, we have set ourselves the following goals to achieve over the next three years:

1. Culture and employment (Internal operations)

To review our workforce diversity, workplace culture and systems to identify opportunities for improved inclusive behaviours, processes, policies, recruitment, and knowledge.

2. Creative Experiences (Artistic Programming / Schools / Learning & Engagement)

To review current artistic and learning and engagement programming and offerings and identify opportunities for improved access for participation. We will also identify artists with disability and disability-led organisations with a view towards future partnerships, collaboration, and capacity building.

3. Community (Audiences / Online / In person)

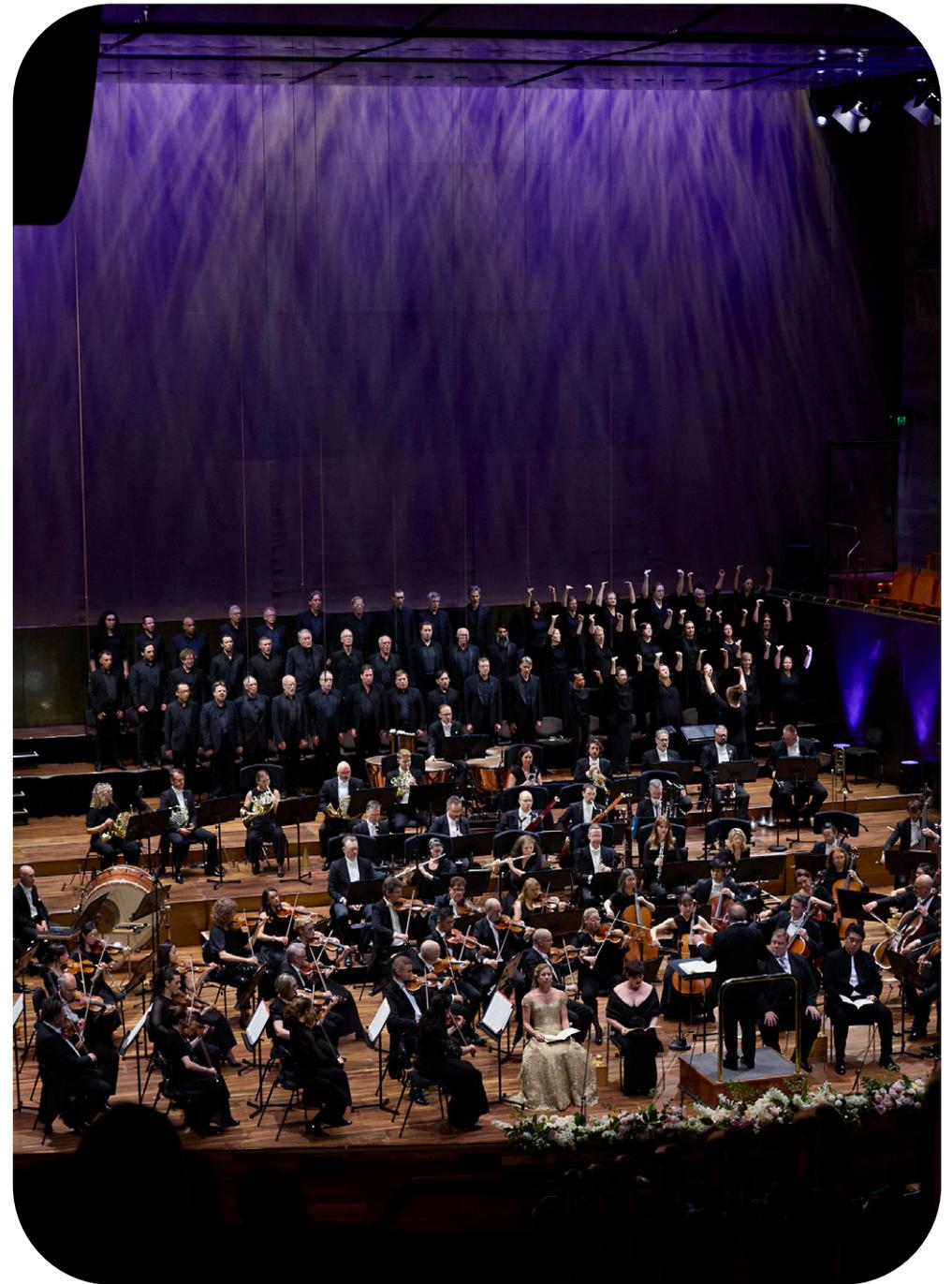
To review the accessibility needs of our current audiences as well as the services we provide through communication channels, platforms and customer service provisions. We will also examine how we are currently reaching and communicating with audiences and develop new communication strategies, language or style guides and customer service offerings as needed.

Each of these areas seeks to remove or reduce the social, economic, physical, behavioural, communication and attitudinal barriers that can prevent people with disability fully engaging with the MSO.

Our achievements to date

This Plan builds on our commitment to provide musical experiences for all Victorians to enjoy, wherever and whoever they are.

It is part of our longer-term commitment to change, building on the learnings and work we have already undertaken with dedicated projects over the last five years that have sought to make music and performance available to everyone.



Case Study 1: The MSO, e.motion21 and Circa Contemporary Circus

On Saturday 8 February 2020, more than 10,000 people gathered at the Sidney Myer Music Bowl for a powerful free concert by the MSO. The event marked the end of two years of planning and featured a unique collaboration with e.motion21 and Circa Contemporary Circus.

e.motion21 is a not-for-profit dedicated to empowering people with Down syndrome through dance, fitness, and performance. Together with Circa and the MSO, their dancers helped create an original piece set to Elena Kats-Chernin AO's *Wild Swans*, with vocals by Katie Noonan. Directed by Circa's Yaron Lifschitz and Libby McDonnell, the performance included:

- 44 dancers with Down syndrome (12 from regional Victoria)
- 3 professional support dancers
- 7 MSO musicians choreographed into the piece
- 1 singer
- 37 backstage crew
- 182 costume pieces
- 46 props





Key insights from the project included:

- **Artists first:** the performance celebrated the creative strengths of each participant as an artist, while supporting their access needs.
- **True collaboration:** Blending circus, dance, and orchestra required developing a shared creative language. For the collaboration to flourish, each organisation's 'traditional' creative approach had to be reimagined from the ground up.
- **Embrace experimentation:** Failure became a tool for discovery, pushing boundaries for both individuals and organisations, and enriching the final and longer term outcomes.
- **Collaboration pays off:** Though complex, demanding, and costly, the process brought lasting artistic growth for everyone involved, particularly for all artists at a personal level.

The performance was live-streamed and remains available on the [MSO's YouTube channel](#).

"We were practising for this big day, and the feeling was amazing, plus we got to meet and greet all of the MSO people. Not only that, we got to perform here at the Sidney Myer Music Bowl."

Jaime Halliday, e.motion21 dancer

Case Study 2: MSO's Auslan Choir and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony

In November 2024, the MSO presented its first Auslan Choir, as part of the performance of Beethoven's Symphony No.9 at the Spring Gala conducted by Jaime Martín as part of the Beethoven Festival. Led by MSO's Artist in Residence, Learning & Engagement, Karen Kyriakou, and Deaf consultant Rachelle Stevens, the Auslan Choir featured 20 people from around Melbourne who auditioned to be part of the event. To prepare for the Auslan Choir rehearsals, participants received video learning materials created by Karen and Rachelle which provided information about Beethoven (who was profoundly deaf for more than half his life) and his Ninth Symphony.

To develop the videos, Karen and Rachelle spent hours deciphering the old German poem 'Ode to Joy' by Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller, into English and then into Auslan, navigating some very complex metaphors along the way.

The project celebrated the easily misunderstood connection between music and deafness. Both involve an expressive, non-verbal language that relies heavily on emotion and human connection. In describing the connection, Karen says:

"Music is part of the shared human experience, with emotions often expressed beyond what vocabulary can provide. Beethoven's Ninth Symphony covers a broad spectrum of emotions, which can be powerfully represented visually through sign language."

The performances by the Auslan Choir were well-received by audiences, with feedback from the Choir revealing that the experience was overwhelmingly positive.

"...sitting on the stage at Hamer Hall, watching the conductor and orchestra was awe inspiring. Never would I have imagined that I would have such an opportunity. I am so grateful for the experience and proud of what we did."

Auslan Choir participant

"[What I enjoyed most was] the inclusively, being part of something that is more often denied this minority; the camaraderie, making connections with passionate, like-minded people; and the endorphin rush I felt every time I finished the rehearsal video and the words 'see you at rehearsal' would flash on the screen. After the first Auslan rehearsal, I floated back to the train station. It took hours to come back from the high."

Auslan Choir participant

The MSO's Auslan Choir initiative was supported by funding from the Australian Government's Department of Social Services.



Case Study 3: MSO's Box Office support of attendees with disability

The MSO Box Office is committed to creating an inclusive environment for all ticket purchasers and attendees, including those living with disability.

The Box Office team has a strong understanding of the accessible services available at each of our venues and are able to provide relevant information to customers at the time of booking. The MSO welcomes Companion Card holders, ensuring that patrons who require a companion to accompany them to attend an event are not disadvantaged.

Bookings made via the website are reviewed in each instance that a customer indicates accessibility requirements. This process helps to ensure that the most suitable seats are booked for the customer. The MSO website's capture of accessibility requirements was upgraded in May 2024, aligning with a similar change to the subscriber booking forms the year prior. Customer feedback regarding this process has been overwhelmingly positive. Customers feel supported and that their needs are being considered carefully.

Before each concert, the MSO Sales team ensures that the venues are aware of attendees' access needs. Allowing the venue team to prepare reduces potential interruptions to a customer's experience. Custom reports have been created to allow for information to be easily and accurately provided to the venues for these bookings.

Additionally, the MSO has recently joined the **Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Program**. Sunflower lanyards will be available at the box office prior to concerts in effort to make audience members with hidden disabilities feel more comfortable at events.

The MSO Box Office continually assesses its practices regarding access bookings and customer experience, with the goal of ensuring our customer's needs are met while providing a positive experience and exceptional service.

"Having a free companion card is what makes a huge difference."

MSO DIAP survey respondent

"I find every MSO staff member, be they on the phone for bookings (which I really appreciate rather than everything being online!) or in person at concerts extremely courteous and helpful."

MSO DIAP survey respondent

Methodology and consultation

To develop this Plan, the MSO partnered with disabled Access Consultant and musician Morwenna Collett and engaged with a diverse mix of stakeholders with disability to seek feedback and ideas.

The consultation and fieldwork phase of this Plan's development has included:

- Presentations and discussions with the MSO Senior Leadership Team
- Several workshopping sessions with the DIAP Working Group
- A series of staff interviews and drop-in sessions
- An internal survey for all staff and musicians
- An external survey of MSO subscribers and ticket buyers, which received approximately 1400 responses
- A series of focus group discussions, with external stakeholders including donors, artists, and community members
- A series of capacity building and training sessions with staff and musicians.

All consultation methods were accessible, and incentives and honorariums were offered to external participants, to acknowledge people providing their time and expertise into the process.

The types of consultation processes used throughout the development of this Plan will continue throughout its implementation and beyond, to ensure we are receiving feedback directly from people with lived experience to inform our thinking and design of our future projects.

Governance, monitoring and review

Our DIAP Working Group

In 2024, we formed an internal Disability Inclusion Action Plan Working Group (DIAP Working Group), made up of representatives from across the organisation, who have been working together to steer and guide the creation of this document.

The DIAP Working Group will continue to meet quarterly to implement the Plan, resolve or escalate issues, provide, advice and champion accessibility throughout the organisation. Updates from these meetings will be shared with our Senior Leadership Team, and Board as appropriate.

External Expertise

Adding to the DIAP Working Group, we will scope the potential to incorporate external community member/s (including Deaf and disabled musicians) who will provide insights, knowledge, advice, and perspectives to assist in the implementation of the Plan, including any required adjustments or changes. We may also engage other experts, partners and stakeholders with lived experience of disability to assist us with Plan implementation over and beyond the next three years.

Reporting

We will report on DIAP progress annually, through our Annual Report, which is published on our website and provided to key stakeholders. We will use a range of measures and measurement tools to track progress against targets.

Disability Inclusion Action Plan

Key Outcome Area 1: **Culture and employment (Internal operations)**

Goal: To review our workforce diversity, workplace culture and systems to identify opportunities for improved inclusive behaviours, processes, policies, recruitment, and knowledge.



Objective	#	Action	Action Owner	Timeframe
1.1 Continue building an inclusive organisational culture Increase awareness and understanding of disability across the MSO. Demonstrate strong leadership and commitment to disability, access and inclusion objectives.	1.1.1	Continue the internal DIAP Working Group and clearly define its role in implementation of this Plan. Ensure the group has representatives from across the organisation and that its role is understood by all employees. Scope the potential to incorporate external community member/s (including Deaf and disabled musicians) into this group.	Head of Learning & Engagement	2025
	1.1.2	Establish multi-year staff and budget resourcing for the implementation of DIAP actions.	CEO / CFO	Annually
	1.1.3	Build responsibility for implementation and reporting progress against the DIAP into a position description.	CEO / COO	2025
	1.1.4	Conduct a review of MSO policies and company values to ensure access and inclusive objectives are embedded across these.	People & Culture Officer	2025
	1.1.5	Ensure access and inclusion are incorporated into the company rebranding project.	Director of Brand & Communications	2025
	1.1.6	Engage in regular dialogue and continue to consult with the disability community about needs and opportunities. Build partnerships in this area with key organisations.	Head of Learning & Engagement Director of Marketing & Sales	Ongoing
	1.1.7	Celebrate key dates, such as International Day for People with Disability (3 December) with staff and musicians.	Staff Committee People & Culture Officer	Annually
	1.1.8	Ensure access and inclusion is in the job description for relevant positions, as roles are advertised.	People & Culture Officer	Ongoing

Objective	#	Action	Action Owner	Timeframe
1.2 Staff confidence and competence Build the capacity and skills in relation to disability access and inclusion	1.2.1	Provide appropriate training around access and inclusion to employees across the organisation.	People & Culture Officer	Ongoing
	1.2.2	Explore other ways of building knowledge and skills through other learning opportunities, such as a 'lunch and learn' series with musicians, audience members and/or advocates with disability. This could involve presentations, talks, events or experiences.	People & Culture Officer	Ongoing
	1.2.3	Engage in ongoing learning opportunities. Participate in sessions held in Melbourne (e.g. Arts Access Victoria's regular Gathering programs) and online (e.g. Accessible Arts Access Ideas and Insights series).	People & Culture Officer	Ongoing
1.3 Improving workplace accessibility Review and increase awareness and understanding of inclusive workplace policies, such as the workplace adjustments process	1.3.1	Embed a system of asking job applicants, employees and musicians/artists about access requirements, such as through recruitment, selection, and contracting processes, and during performance planning conversations. Develop Access Rider template for use across the organisation and make this widely available.	Head of Artistic Planning People & Culture Officer	2025
	1.3.2	Review flexible working arrangements and reasonable adjustments policy for all employees and communicate clearly with staff to increase knowledge and awareness of how to request support for individual needs.	People & Culture Officer	2025
	1.3.3	Ensure any employee feedback surveys and consultation processes include an opportunity to comment on access and inclusion related content and issues, for continuous improvement.	People & Culture Officer	Ongoing

Objective	#	Action	Action Owner	Timeframe
1.4 Diversifying our workforce Introduce new measures to diversify staff and leadership base to ensure the workforce is more representative of the community MSO serves.	1.4.1	Develop a Diversity Employment Strategy to increase the breadth and diversity of staff hired by addressing recruitment, selection and onboarding processes, and our approach toward ensuring diverse people, including people with disability, are represented throughout all areas of the organisation.	People & Culture Officer	2026
	1.4.2	Develop a Board Diversity Matrix, which highlights individual's lived experience and work experience across different areas of diversity, including disability. Identify current gaps, and utilise future Board recruitment processes to address these gaps. Explore opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds to join Board Observership program.	CEO and Chair of the Board	2026
1.5 Accessible systems and processes Ensure MSO internal and external systems and processes are accessible for people with different access requirements	1.5.1	Review current approach to accessibility in documents and communications, to ensure these are accessible to a wide range of people. Review the suitability of the MSO's style guide, and develop an Accessible Formats Guideline.	Director of Brand & Communications	2026
	1.5.2	Add accessibility into the procurement process for key systems and projects. Embed access on tender documents, assessment and selection processes and contracting and processes.	CFO	2027
	1.5.3	Conduct an accessibility review of external facing programs, such as volunteer or donor programs, and implement improvements over time.	COO	2026

Key Outcome Area 2: Creative Experiences (Artistic Programming / Schools / Learning & Engagement)

Goal: To review current artistic and learning and engagement programming and offerings and identify opportunities for improved access for participation. We will also identify artists with disability and disability-led organisations with a view towards future partnerships, collaboration and capacity building.



Objective	#	Action	Action Owner	Timeframe
2.1 Artistic collaborations Collaborate and build relationships with Deaf and disabled artists and organisations	2.1.1	Continue to initiate, build and maintain relationships with key organisations aiming to create collaborations, prioritising organisations which are disability-led.	Head of Learning & Engagement Head of Artistic Planning	Ongoing with outcomes from 2027 onwards
	2.1.2	Explore potential collaborations with Deaf and disabled artists, locally, nationally and internationally. Initiate at least three meaningful artistic collaborations with Deaf and disabled artists over the life of this Plan.	Head of Learning & Engagement Head of Artistic Planning	Ongoing

Objective	#	Action	Action Owner	Timeframe
2.2 Programming Increase and invest in more diverse artistic program offerings.	2.2.1	Programming Team to take active measures to seek out Deaf and disabled talent, by: 1. ensuring planning processes and strategy consider disability and inclusion 2. staying up to date with activity and opportunities in the disability arts sector 3. maintaining records of artists who identify as disabled	Director of Programming & Head of Artistic Planning	Ongoing
	2.2.2	Scope the potential of establishing dedicated events, such as hosting International Day for People with Disability performances, featuring Deaf and disabled composers and performers.	Head of Learning & Engagement Head of Artistic Planning	2027
	2.2.3	Explore what other orchestras are doing internationally and nationally, and visit and attend their events to experience different accessible performances and programming offerings.	Head of Learning & Engagement Head of Artistic Planning Head of Marketing & Sales	Ongoing
	2.2.4	When working with artists with disability, explore potential wrap-around program opportunities around their visit (e.g. additional talks, discussions, events).	Head of Learning & Engagement	Ongoing
	2.2.5	Provide continuity in program offerings for particular audience segments, such as the Deaf Community. Commit to another Deaf focused event over the life of this Plan.	Head of Learning & Engagement Head of Artistic Planning	2026

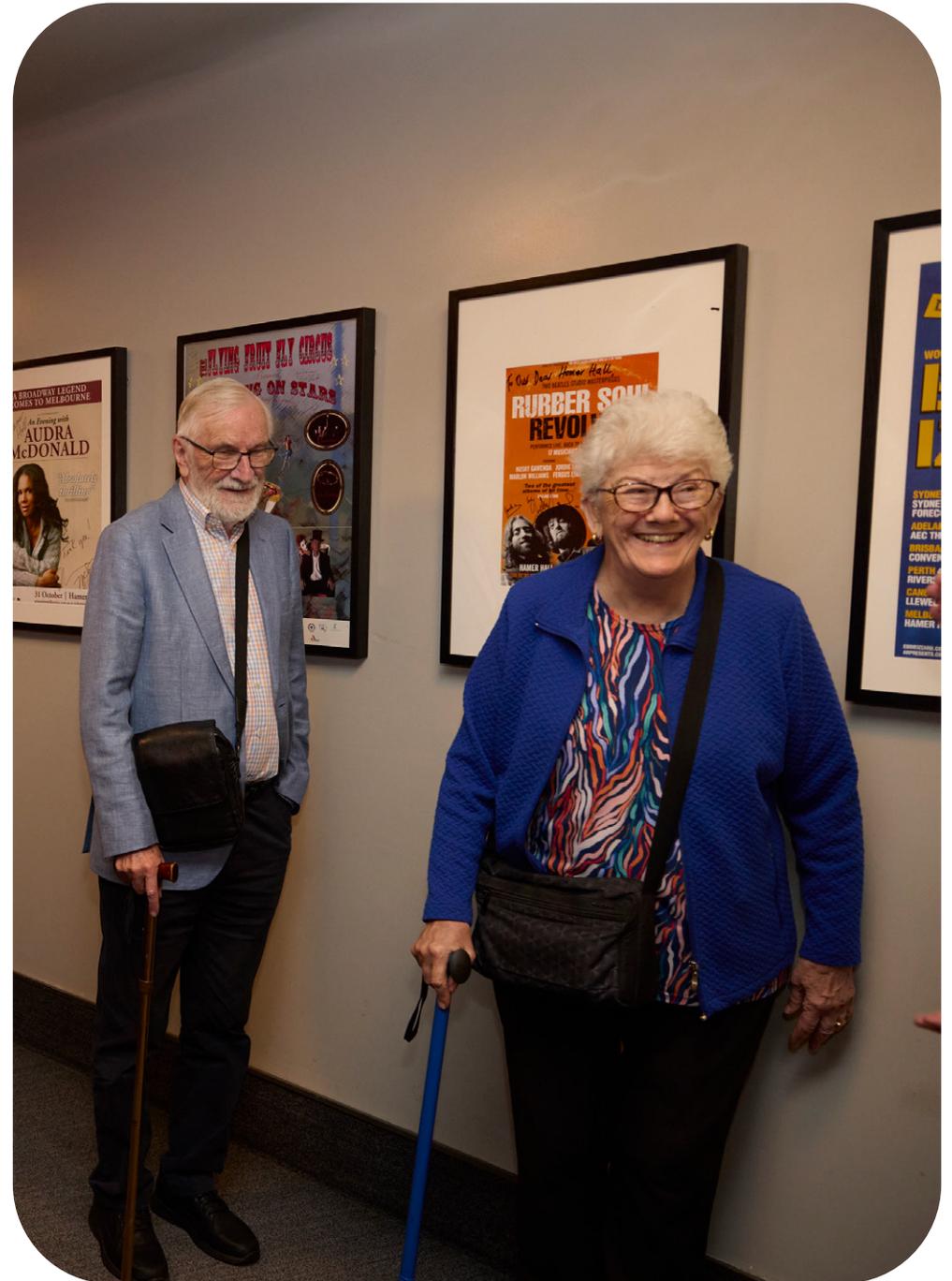
Objective	#	Action	Action Owner	Timeframe
2.3 Accessibility for artists Ensure accessibility is considered as part of all MSO activities and events and ensure artists access needs are met.	2.3.1	Review access and participation of MSO Chorus members, to ensure access requirements are supported, both during audition processes and through ongoing discussions.	Chorus and Library Coordinator P&C	2026
	2.3.2	Develop a proposal for targeted opportunities and/or positions for emerging disabled artists and musicians. Explore development pathways.	Head of Learning & Engagement	2027
	2.3.3	Identify and actively promote emerging artist opportunities to the disability community, including the provision of reasonable adjustments.	Head of Learning & Engagement Head of Marketing & Sales	Ongoing
2.4 Accessibility of performances and venues Expand the accessible performance offering available at the MSO	2.4.1	Explore opportunities to provide a higher volume and a wider diversity of accessible performances. Offer different types of concerts and experiences for different audiences and their access needs.	Head of Learning & Engagement	Ongoing
	2.4.2	Increase access services available for MSO performances, including captioning, Audio Description and Auslan.	Head of Learning & Engagement Head of Artistic Planning	2026
	2.4.3	Review the mainstage concert experience and identify opportunities to make all concerts a more welcoming, relaxed and accessible environment (e.g. announcements of pieces and hearing from musicians and conductor, time of day of concerts, early entry and exit).	Director of Marketing and Sales	2026
	2.4.4	Maintain and scope the potential to increase (if appropriate) commitment to online or live streamed concerts or events.	Director of Brand & Communications	2026

Objective	#	Action	Action Owner	Timeframe
2.5 Relaxed performances Continue to expand the relaxed performance offering across MSO's annual program	2.5.1	Seek ongoing and regular feedback on relaxed performances, to make continuous improvements, such as through surveys, user testing, diversity in program offering and communications.	Head of Learning & Engagement	2025 and ongoing
	2.5.2	Engage a neurodivergent company for an environment assessment of a relaxed performance.	Head of Learning & Engagement	2025
	2.5.3	Conduct an internal debrief on all relaxed performances, to share lessons learnt and adjustments for the future.	Head of Learning & Engagement	Ongoing
	2.5.4	Work with other organisations who regularly provide relaxed performances to continue to learn from them and their experiences.	Head of Learning & Engagement	Ongoing
	2.5.5	Over time, work towards bringing relaxed performances to other locations.	Head of Learning & Engagement	2027
	2.5.6	Continue to improve the information provided online around relaxed performances, including a dedicated webpage for relaxed performances, featuring clear descriptions, virtual tours and/or visual stories, and information about what audience members can expect during relaxed performances.	Head of Marketing and Sales	Ongoing
	2.5.7	Develop specific partnerships to support and promote relaxed performances and reach more potential audiences.	Head of Learning & Engagement Head of Marketing & Sales	2026

Objective	#	Action	Action Owner	Timeframe
2.5 Relaxed performances (continued)	2.5.8	Develop a specific media list to promote relaxed performances, including organisations that focus on accessibility and the arts, and grow this over time. Engage local newspapers, radio stations, and online outlets focusing on accessibility and arts culture.	Director of Brand & Communications Publicist	2025
	2.5.9	Prepare and upskill musicians for the experience of what relaxed performances will be like from a performer perspective.	Director of Orchestra & Operations	2025
2.6 Sector leadership Ensure MSO contributes to building a more accessible classical music sector in Australia	2.6.1	Play a role in championing access and inclusion across orchestral music, by sharing learnings and speaking with other orchestra colleagues about MSO experiences, as well as the opportunity to present and share in other forums and sector gatherings.	CEO	Ongoing

Key Outcome Area 3: Community (Audiences / Online / In person)

Goal: To review the accessibility needs of our current audiences as well as the services we provide through communication channels, platforms and customer service provisions. We will also examine how we are currently reaching and communicating with audiences and develop new communication strategies, language or style guides and customer service offerings as needed.



Objective	#	Action	Action Owner	Timeframe
3.1 Consultation and outreach Continue to consult with audiences and community groups about how to improve access	3.1.1	Build relationships with the arts and disability community, including long-term partnerships and collaboration opportunities where possible, including schools with students with disability and disability service provider organisations.	Head of Learning & Engagement	Ongoing
	3.1.2	Regularly seek feedback from audiences about their access needs through audience surveys, research, and clear feedback channels.	Director of Marketing & Sales	Ongoing
	3.1.3	Continue to explore ways for MSO to go out to communities, rather than relying on communities to come to us.	Head of Learning & Engagement	Ongoing
3.2 Build new audiences Explore and identify ways of reaching new audiences.	3.2.1	Establish an Accessible Audience Development Strategy, which includes a focus on connecting with different audience segments within the disability community.	Director of Marketing & Sales Director of Brand & Communications	2026
	3.2.2	Develop an annual marketing plan to demonstrate positive and accessibility experience for audiences.	Senior Manager Content and Digital Head of Marketing & Sales	Annually
	3.2.3	Review ticketing affordability for engagement with the disability community, including a review regarding financial barriers to access. Scope the potential of special offers or ticket giveaways to help build the audience, and/or provide concession or discounts to disability community where possible.	Director of Marketing & Sales	2026

Objective	#	Action	Action Owner	Timeframe
3.3 Venue accessibility for audiences Work with venue partners to improve accessibility for audiences across all venues.	3.3.1	Scope the potential to review parking, drop off points and access to public transport across key MSO venues and work with venues to advocate for improvements or workarounds where possible.	Head of Marketing & Sales	2027
	3.3.2	Conduct an accessibility review of venues MSO regularly utilises, particularly for accessible performances. Using this information, develop a set of minimum standards for venue selection for performances (ad back of house requirements), within Melbourne, regional Victoria and further afield.	Head of Operations	Biennially
	3.3.3	Review and ensure wheelchair and Deaf seating is appropriately positioned within venues and explore offering further assistance (e.g. wheelchairs for hire, more visual information or digital maps to indicate seating location).	Head of Marketing & Sales	2026
	3.3.4	Provide wayfinding and other information to help people plan their visit to a wider range of MSO performances, with the continued development and promotion of Visual Stories. Scope the potential of developing Virtual Tours and Sonic Stories.	Head of Marketing and Sales Senior Manager, Content and Digital	2026

Objective	#	Action	Action Owner	Timeframe
3.4 Ensure booking processes are accessible Improve accessibility across booking process including contact with box office and seat allocation.	3.4.1	Work towards providing customers with access needs with the ability to be able to book their tickets online, including those who need to book aisle seats for accessibility reasons.	Head of Marketing & Sales Senior Manager, Content and Digital	2026
	3.4.2	Consider appointing a dedicated accessibility staff member position within the MSO Box Office team.	Head of Marketing & Sales	Ongoing
	3.4.3	Scope the potential of providing ticketing information in a variety of accessible formats.	Head of Marketing & Sales Senior Manager, Content and Digital	
3.5 Communications and advertising for audiences Improve external communications about access services and performances.	3.5.1	Continue to increase awareness of MSO commitment to access including performances and services.	Director of Brand & Communications	Ongoing
	3.5.2	Identify and utilise key marketing channels for promoting and communicating about experiences and services available to various groups, such as through radio, print, and social media.	Senior Manager, Campaign Marketing	Ongoing
	3.5.3	Increase reach and awareness through partnerships with groups and organisations who can help communicate to audiences with disability.	Senior Manager, Campaign Marketing	Ongoing

Objective	#	Action	Action Owner	Timeframe
3.6 Documents and Website Ensure MSO documents and website is easy to read, navigate and includes need-to-know information in accessible formats	3.6.1	Ensure that the accessibility page on the website is easy to find.	Senior Manager, Content & Digital	2025
	3.6.2	Implement the recommendations from the website accessibility audit and desktop review. Conduct regular user testing once new website is in place.	Senior Manager, Content & Digital	2025
3.7 Social media Ensure social media includes everyone, including Screen reader users	3.7.1	Develop Social Media format guidelines to standardise use of accessible features across social media platforms, such as including use of Alt Text, image descriptions, and video captioning.	Director of Brand & Communications	2026

Contact us

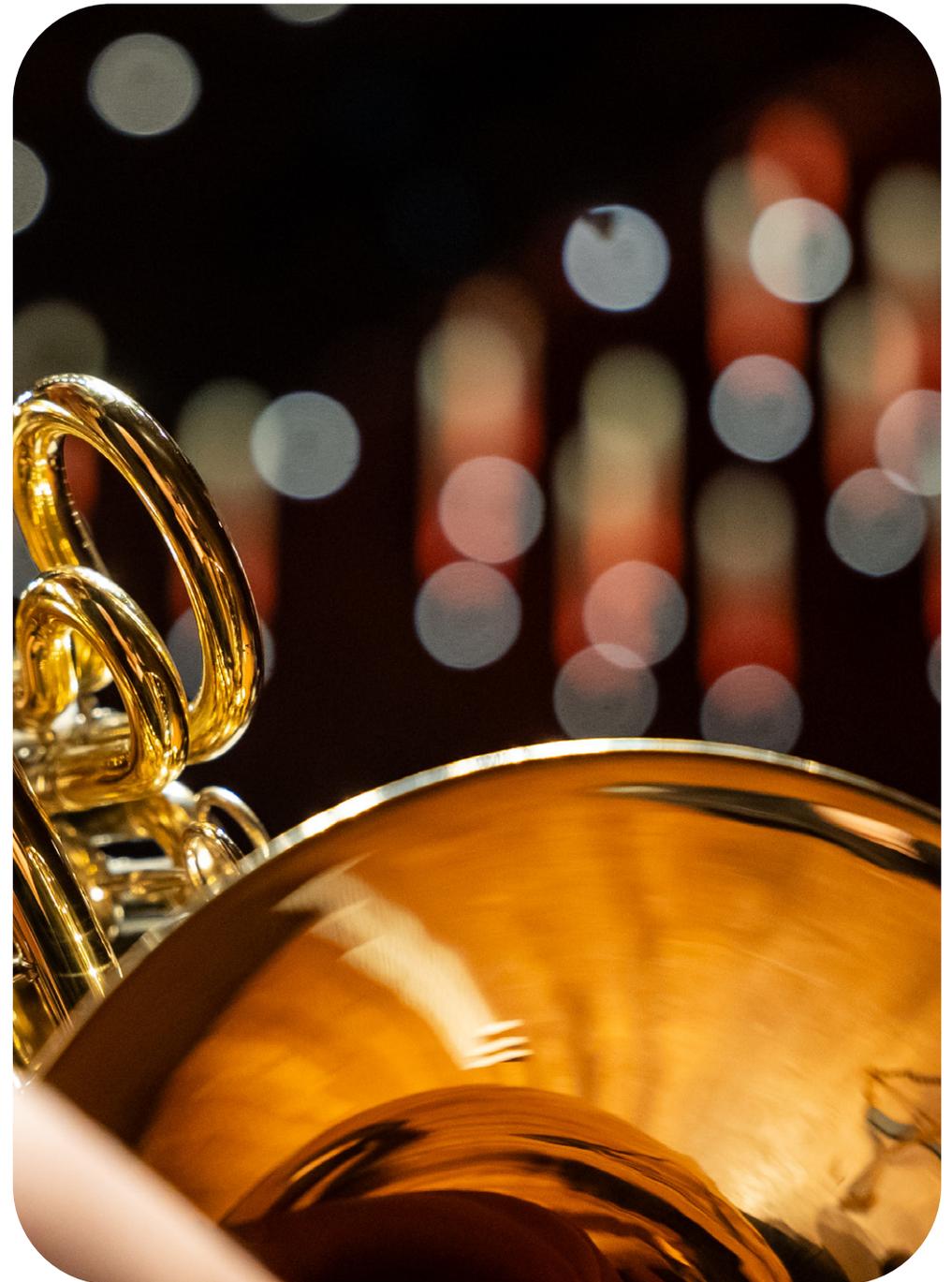
Our Plan is available to the public through our website and alternative formats are available on request. This plan is also registered with the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC).

The MSO values community feedback on our progress in meeting the goals and actions outlined in our DIAP. We encourage individuals and organisations to share their thoughts and experiences with us to ensure our continued improvement.

Please contact us on:

Email: feedback@mso.com.au

Phone: +61 3 9929 9600 (Monday-Friday, 10am-5pm)



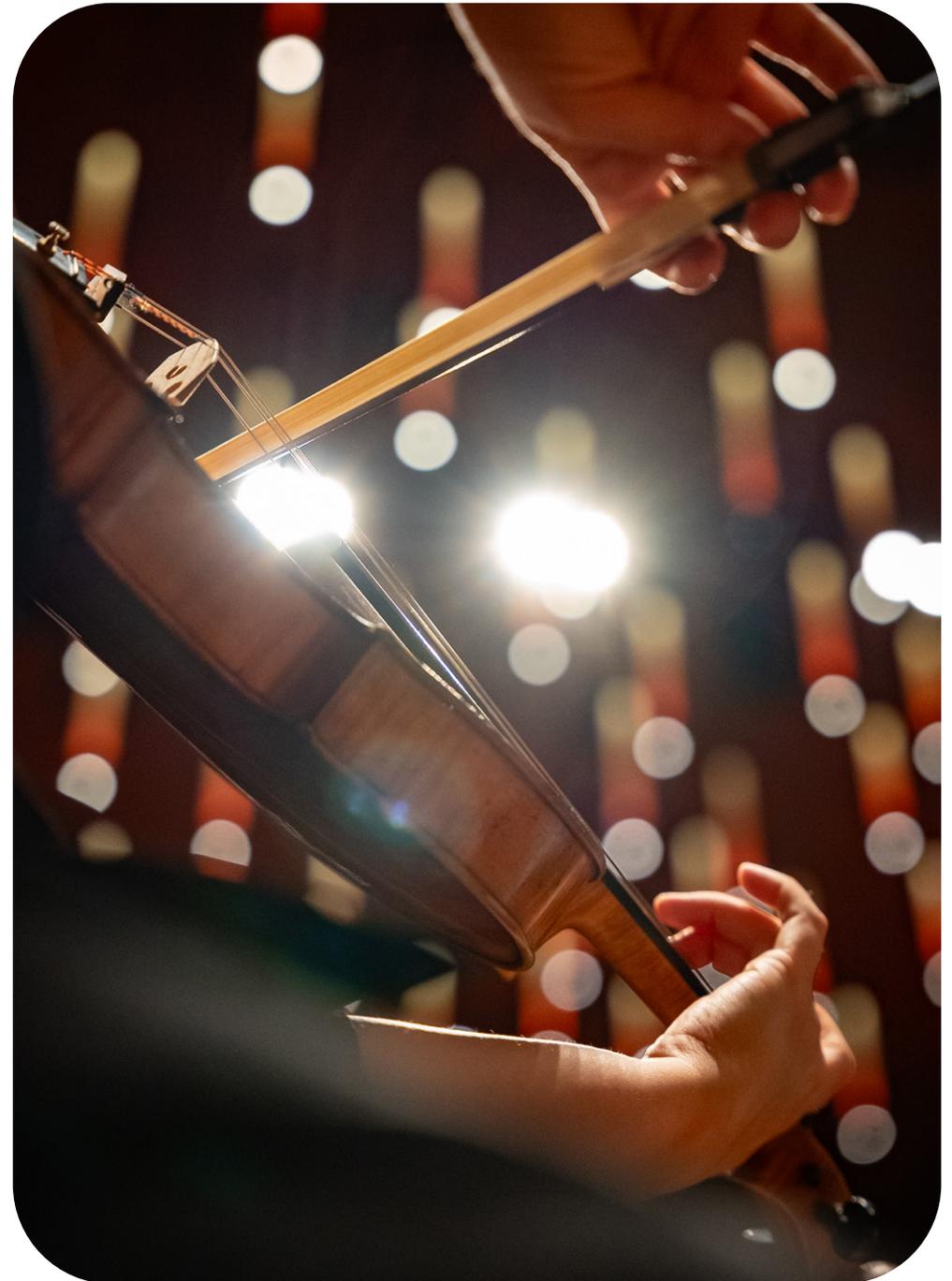
Other acknowledgements

The MSO would like to acknowledge those people who contributed their time and expertise to participate in the development of this plan, including:

- Our internal DIAP Working Group – Nick Bochner, Caroline Buckley, Catherine Hempenstall, Andrew Groch, Phil Paschke, Alison Kearney, Meg Bowker, Holly Wighton
- Interview and focus group participants and survey respondents
- Our musicians, artists, staff, contractors and volunteers
- Our audience members, partners and other stakeholders
- Access consultant Morwenna Collett.
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Australian Government
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Appendix - Definitions

What is disability?

The 2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities defines persons with disabilities to 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.”¹³

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) defines disability as an umbrella term for any or all of the following:

- **impairment** – problems in body function or structure
- **activity limitation** – difficulties in executing activities
- **participation restriction** – problems an individual may experience in involvement in life situations.

According to the AIHW, disability is a dynamic interaction between a person’s health condition(s), environmental factors, and personal factors.¹⁴

This definition supports the **Social Model of Disability**, which makes a distinction between conditions - the condition, illness or loss/lack of function - and disability - barriers and discrimination. So, the term ‘disability’ refers to barriers, rather than medical conditions. The Social Model looks at the environment instead of individual conditions.

Intersectionality

A term first coined in 1989 by American civil rights advocate and leading critical race theory scholar, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, intersectionality refers to overlapping or intersecting social identities and related systems of oppression or discrimination. Intersectionality recognises that while there are some areas in which people experience discrimination, marginalisation or barriers to participation, these experiences can compound when people are part of more than one underrepresented group.

13 [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(CRPD\)](#)

14 [AIHW People with disability in Australia report](#)

Language

The Melbourne Symphony Orchestra recognises that there are varying views on language and terminology around disability in Australia and internationally. Language can be both a personal, and also political choice. We use the person-first language of 'person with disability' to recognise that disability is just one aspect of a person's life and does not determine who they are. However, we respect that different people have different preferences about language.

Other terms

Inclusion is about creating an environment that celebrates diversity and is free from all forms of discrimination and harassment. This environment recognises, utilises and values the knowledge, abilities, skills and ideas of people, irrespective of race, ethnicity or religion, gender or sexual orientation, education level, socio-economic background, age, disability or family responsibility.

Equity recognises that people have different resources and opportunities. This is about allocating the exact resources and opportunities they need to reach an equal outcome. Equitable practices aim to identify and eliminate barriers that have historically prevented the full participation of some individuals or groups. Unlike equality, which aims to treat everyone the same, equity focuses on providing individuals and groups with what they need to succeed.

Access is about creating the necessary conditions for all individuals and organisations to utilise services, facilities, programs and employment opportunities. Access is about making space for the unique characteristics that each person brings. Barriers to equitable access fall into the categories of physical, communication, economic, social and attitudinal.

Universal Access is about the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used by all people regardless of their age, size or ability. An environment (or any building, product or service in that environment) should be designed to meet the needs of all people who wish to use it. It is a fundamental condition of good design. If an environment is accessible, usable, convenient and a pleasure to use, everyone benefits.

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