

IMPROVING ACCESSIBILITY IN PERFORMING ARTS VENUES: KEY INSIGHTS AND ACTIONS



CircuitWest presents the key findings from its 2022 Venue Access Audit, coordinated by DADAA, which evaluated the accessibility of regional WA performing arts venues through the lived experiences of people with disability. The audit reveals real-world barriers and provides practical, actionable recommendations to support venues become more welcoming for everyone.

KEY INSIGHTS AND ACTIONS

1. Venue Design and Infrastructure

Signage and Directions

- Implement consistent internal and external signage across the venue.
- Use sans serif fonts, high-contrast colour schemes, non-reflective materials, and large typefaces for better readability.
- Ensure signage to accessible toilets and seating areas is clearly visible and at appropriate heights.

Entrances and Exits

- Review automatic door access, especially with double sliding doors.
- Ensure all doors, including those to toilets, meet minimum accessibility standards.

Accessible Toilets

- Clearly mark and provide female and male accessible toilets.
- Avoid ad-hoc solutions, e.g., blocking off male toilets for female wheelchair users.

Wheelchair Access

- Review the number of wheelchair bays to align with venue capacity.
- Ensure accessible seating options are available across multiple sections, not just lower stalls.
- Ensure all areas of the venue are easily accessible by installing features such as a lift to reach service areas on different levels.

Counters and Service Areas

- Ensure bar and reception counters are accessible in height and free from clutter.
- Designate a dedicated accessible ticketing counter at the venue.

Hazards

- Replace worn-out carpets that pose trip hazards.

Stage Accessibility

- Make sure performers with disability can get onto the stage easily.
- Fix broken accessibility features, like stairlifts and automatic doors.

Tours

- Provide guided venue tours, especially pre-show, for audience members with disability.

2. Programs and Services

Inclusive Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Include at least one Audio Described show, Tactile Tour, and AUSLAN-interpreted performance annually.• Make use of support and services available from organisations in Perth, like DADAA.• Teach staff and volunteers how to use shared Audio Description (AD) scripts at venues.
Assistive Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Invest in portable assistive listening systems such as:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Sennheiser MobileConnect◦ Williams waveCAST• Explore remote AUSLAN and captioning services via iPads or monitors, especially for regions with limited interpreter availability.
Matinee Performances	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Schedule daytime performances to accommodate better transport access and availability of carers and support staff.• Consider that some people with disability may not have support after hours.

3. Staff Training and Engagement

Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct regular disability awareness training for all staff and volunteers including marketing, programming, hospitality, and technical teams.• Include training about different types of people, like older adults and those who have trouble hearing.• Recognise the role of staff attitudes and flexibility, particularly in venues with limited budgets for physical upgrades.
-----------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

4. Information Formats - Printed and Online

Alternative Formats	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide information in alternative formats: large print, braille, Easy English, audio guides, and social stories.
Web Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commit to creating fully accessible websites that comply with W3C, World Wide Web Consortium, standards.• Partner with organisations such as the Centre for Accessibility for audits and recommendations.• Make access information highly visible and easy to find online.• Promote existing assistive features (e.g., induction loops) more effectively.
Marketing and Promotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve targeted marketing to people with disability, carers, and support agencies.

5. Governance

Policies and Procedures

- Create up-to-date policies that make access and inclusion a key part of the organisation's strategic and operational plans.
- Review and update booking procedures, online and in person, for accessibility and ease of use.

6. Community Partnerships

Collaborations

- Work together with local access and inclusion officers and disability support organisations.
- Create and distribute short access needs surveys to gather community feedback.
- Recognise that not all who need support identify as having a disability, e.g., older patrons.

7. Transport

Transport

- Provide clear transport options, e.g., taxi partnerships, drop-off zones, at the time of booking, particularly for evening events.

8. Ticketing and Affordability

Admissions

- Promote discounted ticket schemes.
- Ensure such programs are inclusive of Companion Card users and people with disability.