

however the Disability Programming Initiative has the exclusive intention of increasing representation of artists with disability or who are Deaf in Sydney Festival's program.

Sydney Festival's **Access and Inclusion Advisory Panel** has highlighted the complexity of issues regarding programming of artists with disability, such as lack of funding, inaccessible venues, inaccessible application processes and misconceptions about quality of work. With this in mind, Sydney Festival, in collaboration with Accessible Arts, now provides artists with clear information online about how to pitch as well as offering support and guidance for all artists who want to submit work through this program.

Recently, Sydney Festival has featured artists with disability including Dan Daw (*Beast*, 2018), Heather Lawson and Michelle Stevens (*Imagined Touch*, 2017) and Ethan Hugh (*Kaleidoscope*, 2017) and through this initiative will be able to increase representation and opportunities for artists living with disability.

Wesley Enoch, Festival Director, Sydney Festival says: *"Sydney Festival takes seriously our role to unite our city and create memorable moments we are all excited by. We have a long history of inclusion and accessibility for audiences and via this new initiative we will be focussing on giving artists with disabilities a platform for their diverse range of work to be included in the annual Sydney Festival program."*

Kerry Comerford, CEO, Accessible Arts, says: *"Alongside the numerous accessible performances for audiences, it is equally important that what Sydney Festival presents in their annual program reflects the society in which we live, which means including artists with disability or who are Deaf in their programming. Programming more work by, and providing artistic opportunities for artists with disability recognises the under-representation and employment of people with disability in the arts in Australia."*

Riana Head-Toussaint, Chair of the Sydney Festival Access and Inclusion Advisory Panel says *"This targeted initiative by Sydney Festival is an acknowledgement of the fact that artists with disability experience particular disadvantage when attempting to secure artistic opportunities in Australia, and that space needs to be carved out in an effort to change this. It is a real commitment to seeing the diversity of Australian life accurately reflected through arts and culture, and I have no doubt it will lead to some phenomenal projects by systematically undervalued artists finally reaching broader audiences! I hope it encourages other festivals and arts and cultural institutions to reflect on their own programs and what further positive action they could be taking."*

For further pitching information and how to submit artists can go to www.sydneyfestival.org.au/access-submissions

For images of Kerry Comerford and Wesley Enoch, see here - <https://sydfe.st/disabilityprogimages>

About the Sydney Festival Access & Inclusion Advisory Panel

Sydney Festival strives to provide equitable access to ticket booking, information, performances, events and venues. To assist in this, Sydney Festival established an advisory panel in July 2017, known as the 'Accessibility and Inclusion Advisory Panel'. This Panel, consisting of members chosen to represent the broader spectrum of people with disability, reflects wide perspectives and provides impartial advice to Sydney Festival on enhancing inclusion and reducing barriers to access within the annual program to people living with disability.

About Sydney Festival

Every January, Sydney Festival enlivens Sydney with a city-wide multi-art form cultural celebration. Sydney Festival 2019 takes place 9–27 January and sees Festival Director Wesley Enoch in his third year with a program of performances across theatre, dance, music, circus and visual art. Inclusive programming, a broad range of free events and accessible pricing policies for ticketed shows mean that Sydney Festival is open to all, welcoming both Sydneysiders and visitors alike.

Since its launch in 1977, Sydney Festival has presented international artists such as Björk, Brian Wilson, Grace Jones, Manu Chao, Elvis Costello, AR Rahman, Cate Blanchett, Ralph Fiennes, Robert Lepage, The Flaming Lips, Peter Sellars, Sir Ian McKellen and David Byrne & St. Vincent, alongside some of the world's great companies – Company Wayne McGregor, Cheek by Jowl, Gate Theatre, The Wooster Group and Schaubühne Berlin to name only a few. Sydney Festival creates a meeting point for the best in national and international art, building a world-class festival in one of the world's most stunning cities.

About Accessible Arts

Accessible Arts is the peak arts and disability organisation across New South Wales. The purpose is to enable artists, arts workers and audiences with disability to have full, inclusive access to the diverse arts sector. The organisation aims: to empower and connect artists with opportunity, development and career sustainability; to foster a creative, vibrant and inclusive arts community in which everyone can participate and thrive; and, to provide sector leadership through innovation, sound governance, effective management and operational efficiency.