



Melbourne Fringe Festival Accessible Event Quick-guide

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Here at Melbourne Fringe, we want to make sure art is as accessible and inclusive to everybody as possible. We passionately encourage Fringe artists to consider ways to make events more accessible for the broader community, including those living with disability or who are Deaf.

It makes good business sense to think about accessibility early – to save costs, and to save audiences from the heartache of not being able to see a Festival show. When access requirements are met, it says everybody is welcome.

Arts Access Victoria has some great resources which you can find [here](#).

We worked with Arts Access Victoria and Medina Sumovic to provide an information session about access and inclusion in May 2018. [You can view the video here](#) – and this is the guide we referred to in the video.

Making Your Performance Accessible for Blind or Low Vision Audience Members

Venue

Make sure transport options are clearly listed. Is the address of your venue clearly marked? Many people who are blind or have low vision use taxis for transport. Ensure you have some large-print (20 point sans serif font) programmes available.

Pre-Show Notes

Consider providing preshow notes via email or a website prior to the performance.

- Things you can describe include: set, costumes and other visual elements of the show.
- Format: consider a plain text word document that audiences can access using screen reader software, text to voice apps, or audio notes.

Tactile Tour / Touch Tour

Tactile tours allow patrons who are blind or have low vision to have a hands-on experience of the work.

- Set a time before an audio described show for the tour.
- Promote the show through disability networks such as Vision Australia and Arts Access Victoria.
- Choose what you would like to have as part of the tour – for example a guided tour of the stage where people can touch the sets, props and costumes. Sometimes performers will take part in this, dressed in their costume – they describe themselves and introduce their characters.
- Make sure the person who is leading the tour is able to answer any questions about the performance.

Sighted Guide/Greeting and Guiding

You might want to have a volunteer outside your venue to guide Blind or Low Vision audience members inside. If you decide to do so, e-mail audience members letting them know that there will be volunteer available.

Guide Dogs

- Provide an allocated welcoming space for guide dogs, and have a water bowl available in case it is needed. Show guide dog handlers where they can take the dog to toilet.
- If the person is accompanied by a guide dog, the dog is a working dog and so it is not appropriate to pat or speak to the dog.

Useful Links

Vision Australia

www.visionaustralia.org

Arts Access Victoria

www.artsaccess.com.au

[tactile tours](#)

Arts Access Australia

www.artsaccessaustralia.org

This Fact Sheet was prepared with materials provided by [Arts Access Victoria](#) and [Arts Access Australia](#)



Audio Description

In an audio-described show, audience members can listen to a description of the visual aspects of the performance described live via a small radio receiver. **Vision Australia** have trained audio describers and free radio

receivers. We recommend using **Description Victoria** – you can contact them by e-mailing Will McRostie at will@descriptionvictoria.com.au or call/text him at 0405 725 423. For more information, check their website: <http://descriptionvictoria.com.au/>

For a live performance, audio describers usually work from a sound isolated box, such as the bio box. Your Fringe venue might not have this set up so you could consider having the describer in the audience seating bank as part of a relaxed performance (as other audience members will hear them talking).

Things to consider:

- Book your audio describer far in advance – they will need to prepare an Audio Description script with all their notes.
- If your event is a performance, record a full run of the show and give the video to the audio describer so they can practice.
- Offer time in your venue for the audio describer to practice during your show season, before your proposed Audio Described performance date.

You could create your own pre-recorded description by saying aloud the stage directions and describing visual clues (such as facial expressions) and movement sequences. For an exhibition or live art event you could create a podcast style description of all the visual elements. This could be provided on an audio player at your venue or be downloadable from a website prior to the performance.

Relaxed Performances/Sensory Friendly Performance

Relaxed performances are designed to create a safe and welcoming environment for patrons with learning disabilities and/or sensory and communication difficulties.

There is a relaxed attitude to noise and movement, and audience members can enter and exit the venue throughout the show. An easy way to understand the atmosphere is perhaps, 'the opposite of the quiet carriage on the train'.

- Set a date and time for your relaxed performance.
- Promote the show through your usual networks as well as arts and disability networks, and places that support people with learning difficulties.
- You may need to make changes to lighting and sound effects – for example taking out strobe lighting or loud sound effects. House lights stay on during a Relaxed Performance.
- Where possible, give audience members access to as much information about the performance prior to the show. For example a script breakdown and a guide to where any particularly loud or sensory surprises may occur. Pictures of the performers and a guide to what their characters are like can be useful if applicable.
- Provide a chill out room or area, where audience members who desire a break from the noise of a performance and foyer can go before, during or after the show.
- Ensure there is adequate Front of House support for the event to help guide audience members and provide any additional instruction if required
- Create clear signage for venue entrances, exits, bathrooms, the Box Office and any other public or safety facilities, including the 'Chill Out' space.
- Where possible, provide an introduction to the performers prior to the show as to minimise the level of surprise for the audience

Promoting your Relaxed Performance

Arts Access Victoria can give you some great guidance on promoting your Relaxed Performance.

Arts Access Victoria is Australia's founding and most experienced arts and disability organisation.

info@artsaccess.com.au
Ph. 03 9699 8299
www.artsaccess.com.au

A_tistic Theatre

A_tistic Theatre is a company that specialises in relaxed performances. Find them on [Facebook](#), send them an [email](#) and check out an example of their [resource pack](#).

A great reference for relaxed performances is this [Guardian article](#).

This Fact Sheet was prepared with materials provided by [Arts Access Victoria](#) and [Arts Access Australia](#)

Auslan-Interpreted Performances and Events



Auslan is the sign language of the Australian Deaf community. Auslan interpretation is available for a range of different type of performances, talks and events. Experienced Auslan theatre interpreters stand to the side of the speaker or action and interpret the text and dialogue into Auslan, signing live.

Booking interpreters

- Set a date for the Auslan Interpreted event, for a performance usually once or twice in a season.
- Book the interpreters as early as possible. A month in advance is ideal. Deaf community members often like to know the names of the Interpreters engaged. Some have preferred interpreters.
- Seek interpreters who have specialised skills - for example theatre interpreting. Auslan Stage Left specialises in Auslan Interpreting for theatre and has a Deaf language/cultural consultant working with the interpreters for each show/event.
- Two interpreters are usually required so they can share the tasks and take breaks.

Preparing for your Auslan Interpreted event

- Allow time and budget for interpreters and the language/cultural consultant to attend rehearsals or earlier performances to familiarise themselves with the show.
- Give the interpreters as much information about the event, in advance, as possible—a transcript of the speech or lecture, scripts, videos or a summary of the show.
- If you are planning a public social event after the show, book interpreters for longer so they can interpret the chatting and networking.
- Consult with the interpreters on the best location for the interpreter position on stage to allow optimum viewing.
- Reserve seating that allows a clear view of the interpreter position. You can ask the interpreter agency to give a rough number of Auslan seats to reserve.
- Ensure there is adequate stage lighting for the interpreter, ensuring that the top half of their body is clearly lit, with no shadows on their face. Non-manual features such as facial expression is an important part of Auslan.
- Let your front-of-house staff and volunteers know you are having an Auslan Interpreted event. Ask them to print out any key information that they say in a pre-show announcement and ensure you have adequate visual signage so people know where to go. Ask that they have a pen and paper ready in case they need to write things down to communicate with Deaf audience members.

To book interpreters:

Auslan Stage Left

info@auslanstageleft.com.au
Ph. 0423 933 361
(Voice/SMS)
www.auslanstageleft.com.au

Auslan Services

admin@auslanservices.com
Ph. 1300 287 526
www.auslanservices.com

VicDeaf

info@vicdeaf.com.au
Ph. (03) 9473 1111
www.vicdeaf.com.au

Interpreters' rates are between \$50 - \$120 per hour.

A booking is often a two hour minimum. For performances at night you might be charged 'after business hours' rates.

Remember, by making your event more accessible you are inviting a larger audience to see your work.

For more information:

For more details on creating an Auslan Interpreted event download the PDF '**Auslan Facts**'
www.artsaccess.com.au/auslan-facts

[Signbank](#)

Promoting your Auslan Interpreted event

The Deaf community can access marketing material that is 100% visual as well as captioned videos.

- Online platforms such as Facebook are popular with the Deaf community.
- Online bookings are preferred.
- Provide an email address or mobile phone number for SMS, where Deaf people can make enquiries.
- Include the Sign language interpreted symbol  in your promotional materials.
- Promote your work through local Access organisations, including Deaf organisations such as Vicdeaf and Deaf Victoria.

Visual Ratings gives audience members who are deaf a better understanding of your work.

 100% visual content **100%** - No music or dialogue.

 75% visual content **75%** - Fully subtitled or minimal dialogue; some background music and/or sounds.

 50% visual content **50%** - Partly subtitled or includes dialogue, background music and/or sound

To promote your performance:

Deaf Arts Network (DAN)

deaf-arts-network

deafartsnetwork@artsaccess.com.au

Arts Access Victoria is Australia's founding and most experienced arts and disability organisation.

They publicise and advocate for Auslan interpreted events.

info@artsaccess.com.au

Ph. 03 9699 8299

www.artsaccess.com.au

For more information:

This Fact Sheet was prepared with materials provided by Arts Access Victoria and Arts Access Australia

Still more questions?

Contact Participant Services at the Fringe Office

Ph. 9660 9600

artists@melbournefringe.com.au or

Contact Arts Access Victoria

Physical Access

Some points about physical access to consider:

- Can the audience get into the front door? Is there a ramp?
- Is there an accessible toilet? Is it clearly marked by signage?
- Are you close to public transport?
- Are the surrounding streets evenly paved or do they have cobblestones?
- Are the surrounding streets well lit?

You may also have a performer with access requirements as part of your Fringe event, so it's worth considering:

Does your venue:

- Have an accessible stage door? Is there a ramp to access the stage?
- Have a space for the artist like a green room or dressing room?
- Have a dressing room with an accessible toilet?
- Have a back of house area easy to navigate and accessible?
- Have the capacity to be flexible with technical requirements?
- Have adequate heating and cooling?
- Have staff to introduce performers to the space prior to the show?

For more information about accessibility, visit [Arts Access Victoria's Quick Wins](#) guide or [email Melbourne Fringe's access and Inclusion Coordinator](#).

Language and content warnings

Performer's guide to inclusive language

This guide contains disability slurs – as examples only.

Melbourne Fringe is committed to access and inclusion – this includes welcoming audience members who are Deaf or live with disability. While we welcome and encourage democracy of opinion at Melbourne Fringe, we discourage ableism – that is, discrimination toward people with disability, and audism – discrimination towards Deaf people. We want all our audience members to feel safe and respected when they see a show at the Festival.

Using disability, or disability slurs, as a punchline of a joke or thread in a performance – even if it's not targeted towards people with disability – can hurt. Mocking disability, or using words like 'retard' or 'moron' or derivatives of lowers expectations of people with disability While these words have a medical history, and language has evolved, these words still have a negative impact on how Deaf people and people with disability feel and are perceived.

Examples of disability slurs:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• victim• less fortunate / unfortunate• slow / moron / mongol• mad• retard/derivatives of	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• backward• freak• spastic / spaz• loony• midget/dwarf	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• cripple / crip <p>(even if some people with disability use this term about themselves)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• special/special needs
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(sourced from [Arts Access Australia](#))

There are also words that are used in every day speech that are ableist. These aren't as well known as the words in the table above – but include words like *stupid idiot*, *crazy*, *OCD*, and *insane* are used flippantly, and can have a negative impact on people with disability and people with mental illnesses.

Performers using ableist (or other discriminatory or exclusionary) language might result in some feedback on social media after the show. If this happens, take the time to listen to the feedback and consider how you can be more inclusive and respectful in your next show.

People with disability often reclaim language that is considered derogatory. They use terms like "crip" to refer to themselves and in the company of other people with disability. It's important not to correct people with disability on how they identify, and not to use these words if you are not a part of the disability community.

For more information:

[Talking about disability](#) – Arts Access Victoria

[When is language ableist or offensive?](#) – Crippled Scholar

[Spread the Word to End the R Word](#) – Spread the Word

[Autistic Hoya's guide to ableist language](#) – Autistic Hoya

[We've had all the insults. Now we're reclaiming the language of disability](#) – Penny Pepper

Content warnings

Content warnings alert audiences to triggering content – such as mentions or descriptions of violence, death, suicide or self harm.

Some artists might want to include a content warning before their show, and if so, content warning should be included in marketing material, at the point of ticket sale and at the venue. This prepares audience members for potentially triggering situations.