



**ADVANCING THE
PERFORMING ARTS**

EQUITY ACTION PLAN

December 2020 - December 2024



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We begin by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the unceded lands on which we meet, gather and work. We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging, and ask for their guidance as we embark on this journey.

Endorsed by TNA Board: 4/12/2020. Reviewed in August 2021.
This is a living document that will be updated as we progress.

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FRAMEWORK

This Equity Action Plan (EQAP) is an extension of Theatre Network Australia's 2020-2024 Strategic Plan, and is based on a human rights framework where every human has the right to participate in cultural life.¹

CONTEXT

TNA recognizes that Equity and Inclusion planning is wholistic and intersectional, and as a result this Action Plan will cover:

- First Nations status
- Disability
- Cultural Background (including Race and Religion)
- Linguistic Background
- Gender identity
- Sexuality
- Socioeconomic status (e.g. Class)
- Age
- Geographic location

Based on our knowledge of the performing arts sector in Australia currently, for this Equity Action Plan we will pay particular attention to **First Peoples, People of Colour, Deaf and disabled people and those based regionally**. We also acknowledge that as a service organisation that represents the subsidised performing arts sector (our members), there is work to be done in diversifying this sector. As such, we have both top-down and bottom-up approaches in this EQAP plan and our strategic plan.

PLAN ELEMENTS

This comprehensive four-year plan aims to support TNA's overarching Vision, Goals and Objectives (as per our Strategic Plan) by articulating our Equity Action Plan (EQAP) Aims (internal and external), Key Factors (structural and activities), Targets and Actions for implementation and evaluation.

PURPOSE

In order to achieve systemic change, we must embed transformational change within all areas of our work, including programming, governance and engagement. This plan documents that commitment.

¹ Article 27 of the UN human rights charter, of which Australia is a signatory.

PROCESS

Our Equity Action Planning process has been undertaken as part of the organisation's participation in Diversity Arts Australia's Fair Play Program in 2019 and 2020.

We have also sought more targeted input and feedback from Diversity Arts Australia's staff and mentors, Arts Access Victoria, our staff and board, and Theatre Network Australia members and networks (this includes key representatives from identified target groups).

This EQAP is a living and publicly available document, which will be reported against, ensuring that we remain transparent and inclusive at every turn. We have and will continue to provide ongoing opportunities for feedback, evaluation and process change within the organisation, and to share our successes and challenges.

EQUITY ADVISORS

TNA has identified and will be guided by the support of a growing list of Equity Advisors which is reflective of the community and our stakeholders. They will be consulted at least twice yearly to review the development and implementation of this plan, and to provide feedback from their multiple perspectives. They will also guide annual priorities, and our external communication plan. They will be paid for their time.

Our current list of 11 advisors (outside of our staff) includes members of our Board, other TNA Advisory groups, as well as TNA members and our broader networks. In addition, TNA will seek input from our Fair Play trainers and mentors, our members, key stakeholders, our funders, and peers including Diversity Arts Australia, BlakDance, Multicultural Arts Victoria, Arts Access Victoria and our fellow Fair Play participants.

TNA'S OVERARCHING VISION IS FOR
**A SAFE, HEALTHY AND RELEVANT
PERFORMING ARTS SECTOR**

OUR ORGANISATIONAL GOALS ARE:
**STRONGER ARTISTS AND COMPANIES;
STRONGER ARTS SECTOR;
STRONGER ORGANISATION**

OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES ARE:

- **FIRST NATIONS FIRST** – Self-determination and leadership roles for First Nations artists and arts workers, greater First Nations cultural awareness amongst the wider sector;
- **JUSTICE & DIVERSITY** – A more equitable distribution of resources, opportunities and power. A welcoming, accountable, accessible and inclusive performing arts sector which promotes the creative benefits of diversity.
- **SAFER SPACES** – Within an intersectional framework, safe workplaces for all, free from harassment, bullying and other behaviours that create unsafe workplaces;
- **ACCESS & INCLUSION** – Contributing to systemic change through the pillars of access, employment, participation, and attitudes for people with disabilities;
- **GENDER EQUITY** – Gender Equity in the performing arts, especially in artistic leadership roles, and a safer more inclusive environments for LGBTQIA+ people.

EQUITY ACTION PLAN AIMS

Our Internal Aim is to focus on **dedicating resources to making change** and to implement best-practice models alongside our peers.

Our External Aim is to **be recognised as part of the change**, explicitly leading by example, influencing and supporting the performing arts sector nationally to adopt an equity agenda.

SECTOR ISSUES

Through our ongoing engagement with artists and arts organisations, TNA has a deep understanding of the key issues currently facing the sector. With regards to our EQAP, the issues we endeavour to lead the sector in addressing include:

- Putting First Nations work at the centre of Australian arts - in policy, how it is created, how it is supported, how it is presented.
- Using a justice framework - a more equitable distribution of resources, opportunities and power, including the ten principals of disability justice².
- Increasing diversity on stage, in our companies, in our artists, in our audiences, especially of People of Colour and people with disabilities.
- Gender equity in creative leadership roles in the performing arts.

AUDIT FINDINGS AND ORGANISATIONAL FACTORS

Following on from the Fair Play Audit, the Key Factors that have informed this plan are as follows:

- TNA's structural strength is our: **Training**, with numerous staff and Board members having undertaken training with Reconciliation Australia, ADAPT and Open Your Eyes with AAV, the Fair Play program, and learning Auslan.
- TNA's structural focus for improvement in the next 12 months will be: **Employment and Contracting**
- TNA's structural focus for improvement for the next 4 years will be: **Leadership**
- TNA already has a great process of: **Feedback**, specifically in relation to our gatherings, and implementing positive change for First Nations People.
- The focus of our activities for the next 12 months and 4 years will be: **Engagement**, which moves us beyond one off projects.

² <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/690824/pdf>

PROGRESS TO DATE – AUGUST 2021

TNA's Equity Action Plan (EQAP) is an extension of Theatre Network Australia's 2021-2025 Strategic Plan, and is based on a human rights framework where every human has the right to participate in cultural life.

TNA is reporting on our first year of implementation of the EQAP (September 2020 – August 2021). TNA staff prepared a more detailed report for the TNA board, and the board has requested that a summarized version is made public to increase transparency and to share our progress to encourage other organisations to develop, implement and report on an EQAP.

The following list is the desired impact of our work in five target areas. We give examples of implementation under each.

1. Reducing Racism and Ableism (Target -All Staff and Board to do Key Readings and Training)

✓ Mostly achieved.

Example:

- ⇒ All staff have done at least one training program. Ongoing annually.
- ⇒ Essential Anti-Racist reading material shared in TNA's June 2020 e-news. Feedback includes thanks from members and subscribers.

Room for improvement: TNA staff to more consistently offer board members opportunities to participate in training. Key readings to be added as an ongoing agenda item at each Board meeting.

2. Governance and Leadership (Target- Create a Plan for the Succession Plan – Board and Staff)

✓ Mostly achieved. Board succession plan in place. Staff succession plan in progress. EQAP objectives built into all staff's roles.

Examples:

- ⇒ New sitting fee for independent Board members researched and implemented in 2021 – to address the disproportionate representation of under-represented groups as independents in the sector. Endorsed by the

Board in February 2021. Shared widely with the sector and funding bodies as a best -practice model.

- ⇒ To create easier pathways to leadership roles, all staff members attending board meetings where it fits their workplans (and where there are no conflicts). This breaks down barriers, demystifies the governance process, and allows staff to quickly become adept at board reporting processes.
- ⇒ TNA's 2022 budget includes a new Associate Director role designated First Nations, person of colour or Deaf/disabled. (subject to funding)

Room for improvement: TNA has an extensive employment policy and process to ensure diverse recruitment – this needs to be better documented and shared.

3. An arts industry which lives and breathes Universal Access principals (Target - Partnership with Arts Access Victoria to Design and Deliver Programs, Events and Activities).

✓ Partly achieved.

Examples:

- ⇒ TNA's new office fit-out was achieved with deep access considerations, with paid access advice from Arts Access Victoria.
- ⇒ In person events have budgeted best practice access. Eg. Converge national symposium in 2019 and Neighbourhood Adelaide May 2021 both had excellent feedback regarding our access programs.
- ⇒ 37% of VIPI Round 2 participants identified as Deaf or disabled people.

Room for improvement:

Work with Arts Access Australia on their new Code of Practice and add value wherever possible to imbed access thinking into the performing arts sector.

4. People from under-represented groups have equity of opportunity including paid leadership roles. (Target - create paid positions across all levels of TNA for the four target demographics).

✓ Mostly achieved.

Examples:

- ⇒ TNA's employment policy actively addresses under-application by our target groups.
- ⇒ A minimum of 50% short-term and sub-contractors at TNA are from the target groups. Currently TNA has a major contract with a First Nations web-site development firm for the new website – our biggest contractor in 2020/2021.

Room for improvement:

TNA could more pro-actively promote our employment policy and process to members and increase our focus on diverse leadership in our programs.

5. The arts sector is more inclusive and leads a culture which understands and addresses the intersectional needs of different groups of people. (Target - long-term, ongoing, meaningful and trusted engagement with four target communities).

✓ Mostly achieved.

Examples

- ⇒ In 2020, TNA provided 25 free memberships to the target groups: 3 to First Nations members (12%), 12 to CALD people (48%), 10 people with a disability (40%).
- ⇒ We do not sit on panels or groups that are all white people/people without disability, we explain why, and we seek to replace ourselves with First Nations people, people of colour, and/or people with disabilities.
- ⇒ Significant time and budget allocation for care and Access within Victorian Independent Producers Program. To date, 24 of 29 participants (all paid) are from our target groups.

Room for Improvement: More work to be done in getting the whole sector to be more representative: working with funding bodies on KPIs and Quotas, working with partners on their own change, leading by example at TNA.

SHORT TERM TARGETS – Updated August 2021.

To be achieved in the next 12 months – ending August 2022.

Target 1 (internal): ALL STAFF AND BOARD TO DO KEY READINGS AND TRAINING

Action	Timeline	Outcomes / Success Indicators
Refresh and review key reading list and associated policy for core staff and Board inductions	Sep 21	Effective and ongoing staff and Board training policies implemented.
Purchase 5 new books on the list	Dec 21	Completed, ongoing budget allocation.
Communicate progress in e-news, website, signatures	Dec 21-Aug 22.	Members implement similar policy.
DARTS training 2021 offered to all staff and board.	June 21.	100% of staff undertake at least one module.

DESIRED IMPACT:

- Reduced racism and ableism, increased empathy, greater shared understanding and base level to move forward from, reduced level of labour from target groups in educating.

EVALUATION:

- Internally, at annual reflection time, all staff report enhanced understanding of the essential frameworks of racism and discrimination.
- Externally, TNA is seen as a leader in anti-racism, anti-abelist and anti-discrimination in the arts sector, as evidenced by media articles, social media mentions, unsolicited emails, and responses to formal surveys e.g. our annual member survey. Collating evidence in an ongoing way.

Target 2 (internal): CREATE A PLAN FOR THE SUCCESSION PLAN

Action	Timeline	Outcomes / Success Indicators
Research leadership models – co-leadership and transition	Sep 21 - Mar 22	Models sourced - at least 2 international and 2 national.
Explore funding support for proposal	Sep 21 - Apr 22	List of possible funding sources.
Prepare proposal for TNA adoption (which takes equity representation into account in the process)	May 22	2-3 page plan drafted.
Develop support within Board	Jun 22	Plan sent to board, discussed in a meeting and revised.
Present to Board for endorsement	Jul 22	Endorsement
Tweak Plan based on feedback	Aug 22	Plan revised annually until implemented.

DESIRED IMPACT:

- TNA leads the way in representative governance and leadership for the sector, by addressing equity in leadership employment. Intersectional representation as an advocacy voice.

EVALUATION:

- A 2-3 page Succession Plan for governance and executive leadership within TNA is approved by the staff and board and reviewed annually.
- The plan is followed when board members are renewed and when new executive staff members are recruited.
- TNA has not determined a timeline for executive change, but executive to give extended notice to allow for plan implementation.

Target 3 (external): FORMALISE RELATIONSHIPS WITH ARTS ACCESS VICTORIA TO DESIGN AND DELIVER PROGRAMS, EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES.

Action	Timeline	Outcomes / Success Indicators
Document current engagement	Nov 21	Number of engagements.
Explore potential opportunities within TNA 2022 program	Sep 21	Increased number of engagements.
Implement formal partnership for 2022 Activities	Jan-Aug 2022	Disability consultants in project team.
Communicate partnership in e-news and on website, signatures	Dec 21 – Aug 22	Sparks sector conversations. Feedback from AAV.

DESIRED IMPACT:

- The sector benefits from a strong network of diverse members, including people with disabilities, to create an arts industry which lives and breathes Universal Access principals.

EVALUATION:

- We will benchmark our engagement with members of the Deaf and disabled community in December 2020 and measure progress against that annually from 2022.
- By December 2022, minimum 10% of people feel safe to identify as Deaf or disabled people³, within TNA membership, TNA events, and TNA consultations.

³ <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/disability/people-with-disability-in-australia-in-brief/contents/how-many-are-employed>

LONG TERM TARGETS

To be achieved in the next 4 years – ending August 2024.

Target A (internal): CREATE PAID POSITIONS ACROSS ALL LEVELS OF TNA FOR THE FOUR TARGET DEMOGRAPHICS

Action	Timeline	Outcomes / Success Indicators
Extend casuals list and suppliers list	2021	Increased employment and contracting of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse, Deaf and disabled, and First Nations led orgs. Min 50%.
TNA Board roles	2022	Increased representation of First Nation, Deaf and disabled and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse people on TNA Board. Minimum 40% of our target groups.
Develop Succession Plan for all roles.	2022.	Include in organisational succession plan.
Implement Succession Plan	As arises	As staff change, implement succession plan all roles.

DESIRED IMPACT:

- People from these backgrounds have equity of opportunity including paid leadership roles.

EVALUATION:

- 2021 – Retain current level of diversity (35-50%) with TNA team, and meet quota for casuals and contractors;
- 2022 – meet quotas for board;
- 2023 – fill gaps in staffing, creating new roles for specific target groups.

Target B (external): LONG-TERM, ONGOING, MEANINGFUL AND TRUSTED ENGAGEMENT WITH FOUR TARGET COMMUNITIES

Action	Timeline	Outcomes / Success Indicators
Continue to implement free membership policy (bottom up)	Sep 2021	Increased engagement of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse, Deaf and disabled, and First Nations people.
New website	Sep 2021	Visitation is increased.
Transparent communication re: EQAP wins and challenges	2021-24	Sector learns from our experiences, fewer mistakes.
TNA core staff undertake GENERATE training	2021 as offered	Effective staff training and retention policies implemented.
VIPI partnership with Blak & Bright Festival	2021-23	1 First Nations Producer for First Nations Artists
VIPI as a model of engagement to roll out nationally.	2024	Increased access by marginalised populations to PD opportunities.
Re-brand.	2024	

DESIRED IMPACT:

- The arts sector is more inclusive and leads a culture which understands and addresses the intersectional needs of different groups of people.

EVALUATION:

- Using the DARTS report on arts industry representation - assess the industry's progress in TNA's constituency (where we have influence). Small to Medium performing arts organisations – progress measured in TNA's biennial Salary Survey. Independent artists – progress measured in Showcase opportunities e.g APAM or MFI.

RISKS AND RESOURCES

While risks and resources required do not appear in the tables above, they have been explored in depth in developing these targets, and the final targets detailed above reflect the limits and strengths of the organisation.

We are delighted to be developing this Equity Action Plan with confirmed federal government funding until 2024, supporting our Strategic Plan across the same period.

We have also secured significant philanthropic support until 2021 and State government support until 2024. Where necessary Risks appear in TNA's Organisational Risk Assessment.

MONITORING, REPORTING AND CELEBRATING

We have identified the following opportunities for monitoring, reporting and celebrating:

- EQAP activities included in all staff position descriptions;
- our progress against this EQAP is discussed at staff meetings;
- our Equity Advisors are consulted bi-annually;
- EQAP is a permanent Agenda Item for Board Meetings (held every 6 weeks);
- EQAP is a permanent Agenda item for Advisory Group Meetings held quarterly;
- we seek out feedback from stakeholders and Fair Play peers bi-annually;
- report on progress in our Annual Report and celebrate at our AGM;
- undertake the Fair Play Audit again 2022;
- review EQAP in 2024.

CONCLUSION

Change is hard. And TNA pledges to work hard to make change. Our strong internal culture will celebrate the small wins, and the process as well as the outcome, hoping we can embrace and celebrate difference, diversity and champion First Nation voices. We aim to lead by example and be part of positive change, knowing we will face challenges.