



Physical Disability Council of NSW
Ordinary People Ordinary Lives

Submission for The City of Sydney

Creative City: Cultural Policy Discussion Paper

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Who is the Physical Disability Council of NSW?

The Physical Disability Council of NSW (PDCN) is the peak body representing people with physical disabilities across New South Wales. This includes people with a range of physical disability issues, from young children and their representatives to aged people, who are from a wide range of socio-economic circumstances and live in metropolitan, rural and regional areas of NSW.

The objectives of PDCN are:

- “ To educate, inform and assist people with physical disabilities in NSW about the range of services, structure and programs available that enable their full participation, equality of opportunity and equality of citizenship;
- “ To develop the capacity of people with physical disability in NSW to identify their own goals, and the confidence to develop a pathway to achieving their goals (ie self advocate);
- “ To educate and inform stakeholders (ie about the needs of people with a physical disability) so they are able to achieve and maintain full participation, equality of opportunity and equality of citizenship.

The Physical Disability Council appreciates the opportunity to consider, and make comment to The City of Sydney on the Cultural Policy Discussion paper and would like to acknowledge a stated theme of inclusion throughout the document.

The discussion paper makes reference to the *United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, Article 27 ~~Everyone~~ Everyone has the right to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits¹q PDCN would also like to focus upon how the discussions within the paper also blend well with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) of which Australia became a signatory in 2007².

Article 8 Awareness-raising

- a) To promote awareness of the capabilities and contributions of persons with disabilities.
- a) To raise awareness throughout societyō ò to foster respect for the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities;
- b) c) To combat stereotypes, prejudices and harmful practices relating to persons with disabilities

Article 9 Accessibility

- a) Buildings, roads, transportation and other indoor and outdoor facilities, including schools, housing, medical facilities and workplaces
- b) Information, communications and other services, including electronic services and emergency services

Article 19 Living independently and being included in the community

¹ City of Sydney (2013) Creative City – Cultural Policy Discussion Paper p 12

² United Nations Treaty Collection (2013) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Comments

Direction 1:

Improving Access, creating markets

PDCN agrees with and supports The City's recognition of the importance arts and creativity has, in not only the sense of belonging, but also as a means of reducing isolation, fostering community connectedness and social bonds through providing opportunities for creative expression³.

The first step in being able to fulfil the city's image of a city with soul, where art is for everybody⁴ is by ensuring the inclusiveness of arts and creativity.

When ensuring underrepresented parts of the community have opportunities to participate in the cultural life of the Sydney, the City must be cognisant that people with disability belong within all social and cultural groups.

The barriers as highlighted on page 44 are only too common for people with disability. When taking action to resolve these barriers, PDCN recommends consulting with relevant organisations/committees or forums that include people with disability who can guide actions to be both inclusive and accessible to all.

The Australian Council for Social Service reports that 620,000 Australians with disability are living in poverty.⁵ Given this statistic, extending the empty theatre seat allocation (for accessible venues) to people with disability who live on low income would allow people access to art and cultural activities, which given their financial circumstance, would not normally be possible. This extension would further strengthen the articulated goals in relation to underrepresented parts of the community by providing a tangible example of creative inclusiveness.

Direction 2:

New avenues for creative participation

It is encouraging that the statistics show an increase in the number of Australians actively participating⁶ in at least one cultural activity per year⁶. You only have to consider if cultural events were inclusive, this trend would only continue to increase, bringing not only social benefits to the community but also economic benefits.

³ City of Sydney (2013) Creative City – Cultural Policy Discussion Paper

⁵ Australian Council of Social Service (2012) Poverty in Australia

⁶ City of Sydney (2013) Creative City – Cultural Policy Discussion Paper

When increasing the number of City-run, or supportive creative participation facilities, consideration of the inclusiveness of the venues should be priority. PDCN believes a core part of inclusiveness in the creative and artistic context is accessibility.

Direction 3:

A vibrant creative economy

PDCN welcomes the City's suggestion of opening up further affordable office space. People with disability are also members of creative industries, consideration of the physical accessibility of these spaces should be made. People with disability are not only spectators, but are also artists, event managers, participants, employees and employers. People with disability are part of that untapped talent and opportunity the City has highlighted as not always being adept in using.

Direction 4:

Fostering precinct distinctiveness through cultural and creative expression

A proposal to implement and increase the amount of public arts commissions in public spaces could be a means of reducing the barriers for people with disability accessing arts that are displayed in inaccessible venues (given pathways were accessible).

Direction 5:

A partner for big ideas

PDCN wishes to make comment on the partnership with NSW Government for the light rail and make note having the route of the light rail extend down George Street around Dawes Point and Walsh Bay to Barangaroo (where major developments are planned for arts and cultural venues⁷), will allow accessible transport options and more choice of cultural activities for people with disability.

Direction 6:

Sector sustainability, surviving and thinking

To be able to survive and think about what needs to happen culturally in the City, leaders should be encouraged to approach issues holistically, knowing their responsibilities, seeking advice and guidance where necessary to ensure inclusion and accountability across all social and cultural groups.

⁷ City of Sydney (2013) Major Developments - Barangaroo

Considering this, PDCN agrees with leadership being at the top of the City's list of enabling principles. Without strong leadership; which as the City has mentioned is leadership through what you do, not who you are, plans to provide cultural experience for everyone will fall short of the City's vision, this shortfall having a strong impact to the community's social well-being.

Needs based analysis of Sydney's underrepresented cultural life should further encourage these enabling principles through insight from speakers who are aware of the importance of inclusiveness for a society, one crucial element being the importance of access to the built environment.

PDCN would also further like to make reference of the importance of interdepartmental communication of the City to ensure there are no contradictory priorities.

Direction 7:

Sharing knowledge

PDCN strongly supports investigations into new location-based apps. At present PDCN are conducting a survey on behalf of the Transport and Access Department of the City of Sydney, for an app that would provide people with disability an opportunity to report problems/barriers they meet while travelling around the city; the app would also provide useful information relating to accessibility⁹.

The City's proposal to develop an app which would share stories of Sydney and its villages is only a small part of what can be achieved if they were to utilise sharing of knowledge through technology. Development of apps that go deeper than just sharing stories (as mentioned above) would acknowledge the need of information relating to accessibility and the positive impact this could have for people with disability engaging with and having more choice within the community (this is provided the information is maintained and kept up to date). This would also provide another tangible example of underrepresented parts of the community having access to an opportunity to participate in the social and cultural life of the City of Sydney as articulated within the Cultural Discussion Paper.

Another important area to reinforce this participation is when advocating for increased funding for state libraries, these funds should be apportioned to be used for projects that would ensure inclusiveness of libraries and their resources through a holistic approach to access.

Direction 8:

Global engagement

PDCN has already made comment on how people with disability reflect all social groups. This also applies to people travelling to Sydney; the cultural engagement of international

⁸ City of Sydney (2013) Creative City – Cultural Policy Discussion Paper

⁹ Survey Monkey (2013)

visitors should consider tourist activities that are inclusive for those visitors who have disability.

If you have any enquiries relating to this submission please contact:

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