

REVIEW OCTOBER 2023



SUPPORTING THE ARTS IN REGIONAL VICTORIA

2020-25 EQUITY ACTION PLAN

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

We acknowledge and pay respect to the Traditional Owners and Elders - past and present - of the lands on which Regional Arts Victoria operates. We acknowledge Aboriginal connection to creative practice on these lands for more than 65,000 years and extend our respect to First Nations people throughout our communities.

You can find a language map of Victoria here: [vaclang.org.au/Resources/maps.html](http://vaclang.org.au/Resources/maps.html)

## **ACCESSIBILITY**

To access this in other formats or request a copy, please email [enquiry@rav.net.au](mailto:enquiry@rav.net.au).

## 1. INTRODUCTION

RAV's original [Equity Action Plan](#) was drafted in 2020 after RAV participated in the Fair Play Initiative delivered by Diversity Arts Australia. The motivation for participation in the Fair Play Initiative and for developing the Plan was (and continues to be) offering equitable access to RAV's programs.

The Fair Play Initiative entailed reviewing RAV through equity lenses focused on strategy, leadership, advisory board, employment, internships & mentoring, training, programming, audience promotion & feedback, and engagement with broad groupings commonly linked to marginalisation from the dominant culture: First Nations people, D/deaf & disabled people, and people from cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

In developing the 2020 plan, then CEO Joe Toohey found that the review revealed "A common thread ... [of] lack of intentionality [i.e.] whilst we frequently work with a range of groups in our programs, the formal commitments or mechanisms supporting these was lacking – including feedback and evaluation processes".

The resulting Equity Action Plan prioritised internships & mentoring, equitable programming and audience feedback as mechanisms for change. It called for change in access to RAV by people who identify as First Nations, D/deaf and disabled, culturally and/or linguistically diverse, being "of colour" and LGBTQI, while acknowledging intersectionality<sup>1</sup> and the limitations of categories.

The Plan was driven by a series of internal and external initiatives based on the following assumptions:

1. Drawing on expert advice will equip Regional Arts Victoria to develop and deliver this plan (and those that come later) to consider barriers to access from inception, and inform key decision-making procedures.
2. A cultural safety framework provides a basis for reviewing existing (and developing new) approaches.
3. Publishing the framework online provides potential employees or partners with information on how Regional Arts Victoria approaches diversity.
4. Building networks helps improve access to information about Regional Arts Victoria programs.
5. Regional Arts Victoria programs are improved through feedback.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.vic.gov.au/understanding-intersectionality>

6. Sharing our learning through this Plan will help other organisations as well as Regional Arts Victoria.

The Plan was included in RAV's application for 4-year funding in 2020, which identified resources for delivering the Plan that were not secured. A [progress report](#) was written in 2021, but staff turnover and the impact of COVID-19 pandemic combined in 2022 and 2023 to delay further implementation.

Nevertheless, the principles of the Plan have informed RAV'S culture and operations. While intentionality appears to have increased, monitoring and evaluation is inconsistent, and the Board and staff have indicated ambition to resume a more formal approach.

On 17 October 2023, the RAV staff attending a quarterly all staff meeting reviewed the full Plan. The Inclusive Practice and Cultural Safety sections below are the result of these discussions. A specific area of change to 2020's Plan is an emphasis on the importance of RAV's relationship with First Nations people. This will include establishing a First Nations peoples reference group.

The following pages are a 2024-2025 "refresh" of the 2020 Equity Action Plan. We will continue to refer to the original plan for definitions and to track change. However, we will work within our resources on our internal practices and allyship, before taking a "loud" leadership role outside the organisation.

## **2. THE PLAN**

The Plan addresses interrelated themes: Inclusive Practice and Cultural Safety.

### **A. Inclusive Practice**

RAV has adopted the Arts Access Victoria definition of "inclusive practice" as a flexible, creative process that ensures equal access to the arts for all marginalised groups as audiences, creatives and participants. We work to address access for regional audiences, creatives and participants experience and recognise the intersectional nature of marginalisation.

1. This Plan will form part of new staff and Board member inductions.
2. We will ensure RAV's programs and operations reflect a shared lens of inclusive practice.
  - a. *accessibility review of operations will be part of regular leadership (Fireside) meetings with team leaders to ensure inclusivity is a part of the way that each team's activities are implemented.*

- b. Regularly surveying members & other stakeholders seeking advice, critique and opportunities for improvement.*
3. We will continue to nurture relationships with relevant organisations such as Multicultural Arts Victoria, Arts Access Victoria, Diversity Arts Australia and First Nations creatives and organisations so that RAV is aware of current practice and can seek timely advice.
4. We are committed to accessible communication e.g.
  - a. Diverse imagery on website and social media posts.*
  - b. Following the RAV style guide which addresses accessible communications and see also <https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/>.*
5. We are committed to inclusive recruitment and acknowledge that this commitment requires a culturally safe work place eg:
  - a. Ensuring we communicate a workplace that is flexible about working hours, needs for breaks, parental responsibilities, cultural responsibilities and the role of life experience. We will consider how RAV can support people whose experience is relevant but whose ‘ancillary’ skills (eg facility with digital technology) need support in order to fulfill their roles and do their best work.*
  - b. Providing interview questions in advance, providing for applications via recorded video and paying for support eg Auslan interpreter for an interview*
6. RAV budgets will provide for access and inclusion.
7. RAV programs will describe access and inclusion commitments.
8. RAV processes and activities will address access and inclusion, paying attention to “meeting people where they are”: circumstances differ between individuals, regions and activities:
  - a. Diversity on grant or EOI assessment panels to ensure applications by people who might be perceived as marginalised are assessed by people with relevant expertise/life experience.*
  - b. Touring, Creative Learning & special initiatives include diverse creatives and appropriate support structures. These programs will prioritise mentorships and capacity building and community engagement.*
  - c. Regional Managers will purposefully walk alongside creatives from diverse backgrounds.*

- d. *We will use our relationships eg with VAPAC to ensure Showcase and other collaborations are inclusive and safe.*
- e. *Training and professional development features accessibility and inclusion practices*

9. RAV will establish a First Nations Reference Group.

10. RAV will annually seek external, expert review of its Equity Plan initiatives.

## **B. Cultural Safety**

At RAV, Cultural Safety is inspired by the publications of Dr Ruth Desouza<sup>2</sup> who refers to work by the Nursing Council of New Zealand (NCNZ), which used “Cultural Safety” to describe an ethical framework and an outcome, in which:

- We each reflect on our cultural identity and recognise the impact that our personal culture has on our professional practice.
- ‘Culture’ includes age or generation; gender; sexual orientation; occupation and socioeconomic status; ethnic origin or migrant experience; religious or spiritual belief; and dis/ability.
- Unsafe cultural practice comprises any action which diminishes, demeans or disempowers the cultural identity and wellbeing of an individual.

The approach above is used to ensure that we do not impose our own values and beliefs in ways that result in a loss of power for others. Cultural safety helps us draw attention to and combat the effects of dominant culture bias in our institutions and identify how this impacts the diversity of the arts and cultural sector.

### **Our way of working on cultural safety:**

1. Remembering **we cannot declare ourselves culturally safe**. Instead, *our work is identified as culturally safe or unsafe by the people we work with*. We won't wait for someone to lead us towards cultural safety. We will take responsibility and do the work ourselves.
  - a. *Recognise the importance of relationships to learn about others' safety eg in regional communities*

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.artshub.com.au/news/features/taking-action-for-cultural-safety-260592-2367674/>

2. **Understanding and knowing our biases** through self-education and self-analysis.
  - a. *One-on-one discussion and colleague feedback in context of staff reviews and meetings.*
  - b. *Standing item and discussion in leadership and team meetings.*
  
3. **Reading and research.** There are plenty of books, blogs, articles and websites on cultural safety and related areas that invite us to reflect on our biases and worldviews as well as the ways power and control operate. These include: critical whiteness, racial literacy, queer theory, cultural democracy, ableism, intersectionality, decolonisation and feminism.
  - a. *Sharing articles, books etc in Teams “interesting reads etc”*
  
4. Seeking to **expand our appreciation and respect** for people whose experience and knowledge differ from our own.
  
5. **Self-evaluation and invitations for peer-evaluation** of our activities, projects and practice, asking questions about cultural safety then adjusting future practice in response.
  - a. *Questions in OHS surveys*
  - b. *Follow ups with job applicants*
  - c. *Questions in touring artist or project participant surveys and evaluations*
  
6. **Finding or developing a community of practice.**
  - a. *Ongoing presence in Fair Play – report back by those attending*
  - b. *Take up invitation from Arts Access Victoria to participate in their monthly meetings - report back by those attending*
  
7. **Committing to cultural safety in procedures and processes** such as inductions, meeting formats, role hand-overs .
  - a. *Availability for individual calls and meetings which might be in person as well as online group meetings*
  
8. Examining and challenging the way RAV’s structure and culture is communicated (see also Accessible Communications above).
  - a. *Publishing this Plan and short versions of policies for potential job applicants and partners to assess whether they want to work or partner with RAV.*
  - b. *Using images or project information appropriately, so we don’t look like we are doing more than we are really doing.*
  - c. *Being aware of virtue signalling.*

9. Leading, stewarding and/or supporting RAV's journey towards being a culturally safe place.

We acknowledge that working towards cultural safety in creative practice is a life-long commitment.



### **3. MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

#### **Inclusive Practice: quantitative data**

1. Each team at RAV will gather quantitative data on applicants, appointments, participants and activities to the extent that data is available.

Example: touring

- No of tours
- No of creatives identifying in a category about which we collect data
- No of audience members identifying in a category about which we collect data
- No of non-performance activities eg workshops, meet and greets
- No of survey respondents identifying in a category about which we collect data

Example: recruitment

- No of applicants
- No of applicants identifying in a category about which we collect data
- No and % of staff who identify in a category about which we collect data

2. Completion of commitments

#### **Inclusive Practice: qualitative data**


1. Types of access & responses to the initiatives gathered via participant surveys or one-on-one conversations or emails.

#### **Cultural Safety: qualitative data**

1. Staff survey featuring likert scale questions seeking responses to their sense of cultural safety (eg not discriminated against, feel respected, identity is not denied) and also seeking information about self-awareness and cultural sensitivity across the organisation.
2. Stakeholder survey seeking information about perceptions of the organisation

This information will be:

- reviewed by all staff who will identify next steps
- be reported to the RAV Board

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