



**ADVANCING THE
PERFORMING ARTS**



Equity Action Plan 2021 – 2024

2023 Update

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Acknowledgement of Country

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 and present.

Framework

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

Context

TNA recognizes that identity is intersectional; aspects of a person's social and political identities combine to create different modes of discrimination and privilege. While this is not an exhaustive list, we acknowledge that the most marginalized/excluded groups of people include those that identify as First Nations, d/Deaf, disabled, culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD), people of colour, gender diverse, and LGBTQIA+, as well as factors involving socio-economic status (class), age, and geographic location.

Based on our knowledge of the performing arts sector in Australia currently, in this Equity Action Plan we will pay particular attention to:

1. **First Nations people**
2. **People of colour and culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) people,**
3. **Deaf and disabled people**
4. **People based regionally**

We also acknowledge that as a service organisation that represents the subsidised performing arts sector (our members), there is ongoing 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 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

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.

Process

Our initial equity action planning process was undertaken as part of the organisation's participation in Diversity Arts Australia's Fair Play Program in 2019 and 2020.

We 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).

A major review and update of EQAP was completed in early 2023 with our new EQAP Board Subcommittee.

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.

EQAP Subcommittee

TNA's EQAP work will be guided by a newly formed EQAP Subcommittee, comprised of TNA staff and Board members. The subcommittee will meet once a year 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. Independent board members will be paid for their time as per TNA's Independent Sitting Fee Policy.

In addition, TNA continues to have conversations with industry peers and organisations on best practice and uses these to inform our EQAP.

Progress To Date

TNA reports annually on our EQAP progress:

- [2021 Report](#)
- [2022 Report](#)

The 2021-2024 EQAP was reviewed in early 2023, with our five goals being updated to reflect what we had already achieved, and what we wanted to achieve next.

During 2021 and 2022 TNA focused on dedicating resources to making change, improving employment and contracting, and to sharing best-practice models with our peers and the wider sector.

Some achievement highlights include:

- Paid 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 anti-racism training with Hue.
- We created a reading list and shared this with the sector. All staff undertook the readings and discussed in staff meetings. The reading list continues to grow, and staff are actively engaged in reading, sharing, and discussing the lessons and insights.
- A new sitting fee for independent Board members was researched and implemented in 2021, to address the disproportionate representation of under-represented groups as independents in the sector.
- \$10,000 of TNA financial reserves has been set aside to support future potential access requirements of core staff.
- TNA's structural focus for improvement in the first two years was Employment and Contracting.
 - We exceeded our target of 50% casual employment and contracting of First Nations, CaLD, PoC, d/Deaf and disabled, and regional people and organisations, with 55% in 2022.
 - We exceeded our goal of increased representation of First Nations, PoC, CaLD, d/Deaf and disabled, and regional people on TNA Board – 50% in 2022.

Our organisational goals are:

Stronger artists and companies

Stronger arts sector

Stronger organisation

Our first five 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 find, develop, and implement best-practice models alongside our peers.

Our *External Aim* is to **be in service of the change**; supporting and celebrating work by the community, amplifying leaders of lived experience, explicitly leading by example, and 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, we endeavour to lead the sector in addressing the following issues:

- 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 justice.¹
- Increasing diversity on stage, in our companies, in our artists, in our audiences, especially of PoC, CaLD, and d/Deaf and disabled people.
- Racial equity in governance and creative leadership roles in the performing arts.
- Gender equity in creative leadership roles in the performing arts, including leadership by people who are trans and/or non-binary.
- Increasing cultural competency so that structural change can occur.

¹ <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/690824/pdf>

Short-Term Targets

To be achieved in the next 12 months – ending December 2023

Target 1: All staff and Board to do key readings and training

Action	Outcomes / Success Indicators
<p>1.1 Annually refresh and review key reading list and associated policy for core staff and Board inductions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board and staff to suggest new readings (this is added as a Board action item). • Readings can be articles, social media posts, podcasts, etc. 	List is reviewed, all relevant documentation updated, and inducted staff and Board do key readings.
<p>1.2 Expand EQAP Board agenda item to include discussion and exchange on readings and current issues.</p>	Each Board meeting includes a discussion, more Board and staff engaged in readings. New staff are given a reading list for their first three months.
<p>1.3 Communicate progress in E-News, website, signatures.</p>	Members implement similar policy.
<p>1.4 Training offered to all staff and board.</p>	100% of staff and 50% of Board undertake at least one training opportunity.

Desired Impact

- Reduced racism and ableism, increased empathy, and greater shared understanding within TNA Board and staff. Reduced level of labour from target groups in educating.

Evaluation

- All staff have included any key learnings in Staff Board Reporting.
- Externally, TNA is seen as a leader in anti-racism, anti-ableist 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: Improve organisational succession planning

Action	Outcomes / Success Indicators
2.1 Finalise succession plan for governance and executive leadership (Executive Director and General Manager).	Plan is finalised and approved by Board. Actions are implemented into TNA operations.
2.2 When appropriate, give the sector advanced notice regarding succession of executive leadership.	Allows time for people to prepare for and see themselves in the roles, leading to larger and more diverse applicant numbers.
2.3 Research potential shared leadership models for TNA.	New models are interrogated/considered. HR sub-committee to lead this work.
2.4 Assess the cultural safety of current onboarding processes and develop a cultural safety rider for new employees.	Recruitment and onboarding processes are updated, TNA is recognised as a culturally safe workplace, leading to more diverse applicants.
2.5 Support participating leaders and organisations in LeaderShift, profile cohort members, and find opportunities to add value to their career progression.	More diverse leaders supported to lead organisations, more organisations are culturally safe and adopting an equity agenda.

Desired Impact

- TNA is a culturally competent and safe organisation and is recognised as such, leading to more diverse applicants for staff roles and retainment of staff. TNA leads by example in representative governance and leadership, influencing other organisations to do the same.

Evaluation

- A succession plan for governance and executive leadership and a cultural safety rider is approved by the staff and Board and reviewed annually.
- The plan is followed when Board members and executive staff are recruited.
- Debrief and reflect monthly on LeaderShift and collect feedback from participants at its conclusion.

Target 3: Work with Arts Access Victoria and other partner organisations to increase and improve engagement with d/Deaf and disabled people in TNA activities and membership.

Action	Outcomes / Success Indicators
3.1 Present at AAV events and gatherings.	More d/Deaf and disabled people know about and are connected to TNA and broader sector initiatives.
3.2 Cross-promote items in TNA and AAV E-News.	More d/Deaf and disabled people hear about news and opportunities and representation is increased.
3.3 Offer discounted and free TNA memberships to d/Deaf and disabled people.	Financial barriers to membership and participation are overcome, representation in TNA membership is increased.
3.4 Develop a strategy for APAF to offer hybrid/online sessions.	APAF is more accessible and there is higher engagement from d/Deaf and disabled people.

Desired Impact

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

Evaluation

- We will benchmark our engagement with members of the d/Deaf and disabled community in December 2022 and measure progress against that annually from 2023.
- By December 2023, minimum 10% of people identify as d/Deaf or disabled people, within TNA membership, TNA events, and TNA consultations.

Long-Term Targets

To be achieved in the next 2 years – ending December 2024

Target 4: Create paid positions across all levels of TNA for our four target demographics.

Action	Timeline	Outcomes / Success Indicators
4.1 Extend casuals and suppliers lists.	2021 - 2024	Increased employment and contracting of First Nations, CaLD, PoC, d/Deaf and disabled, and regional people and organisations. Min 50%.
4.2 Prioritise diversity in TNA Board recruitment.	2022 - 2024	Increased representation of First Nation, PoC, CaLD, d/Deaf and disabled, and regional people on TNA Board. Minimum 40% of our target groups.
4.3 Finalise succession plan for governance and executive leadership.	2023	Plan is finalised and approved by Board. Actions are implemented into TNA operations.
4.4 Implement Succession Plan.	As arises	As staff change, implement succession plan for all roles.

Desired Impact

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

Evaluation

- Retain current level of diversity (35-50%) with TNA team and meet targets for casuals and contractors.
- Meet targets for board.
- Fill gaps in staffing, creating new roles for specific target groups

Target 5: Long-term, ongoing, meaningful, and trusted engagement with four target communities.

Action	Timeline	Outcomes / Success Indicators
5.1 Continue to implement free membership policy (bottom up).	2021-24	Increased engagement of target communities.
5.2 Launch new website.	2021	Visitation is increased.
5.3 Transparent communication re: EQAP wins and challenges.	2021-24	Sector learns from our experiences, fewer mistakes.
5.4 TNA core staff undertake training.	2021-24	Effective staff training and retention policies implemented.
5.5 Promote VIPI as a model of change for other organisations and states.	2021-2024	Increased access by marginalised populations to PD opportunities; increased diversity amongst the independent producing sector.
5.6 TNA's CaPT program employs a First Nations emerging producer, TNA's first designated First Nations role.	2023-24	A First Nations Producer employed for 2023-24, who is well supported.

Desired Impact

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

Evaluation

- Using data 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 reflect the limits and strengths of the organisation.

We are pleased 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 2025. 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 Subcommittee meets annually to review the EQAP,
- EQAP activities included in all staff position descriptions,
- Progress against this EQAP is discussed at staff meetings,
- EQAP is a permanent agenda item for Board meetings,
- Report on progress annually in a standalone report, in our Annual Report, and celebrate at our AGM.

Conclusion

Change is hard and TNA pledges to work hard to make change. Our strong internal culture will celebrate the small wins, including 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.