

Media release

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Ambitious, bold, innovative projects supported through Arts and Disability Initiative

The Australia Council has announced the 10 recipients of a new grant program designed to advance the careers of d/Deaf artists or arts workers and artists or arts workers with disability.

The [Arts and Disability Initiative](#) provides financial support of \$30,000 for up to two years for artists to undertake significant projects that advance their skills, practice or networks.

The initiative is part of the Australia Council's broader investment in Arts and Disability in response to research showing the need to [create pathways](#) and [address barriers](#) to access and inclusion in the arts.

Australia Council Executive Director for Arts Investment Alice Nash said:

“The Australia Council has a longstanding commitment to supporting arts and culture that reflect the diversity of Australia. We recognise the barriers and inequities in society that impact on participation in culture, which is a fundamental [human right](#).

This investment will support an impressive group of artists and arts workers to pursue bold, innovative, and ambitious projects and new work. We can't wait to follow their journeys.”

Writer and essayist Amanda Tink is among the recipients and said:

“This initiative recognises the many ways in which disabled people are disadvantaged in the arts in Australia and is a practical contribution to redressing this problem.

This project is my opportunity to learn from other blind or autistic writers, and to develop a writing style that draws on my first language.

The Arts and Disability Initiative will enable me to do this while adequately paying all of us. The significance of this cannot be overstated since disabled people are often expected to write, and develop their craft, unpaid.”

Other recipients include renowned Torres Strait Islander artist Ken Thaiday, who will develop new work building on his work creating traditional headdresses and cultural artifacts.

Dancer, poet and visual artist [Melinda Smith](#) OAM will use the initiative to further develop her practice working with custom built [Airsticks](#). The instruments translate movement into music, text and images.

Multidisciplinary artist Hugo Flavelle will collaborate with experts in film and video mapping to further develop his WONDERCHAIR – a wheelchair he has enhanced with film, sound, lighting and projection.

Read more about the Arts and Disability Initiatives on our [website](#).

Recipients:

Melinda Smith	Victoria
Ken Thaiday	Queensland
Bruno Booth	Western Australia
Amanda Tink	New South Wales
Dan Graham	New South Wales
Hugo Flavelle	Western Australia
Julian Jaensch	South Australia
Yousef Alreemawi	Victoria
Marc Brew	New South Wales
Lesley Murray	Western Australia

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Background

About the work of the Australia Council with the arts and disability sector

The Australia Council believes that art is for everyone, and that Australians living with disability have the right to enjoy, benefit from and contribute to the arts and cultural life of Australia. Disability in the arts offers excellence and artistry, unique perspectives and lived experiences, and transformative experiences for audiences and communities.

The Australia Council supports disability and accessibility in the arts through its activities and delivers strategic initiatives designed to increase access to the Council's support; build sector capacity and sustainability; expand opportunities for artists and arts leaders with disability; and celebrate artistic excellence.

The Council also produces research which highlights the barriers and disparities which still exist for people with disability across arts practice, employment, leadership, education, training, engagement and participation.

Definition of disability

People with disability are diverse and are not defined by their disability. There is no single definition or way of capturing such complex and multidimensional experiences.

The Australia Council embraces the social model of disability, which distinguishes between impairment of the person, and the barriers in society that are disabling. These can include attitudes, discrimination, or the physical environment. This definition includes mental health. However, not all people who experience a mental health condition identify with disability. The term 'disability' can also include people who are d/Deaf or hard of hearing. However, members of the d/Deaf community may not always identify with disability and may identify as part of a cultural and linguistic group with their first language being Auslan (Australian Sign Language) or another sign language.

The Australia Council recognises the term people with disability is widely used in Australia, including by disability advocates and peak bodies. We also recognise that the term is contested and evolving, with increasing use of self-identifying terms such as disabled, including in advocacy for change. We recognise that some choose to identify with a specific community such as d/Deaf or Autistic and may prefer not to refer to themselves as disabled or as having disability. We will continue to recognise self-identification and engage in dialogue as the terminology evolves.