TNA ▼ ADVANCING THE PERFORMING ARTS

Equity Action Plan 2021 – 2024

2024 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.

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. TNA now commits to a review and update at the beginning of every year.

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 an 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 | 2023 Report

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

During 2021-23 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.

- TNA developed and published a Staff and Board Recruitment, Retention & Succession Planning Policy, which outlines our commitment to justice and equity within those processes.

- 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.

- 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, and 62% in 2023.

- 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 and 2023.

> **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.

- Recognising the contributions of regional artists and arts workers, as well as the unique challenges faced when making work in this context

- Acknowledging the ongoing climate crisis is directly linked to more perilous outcomes for vulnerable groups and upskilling to integrate this perspective from 2025 onwards.

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[1] https://muse.jhu.edu/article/690824/pdf

Short-Term Targets

To be achieved in the next 12 months – ending December 2024

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

Action	Outcomes / Success Indicators
1.1 Annually refresh and review key reading list and associated policy for core staff and Board inductions. • 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.
1.2 Expand EQAP Board agenda item to include discussion and exchange on readings and current issues.	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.
1.3 Communicate progress in E-News, website, signatures.	Members are encouraged to implement similar policies.
1.4 All staff and Board supported to undertake development.	100% of staff and 50% of Board undertake at least one development 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.
- TNA staff self-evaluate on the impact our work has on the broader sector, and create 1-2 opportunities per year for external feedback (e.g. adding a question to an existing survey).

Target 2: Improve organisational succession planning

Action		Outcomes / Success Indicators
2.1	Implement and evaluate the new Staff and Board Recruitment, Retention and Succession Planning Policy.	Consolidate and improve new processes within TNA. Diverse recruitment is more successful. Staff and Board feel supported.
2.2	Share our learnings and resources through communications and events.	Other organisations are encouraged and enabled to implement policies and actions that support diverse recruitment and retention.
2.3	Offer a Board Observership position annually to someone from our target communities.	Contribute to the development of a diverse leader. Build stronger relationships with potential TNA staff, Board members, and contributors.
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 safer workplace, leading to more diverse applicants.
2.5	Support participating leaders and organisations in LeaderShift, and find opportunities to extend learnings to the sector.	Diverse leaders are supported and connected, more organisations are culturally safer 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/Board roles and retainment. TNA leads by example in representative governance and leadership, influencing other organisations to do the same.

Evaluation
- A cultural safety rider is approved by the staff and Board and is reviewed annually alongside other new policies.
- The policies are followed when staff/Board are recruited.
- At least one online and one in-person opportunity to share new TNA learnings/developments.

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 VPAF to include an online offering.	VPAF is more accessible and there is higher engagement from d/Deaf, disabled, and regional people.
3.5	Increase staff understanding of making marketing/ communications accessible to d/Deaf and disabled people.	TNA communications can be accessed better by d/Deaf and disabled people, and can be shared by Arts Access Victoria.

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.
- By December 2024, 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 12 months – ending December 2024

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

Action	**Timeline**	**Outcomes / Success Indicators**
4.1 Develop relationships with casuals and suppliers.	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 Plans.	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	Create opportunities for repeat engagements with people from our target communities.	2021-2024	A commitment to positive change as a permanent practice. Avoids one-off, transactional interactions.
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
- TNA collects statistical data to evaluate engagement with people from our target communities.
- Feedback from people from our target communities indicates their engagement with TNA has been positive and meaningful.

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.