



ACCESSIBILITY ACTION PLAN

2021-2024

About Arts Project Australia:

Arts Project Australia is Australia's first full-time art studio dedicated to artists with intellectual disabilities. The organisation supports over 150 artists by promoting their work and advocating for their inclusion within contemporary art practice.

About the Artists:

Image 1 (2019) Artist: Jimmy Tran

Jimmy Tran is an emerging artist whose practice spans printmaking, painting, drawing and artist zines. He embraces a variety of media, allowing him to experiment broadly. His painterly work tends to focus on traditional and contemporary Japanese cultural subjects. Central to his practice is a series of hand illustrated artist zines he's meticulously developing called *The Hero Man*, which follows the lives of a group of power ranger-type crime fighters. His dynamic graphic style holds the balance between drama and banality, as day-to-day moments are rendered with equal weighting as Hero Man crime-fighting scenes. Jimmy has worked at Arts Project since 2015 and exhibited in numerous group shows. His work is held in private collections in Australia.

Image 2 (2019) Artist: Mark Smith

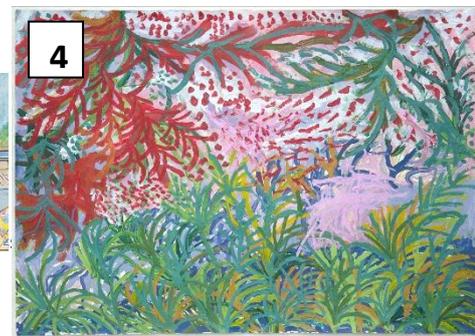
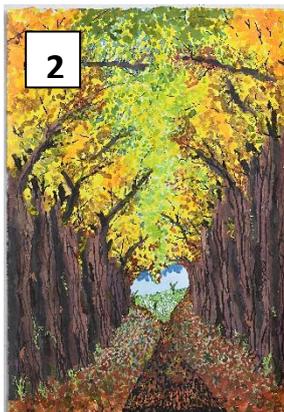
Mark Smith has worked in the Arts Project Australia studio since 2007, maintaining a prolific body of work across painting, ceramics, mixed media, video and soft sculpture. His figurative work often utilises ceramics, pertains to the human body and binds itself to his exploration of the human condition. While he is better known for his 3D work, his practise also extends to two-dimensional depictions of nature.

Image 3 (2019) Artist: James MacSporran

James MacSporran has been an artist at Arts project Australia since 2015 and works with an array of mediums including ink, paint and pastels. He also works across a number of themes in his work, including portraits and animals. Predominantly though, MacSporran is interested in representing imagery that speaks of an intersection of human interaction and interference, on both the natural world and the world created by us. Ultimately, MacSporran seeks to represent these interests through works that present nobility in what is viewed as 'low art'.

Image 4 (2018) Artist: Georgia Szmerling

Georgia Szmerling is a multi-disciplinary artist—working in painting and drawing and ceramics—with a penchant for studying and reinterpreting the natural world. Rich in texture and highly expressive, her abstract plant and water formations revel in expressive movement through her application of colour, line and form. Szmerling has worked at Arts Project since 2003 and held her first solo exhibition in 2005. She has featured in numerous group exhibitions in Australia include Spring 1883 and Melbourne Art Fair. Her work is held in private collections Australia wide.



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Message from the Ombudsman:

Accessibility goes to the heart of the Ombudsman's role. If we are not accessible to all who need our services, we will not achieve our aim of ensuring fairness for all Victorians in their dealings with the public sector. We will be less able to improve public administration. And to truly embrace the benefits of accessibility, we must also practice it within our own office.

We know that the people who need our services the most are often those who are least likely to have heard of us, who may have difficulties with communication, who may not be familiar with computer technology or have ready access to the internet.

So as I embark on the last three years of my 10-year term I reflect that the work we do reducing barriers and promoting inclusion, both inside and outside our office, is more important than ever.

I am proud that we have achieved much from our first Accessibility Action Plan, including significant developments in how we communicate and train our staff. But there is more to be done. This new plan is a commitment to building on the work to date, to improve our service to the public and our own working environment. It is a practical plan with tangible initiatives: more engagement, better communication, greater awareness.

I will be monitoring our progress; our commitment to fairness depends on it.



Deborah Glass

Victorian Ombudsman

Our Office:

The Victorian Ombudsman is an independent officer of the Victorian Parliament. The purpose of our office is to ensure fairness for all in their dealings with the public sector and to improve public administration. We do not advocate for members of the public or authorities. We form opinions based on evidence and operate in accordance with the *Ombudsman Act 1973* (Vic).

Our day-to-day work involves:

- taking complaints from the public about actions and decisions of state government departments, bodies established by legislation (e.g. WorkSafe, VicRoads), local councils and some private organisations acting on behalf of those bodies.
- making enquiries and resolving complaints informally or by conciliation where possible
- investigating when needed and making recommendations for change
- examining systemic problems in public administration
- reviewing complaint-handling by public bodies
- conducting training, and encouraging improvement in public administration and complaint handling by authorities
- receiving and investigating public interest disclosures about the conduct of the above authorities under the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012* (Vic).

Our Strategic Framework

Our vision:

To ensure fairness for Victorians in their dealings with the public sector and to improve public administration.

Our intent:

- Ensure Fairness
 - ensuring fairness through independent and impartial complaint resolution
 - encouraging fair and reasonable decision making within the public sector.
- Enhance integrity and accountability
 - enhancing accountability by independently investigate serious matters
 - reporting on improper conduct and poor administration.
- Support innovation and improvement
 - supporting innovation and continuous improvement methods to assist public organisations to learn from complaints and investigations
 - investigating systemic issues and identifying solutions.
- Protect Human Rights:
 - Protecting human rights by investigating whether an action or decision is incompatible with human rights
 - making it easier for vulnerable people to complain.

Our commitment

To provide accessible and responsive services that are:

- free, independent and impartial
- open, transparent and evidence based
- focused on practical and meaningful outcomes to address injustice
- sensitive to the circumstances of individuals and communities with specific needs
- delivered by skilled and committed professionals
- consistent with the same standards we expect of others.

Legislative framework and principles:

Our office chooses to be guided by section 38 of the *Disability Act 2006* (Vic), and has prepared an Accessibility Action Plan for the period of 2021-2024, for the purposes of:

- reducing barriers to persons with a disability accessing goods, services and facilities
- reducing barriers to persons with a disability obtaining and maintaining employment
- promoting inclusion and participation in the community of persons with a disability
- achieving tangible changes in attitudes and practices which discriminate against persons with a disability.

Additionally, our AAP is guided by:

- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Vic)

- *Disability Act 2006* (Vic)
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic)
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth)

Defining accessibility needs:

People may have accessibility needs if they have a disability.

There are many definitions of disability used in both international and domestic law. For the purposes of our AAP, we are using the Victorian definition contained in the Equal Opportunity Act:

Disability means:

- a. total or partial loss of a bodily function; or*
- b. the presence in the body of organisms that may cause disease; or*
- c. total or partial loss of a part of the body; or*
- d. malfunction of a part of the body, including, including:*
 - i. mental or psychological disease or disorder;*
 - ii. a condition or disorder that results in a person learning slowly than people who do not have that condition or disorder; or*
- e. malformation or disfigurement of a part of the body — and includes a disability that may exist in the future (including because of a genetic predisposition to that disability) and, to avoid doubt, behaviour that is a symptom or manifestation of a disability.*

Accessibility and the Ombudsman

We are committed to creating an inclusive and accessible workplace for our staff and the public.

We strive to create positive and impactful change towards attitudes and practices that discriminate against people with a disability.

We are proud of the achievements made in our previous AAP for the period of 2017-2020. During this time, we successfully completed many initiatives to improve our office's accessibility, both internally and externally. Our achievements include:

- obtaining a 'Communication Access Symbol' accreditation with Scope
- redeveloping our website to meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines Version 2.1 AA Standard
- designing a Communication Booklet which assists the public in communicating with our office
- making our online complaint form easier to use
- staff receiving Mental Health First Aid training and accreditation
- providing online disability awareness modules
- finalising our 'reasonable adjustments' policy

Our current AAP for 2021-2024, sets out how we plan to continue our efforts from the previous plan to ensure we remain inclusive and accessible to people with a disability.

Our new plan focuses on two key areas, to ensure: our working environment welcomes and supports staff who may have a disability, and our services are accessible to any member of the public who may have a disability.

Our goals

Our office remains committed to the following goals:

1. building an accessible Ombudsman's office by reducing barriers for people with a disability
2. providing opportunities for people with a disability to obtain employment at our office and to support staff with a disability to maintain employment at our office
3. providing opportunities for people with a disability to engage with our office.

Monitoring our AAP

Our AAP will be monitored by our Accessibility Action Plan Working Group (AWG) to ensure we are achieving our listed goals and meeting our legislative requirements.

Actions to achieve our goals

Goal: Build an accessible Ombudsman’s office by reducing barriers for people with a disability

Action	Task	Action by	Responsibility
Develop a ‘reasonable adjustments’ policy for communication with external stakeholders.	Review current methods of communicating with complainants who have accessibility needs.	December 2021	Policy and Legal
	Design and implement a ‘reasonable adjustments’ policy/procedure which caters to a range of potential accessibility needs.	December 2021	
	Educate VO staff on the external ‘reasonable adjustments’ policy/procedure.	Ongoing	
Implement training.	Consider additional training to enhance staff’s ability to communicate with people who have a disability.	Ongoing	Director, People & Culture
	Provide induction training to educate new starters to ensure awareness of disability issues.	Ongoing	
	Provide mental health first aid training to relevant staff members.	Ongoing	
	Review current resources available to VO staff regarding communicating with complainants	Ongoing	





	with accessibility needs.		
Maintain Communication Access Symbol.	Implement training to ensure Scope accreditation requirements are met.	Bi-annually	Director, People & Culture
	Oversee audit/self-review requirements in accordance with Scope accreditation.	Annual/bi-annual	AWG
Ensure VO public communications are in an accessible format.	Ensure VO's website maintains AA accessibility standards.	Ongoing	Head of Engagement, Education and Communications
	Identify publications that need to be made in accessible formats.	Ongoing	
	Create a timeline for reformatting publications into an accessible format.	Ongoing	
	Reformat publications into accessible formats in accordance with timeline.	Ongoing	
Implement regular audits to review our office's overall accessibility.	Engage with external consultancy groups halfway through the AAP period.	Ongoing	AWG

Goal: Provide opportunities for people with a disability to obtain employment at our office and support our staff with a disability to maintain employment at our office.

Action	Task	Action by	Responsibility
Support employees with a disability.	Engage with the 'Enablers Network' to gain new perspectives and resources.	Ongoing	Director, People and Culture
	Encourage employees to join the 'Enablers Network'.	Ongoing	AWG
	Ensure all employees are aware of the support services and resources available to them.	Ongoing	Director, People and Culture
Develop a reasonable workplace adjustments policy.	Design and implement a reasonable workplace adjustments policy.	December 2021	Director, People and Culture
Review our recruitment practices.	Clearly document our recruitment practices and procedures.	Ongoing	Director, People and Culture
Implement improvements to our recruitment practices.	Implement improvements identified by reviews/audits.	Ongoing	Director, People and Culture
	Provide clear and constructive feedback for unsuccessful applicants who have a disability.	Ongoing	Director, People and Culture



Goal: Provide opportunities for people with a disability to engage with our office

Action	Task	Timeline	Responsibility
Increase the awareness of our office in the disability community.	Develop a specific disability sector community engagement strategy.	Ongoing	Head of Engagement, Education and Communications
	Create clear targets for engaging with the disability sector and people with a disability.	Ongoing	
	Attend events with disability advocate services and organisations and inform them of our role	Ongoing	Head of Engagement, Education and Communications
Improve Accessibility to VO events.	Develop an accessibility checklist to ensure key events/training/e-courses are accessible to people with a disability.	Ongoing	Head of Engagement, Education and Communications
Obtaining relevant perspectives.	Consider hosting events in partnership with various disability advocate organisations.	Ongoing	Head of Engagement, Education and Communications
	Consider obtaining the perspectives of disability advocate bodies when preparing various reports/materials.	Ongoing	Head of Engagement, Education and Communications



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