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Disability and Screen Work in Australia

Report for Industry

Prepared by Dr. Radha O'Meara, Dr. Laura Dunstan,
Anna Debinski and Catherine Ryan

Supported by Melbourne Disability Institute and A2K Media

A2K ► Media



Acknowledgements

We pay respects to the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Boon Wurrung Peoples of the Kulin Alliance as Traditional Owners of the lands on which researchers conducted this work. We particularly thank First Nations people who shared their experiences with us. In the course of this research, we communicated with hundreds of people around Australia, living on the lands of various First Nations Peoples. We pay respects to First Nations Peoples and Elders as custodians of their lands, waters, skies, communities, stories and cultures. Sovereignty was never ceded.

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Research Team

Dr. Radha O'Meara, Chief Investigator; Dr Laura Dunstan, Survey and Data Specialist; Phoebe Neilson, Training and Development Manager, A2K Media; Anna Debinski, Research Assistant; Catherine Ryan, Research Assistant.

Images

Photos courtesy of ABC News Breakfast and A2K Media (Cover), Tales from The Crips and A2K Media (p10), Renata Dominik, Latecomers and SBS (p4), Nas Campanella and ABC News (p12) and C31 and Attitude Foundation as part of their Emerging Voices initiative (p22-23,p28).

Cover image shows Ade Djajamihardja, an Asian Australian man using a wheelchair, who speaks directly to camera. He's in a lounge room surrounded by lights, reflectors and microphones.

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This includes a Microsoft Word document which has been optimised for screen readers and an Easy Read summary.

<https://disability.unimelb.edu.au/home/projects/community-based-research-program/disability-justice-lens>

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Image description: Cast and crew work on a jetty, shooting Latecomers for SBS. In the foreground, three crew members hold a microphone and camera, while focused on the cast. In the background, the one cast member pushes another in a wheelchair.



“Not only do people deserve to see themselves shown authentically on TV, they deserve to participate in the production and have their voices heard and seen.

- Disabled person in finance and funding, age ~50s, man

Introduction

Disability is a key vector of inequality in Australian society. The screen industry has the potential to create meaningful change, in our workplaces and working practices, for our colleagues and our audiences. We need to pay more attention to disability and take more action to include disabled people in our industry.

Experience of disability is widespread in Australian society. Nearly 1 in 5 people live with disability.^[1] Disability should be commonly discussed and accommodated within the screen industry. Without efforts to create this change, the screen industry will continue to drain talent and entrench disadvantage.

Disabled people working in the screen industry have diverse impairments, conditions, and **access requirements**^{*}. Despite this diversity, many disabled workers share common experiences of stigma, exclusion and discrimination. This is because **ableism** is built into the structures of our society and our industry, from how we talk about disability every day to how we design schedules.

Disabled people experience a more precarious, lower paid, and less powerful position in the screen industry than their non-disabled counterparts. Disabled screen workers routinely experience prejudice.

These experiences suggest structural problems across the screen industry and its culture. They reflect a lack of understanding of disability and a reliance on negative **stereotypes** of disabled workers. Interviewees commonly noted that they experienced more diverse and inclusive work cultures in other industries.

Overwhelmingly, survey respondents called for greater awareness and understanding. Attitudes and inflexibility were repeatedly identified as key barriers. This means that the first steps towards change should be focused on people and everyday practices. Disability equity, inclusion and **accessibility** training tailored to the screen industry can make a significant impact.

Consultation, innovation and funding can transform industrial structures to create a more inclusive and sustainable industry for all screen workers. We must normalise talking about and providing access requirements to support disabled workers.

The findings of this research reflect the need to build greater understanding, transparency and accountability in order to fully include disabled workers in the Australian screen industry.

^{*} **Note:** Throughout this report, words in bold are linked to a glossary on pages 46-47, where these terms are explained.

Background

Screen stories and imagery shape how we understand people and culture. Nearly 1 in 5 people in Australia live with disability,[1] so it is important that disabled people are represented on our screens and contribute to our screen culture. Audiences want to see people and characters that represent us on screen, and industry could reap the benefits of a wider talent pool.

Diversity, equity and **inclusion** are increasingly becoming high priorities for screen audiences and industry leaders.[2] Evidence demonstrates that workplace diversity and **accessibility** increase creativity and productivity.[3]

This research uses the definition of disability provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), which defines disability as: ‘any limitation, restriction or impairment which restricts everyday activities and has lasted, or is likely to last, for at least six months.’[5] Disability may be physical, mental, cognitive, intellectual, developmental, sensory, acquired or temporary, chronic illness, condition or injury, and can be visible or **invisible**. This includes experiences of mental ill-health. We also include **lived experiences of neurodivergent**, Autistic, **Deaf**, **deaf** and **hard of hearing** people. Prevalence of disability increases with age, so an Australian born in 2018 can expect to spend 17 years living with a disability.[1]

We acknowledge that each person’s experience of disability is unique and involves personal identity and an intersectional experience. We use ‘**identity-first**’ language (i.e., ‘disabled workers’ rather than ‘workers with disability’), because it is more accepted in the Australian disability arts community. We recognise that individuals identify in their own ways, so some of the quotes from research participants featured in this report use different language.

Disabled people are marginalised in employment in many ways.[4] Disabled people are less likely to participate in the labour force, less likely to be employed, and less likely to receive a high level of personal income than non-disabled people in Australia.[5] The employment and income of

disabled workers have been disproportionately impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.[6] Taken together, these conditions paint a grim picture of current economic and social participation by disabled workers.

Australian employers are legally required to provide **reasonable adjustments** for disabled workers under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992.[7] Government programs such as JobAccess fund equipment and support services for the employment of disabled workers, but do not appear to be well known or widely used in the screen industry. The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) supports Australians living with permanent and significant disability. It has some provisions to fund supports for participants in employment, such as job customisation, a career coach or a support worker.[8]

Australian workers are legally protected against discrimination based on disability.[7] Workplace discrimination against disabled people can take the form of physical inaccessibility, and it commonly arises through the attitudes of employers and colleagues.[7] Disabled workers may also be marginalised in multiple ways. Disabled workers who are also women, non-white or LGBTQIA+ people are more likely to experience discrimination and harassment in the workplace, in comparison with non-disabled women, non-white or LGBTQIA+ people.[9]

The Australian screen industry is defined as roles that support, create, circulate and deliver content for film, television and web video, including development, production, post-production, distribution, exhibition, broadcasting and streaming. About 200,000 people were involved in TV, film production and post-production, and cinema and video distribution in 2007.[10] Published data on the Australian screen industry often concentrates on productions and money, rather than employment.[11]

Work in the screen industry is characterised by high proportions of casual employment or freelance engagement, project-based

arrangements, and unpaid labour.[10] Studies of employment in the cultural and creative industries in the United Kingdom record high rates of inequity and discrimination.[12] These conditions contribute to the lack of workforce participation and inclusion for disabled people.

This study focuses primarily on employment participation and **inclusion** for disabled people, including paid and unpaid work. Australian screen industry diversity and inclusion reports have identified disability as a key area lacking baseline data.[13]

Research on disability and media commonly focuses on screen representation.[14] For example, Screen Australia’s ‘Seeing Ourselves’ report found that 90% of TV dramas had no main characters with disability.[15] Some research and activism concentrate on accessibility for media audiences and social media users.[16] Disability representation, media accessibility and the employment of disabled people in the screen industry are closely linked.

In general, diversity initiatives in the Australian screen industry tend to focus more on increasing gender and ethnic diversity, rather than on disability. There are currently a range of diversity and inclusion initiatives offered by industry associations, organisations, and government screen agencies, which aim to support screen workers from a variety of marginalised groups.

In Australia’s screen landscape, initiatives dedicated to disability inclusion and accessibility remain rare and sporadic. Diversity and inclusion initiatives must make disability a higher priority, and the wider screen industry needs to pay more attention to disability

“ We deserve empowerment and to sit at the table too. Even if we need a ramp to get to the table or subtitles to understand.

- Disabled Performer, age ~30s

inclusion and accessibility. The screen industry may learn from strategies and approaches that have addressed disability inclusion and accessibility in the arts more broadly.[17]

Until now, there has been little data about disabled workers in the Australian screen industry. Professor Katie Ellis (Curtin University) analysed a broad range of disability media work and identified that a key challenge faced by disabled media workers is **stereotypes** of fear, pity and inspiration. Ellis further found that, despite significant innovation in media technologies and industries since the 1990s, there had been little change in attitudes towards disabled media workers.[18]

A recent report on professionals in Australian camera departments found only 8% of workers are disabled, and bullying, harassment and discrimination are widespread.[19] A survey of parents and carers in the Australian screen industry identified some areas of concern that overlap with disability and accessibility issues, such as difficulty with long hours and inflexible schedules.[20]

The Screen Diversity and Inclusion Network (SDIN) has produced the best data to indicate the incidence of disabled people working in the Australian screen industry. The SDIN’s ‘Everyone Project’ gives preliminary data on thousands of cast and crew roles involved in dozens of film and TV productions in 2021-22, finding that disabled people worked in 6.4% of all roles, including 5.3% of crew roles and 8.9% of on screen roles. Most significantly, this shows that disabled people were “vastly under-represented compared to the population benchmark.”[21]

Aims and methods

This was a mixed-methods research project. Firstly, we conducted a nation-wide survey of disabled and non-disabled people involved in the screen industry – the first of its kind in Australia. It was designed to gauge the extent of current labour force participation by and **inclusion** of disabled people in the Australian screen industry. Secondly, we conducted ten in-depth interviews with people working in the screen industry. These findings will inform industry initiatives to work towards greater disability equity and inclusion.

This research project was led by disabled people. Three of the four researchers on this project have **lived experience of disability**. This research was funded by A2K Media, Melbourne Disability Institute and the University of Melbourne. This research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of The University of Melbourne (Disability Justice Lens, ID number 22611).

The survey was designed by researchers at the University of Melbourne in consultation with partners A2K Media and Melbourne Disability Institute. A2K Media is a Melbourne-based production company that prioritises **disability pride** in their purpose, identity and activity. A2K Media further consulted with an advisory group made up of disabled and non-disabled people in the Australian screen industry. Survey design was informed by national surveys focused on Australian life and attitudes, as well as surveys on diversity and inclusion in the Australian screen industry, most notably 'Honey, I Hid the Kids!' on the experiences of parents and carers. [20]

In this survey, we relied on participants to identify themselves as disabled. Self-identification is a common way that disability status is captured within Australian surveys.[22] It also empowers participants to decide when or if they choose to share their disability status,

acknowledging that sometimes this can be difficult or uncomfortable for individuals.

We gathered information about various experiences of disability, impairments, or conditions, based on categories used by the National Disability Services.[23] We also sought feedback from the disability community to ensure that these categories reflected the ways that disability is experienced by disabled people.

Notice of the survey, containing a survey link and phone option, was promoted widely by researchers, Melbourne Disability Institute, A2K Media and Media Mentors. Researchers directly emailed numerous screen organisations, guilds, broadcasters and production companies asking them to circulate the survey notice and link. Further, researchers posted the survey notice in several relevant social media groups. The survey was also publicly promoted in articles on industry news websites such as Screen News, if.com.au and Screen Hub.[24]

Researchers designed the survey for people involved in the Australian screen industry, including paid and unpaid work. To make the survey more accessible, respondents could choose to take it online or by phone (using computer-assisted telephone interviewing). Respondents remained unidentifiable and anonymous. The online survey was delivered via Qualtrics software and hosted on the University of Melbourne website. Questions were grouped into four key areas: demography, employment information, experiences of disability, and attitudes towards disability. The survey was open from 22 February to 21 March 2022. We received a total of 518 responses: 514 online and 4 by phone. Survey data was used to create descriptive and comparative statistics, and free form responses were analysed thematically.[25]

518 Survey Respondents



50% Half of respondents are disabled



77%

of disabled people reported negative impacts on their work in the screen industry

< \$800.00 58% of disabled workers in the screen industry earn less than \$800 per week

Disabled workers suggest these improvements would have the greatest impact:



Better understanding by employers of the impacts of disability



Easier to arrange adjustments and accommodations in workplaces



Targeted funding for disabled creatives

Quick Facts

Researchers also conducted ten in-depth interviews with people working in the Australian screen industry to obtain more detailed insights about experiences and attitudes, which might not be captured well in a survey. Interviewees worked in various roles in the screen industry including as producers, directors, writers and crew. Some interviewees worked in professional guilds and government screen agencies. Five interviewees self-identified as disabled and five self-identified as non-disabled. Five interviewees identified as women, four interviewees identified as men and one interviewee identified as a genderfluid person. Four interviewees are still establishing their careers and six are already established in their careers in the screen industry.

Interviews of approximately one hour each were conducted by researchers via online video in the period March to October 2022. All data from interviews was de-identified, then analysed thematically. Significant efforts were made to ensure interviewee identities remained anonymous, based on concern expressed by potential interviewees that speaking out on disability issues could be a risk to their reputation and career.

The more we know about disability in the Australian screen industry, the more effectively we can identify and address problems. We hope this research will inform approaches to improving disabled people's experiences telling Australian stories.



Image description: Senator Jordan Steele-John uses a wheelchair on a footpath. He reaches his hands up and looks up towards a camera. In front of him on the footpath, a camerawoman stands on a blue ladder and points her camera down at Steele-John. A man holds the ladder steady and someone swings a boom microphone.

Key findings

1. Disabled people contribute significantly to the industry across a wide variety of roles and on a wide range of content
2. Contributions by disabled people to the Australian screen industry should be better recognised and supported
3. The diversity of disabled people should be recognised in the screen industry
4. Disabled people should be recognised in the screen industry as experts on their own capabilities and **access requirements**
5. Disability can make our screen work better
6. Disabled people enhance the screen industry
7. Disabled people experience a more precarious, lower paid, and less powerful position in the screen industry than their non-disabled counterparts
8. Disabled workers routinely face prejudice in the screen industry
9. Disabled and non-disabled screen workers have very different perceptions of how disabled people are treated
10. Disabled people find talking about their disability status at work is often dangerous and stressful
11. Disabled screen workers want employers to talk about accessibility
12. Disabled workers find it difficult to access the screen industry
13. Some disabled people are excluded from the screen industry
14. The screen industry should be more accessible for everyone
15. Disabled people find the screen industry particularly inflexible
16. The screen industry needs to be more flexible
17. The screen industry needs widespread change


Findings

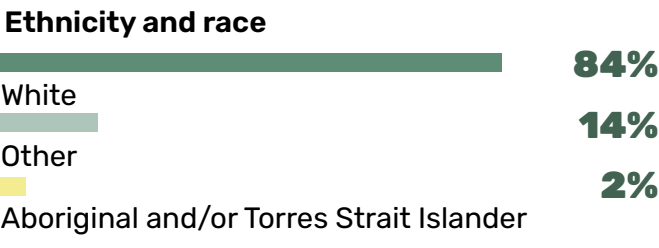
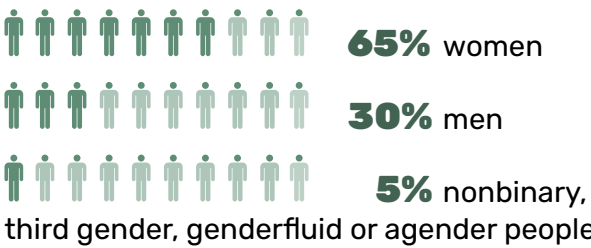
A snapshot of the Australian screen industry

Who participated in this research?

The number and diversity of survey respondents means that this data gives a good picture of the Australian screen industry.

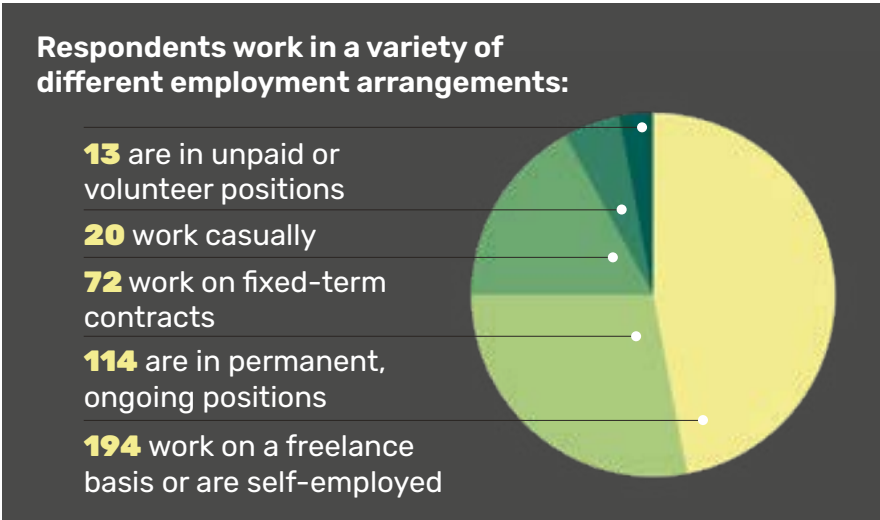
We received 518 responses to the survey. We also conducted **ten in-depth interviews** with people currently working in the Australian screen industry.

 Respondents **range in age from 16 to 77**, with an **average age of 40**.



Throughout this report, percentages for the whole sample are based on 518 respondents. However, comparisons are made between groups of respondents who self-identify as disabled (257) and non-disabled (252). Percentages reported in comparing these two groups are based on the total number of people who self-identify as disabled or non-disabled (509).

Note: See Appendices A and B



Our industry

The survey was addressed to people who work in the Australian screen industry, or who have previously worked in the Australian screen industry. We received responses from people in a variety of roles and working on a variety of screen content. We received more responses from people working in screen production (including pre- and post-production) and fewer from people working in distribution and exhibition.

Respondents work on a large variety of screen content. The most common types are:

- Television (broadcast, subscription and streaming)
- Feature film
- Short film, music video or experimental
- Documentary
- Web video, including web series

Many respondents work on other kinds of screen content including advertising, social media, corporate video and gaming.

Respondents most commonly work as:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| • Producer (20%) | • Production Office Crew (4%) |
| • Crew on Set (12%) | • Development (4%) |
| • Writer (10%) | • 25% of respondents work in other roles or areas including accounts, finance, marketing and education. |
| • Post-Production Crew (9%) | |
| • Performer (9%) | |
| • Director (7%) | |

Key Finding #1: Disabled people contribute significantly to the industry across a wide variety of roles and on a wide range of content

Half of the survey respondents self-identify as disabled. That is, 50% of respondents say they have lived experience of disability, impairment, chronic illness or long-term condition, or are **Deaf**. A further 49% identify as non-disabled and 1% prefer not to say.

Disabled people work in a variety of roles, including Producer, Crew on Set, Writer, Post-Production Crew, Performer, and Director. Disabled people are slightly more likely than non-disabled people to work in roles such as Producer, Writer and Performer, and slightly less likely to work in crew roles than non-disabled people.

Disabled people work on a variety of screen content, including Television, Feature film, Short film, music video and experimental film, Documentary, and Web video. Disabled people work on a similar variety of screen content to non-disabled people.

Although many disabled people work in the screen industry, they frequently lack social inclusion. Their position in the industry often feels precarious, conditional and partial. Many disabled people say they would like their whole selves and their whole identities to be accepted and valued by the people they work with.

Key Finding #2 Contributions by disabled people to the Australian screen industry should be better recognised and supported

Many disabled people in the screen industry feel that their identities and contributions are often invisible. This means that the enormous diversity and value of contributions by disabled screen workers is frequently overlooked, minimised or pigeonholed. Disabled screen workers would like to see their contributions to the industry recognised, supported and celebrated.

Disabled screen workers would like to see more disabled people self-identify in the workplace and more disabled people self-identify on screen. In particular, disabled workers would like to see self-identified disabled role models in the industry, who can show what a successful screen career looks like as a disabled person. Many disabled people report that disabled role models could help them to shape their own aspirations and careers. This could also be useful to show non-disabled people what is possible.

Part of the challenge is creating a stronger culture within the screen industry, where more people feel comfortable to publicly identify as disabled. Many disabled people feel that the stigma against disability is currently too great and identifying as disabled would cause them to lose work.

“

We are so creative and fantastic to work with – but we just need to be given the chance to shine.

- Disabled Producer,
age ~30s, woman

What you need to know

What is disability?

Within the disability community, there are many different perspectives on what ‘disability’ means. We use the term ‘disabled’ to describe the effect of discrimination and barriers created by society. This does not identify disability as an impairment or a ‘deficit’ of the individual. Instead, it highlights the attitudinal, physical and systemic barriers maintained in our society that prevent full and equal participation. It also reminds all people of our responsibility to remove these barriers.

Disability also represents the experience of impairments, which may be physical, mental, cognitive, intellectual, developmental, or sensory, as well as any chronic illness, injury or condition, which may be visible or invisible. Impairments may be temporary, acquired or permanent, and a person’s experience of them can vary over time. We also include lived experiences of **neurodivergent**, Autistic, **Deaf**, **deaf** and **hard of hearing** people.

We recognise that each person’s experience of disability is unique and involves a personal and intersectional experience. We acknowledge each individual’s right to identify with or without disability, and the choice to use the labels which feel most appropriate, both personally and politically. For many disabled people, disability is an enriching cultural identity, with its own history, community, and political and artistic movements. This definition aligns with the **Social Model of Disability** and refers to the Human Rights and **Disability Justice** movements.

Many people in the screen industry have lived experience of disability that is not immediately obvious to other people. This is sometimes known as ‘**invisible**’ disability. This is often overlooked, and requires the individual to share their disability status in order to have their experience recognised by others. This is consistent with lived experiences of disability across the wider Australian population. Even if you aren’t aware of your colleagues’ disability status, you have probably worked with (other) disabled people in the screen industry.

Disability intersects with other identities

Disability status intersects with other dimensions of identity, most notably sexuality, ethnicity, gender, and class. These intersecting identities cannot be separated out from one another. They work together to inform disabled people’s experiences of the world, including their experiences of prejudice and inequity in the screen industry. Everybody lives with multiple, intersecting social identities, but not all identities are treated in the same way in our society. The complexity of people’s identities can provide unique perspectives that inform the screen stories we create.

Particular prejudices are often directed towards people who identify with multiple groups that are marginalized in society. For example, some disabled women told us that stereotypes of disabled people as weak and of women as weak compound to create a particular challenge for them, especially in an industry that often rewards strength. Some Autistic people find that their colleagues commonly understand Autism through a masculine stereotype that doesn’t fit their own experiences of gender and Autism.

Some social disadvantages are more likely to occur together, often without any causal connection. For example, more Indigenous Australians are also **Deaf, deaf or hard of hearing** than non-Indigenous Australians.[26] Autistic people are more likely to be transgender, nonbinary, third gender, genderfluid or agender, compared to neurotypical people.[27] Fully recognising the diversity of people’s experiences and identities can help us to represent our community more authentically in the workplace and on screen.

Key Finding #3 The diversity of disabled people should be recognised in the screen industry

Disabled people are a diverse group with diverse experiences. Disabled individuals can have very different experiences of the world and of working. For example, a **Deaf** producer who requires a Auslan interpreter experiences working on set differently from a disabled director who requires a shorter working day or an Autistic crew member who requires sensory accommodations.

Disabled people working in the screen industry have diverse impairments, conditions, and access requirements. Despite this diversity, many disabled workers share common experiences of discrimination, because ableism is built into the structures of our society and our industry. Provision of access requirements supports a disabled person to participate fully in their community and their workplace. Access requirements should be discussed and provided to suit each individual, not based on groups, categories or diagnoses.

Many disabled workers report that their colleagues rely on damaging stereotypes about disability, which shows a lack of understanding of their lived experience of disability.

The most common categories describing lived experience of impairments (as self-identified by disabled respondents) are:

- Chronic illness or condition
- Psychological or **psychosocial** (including depression and anxiety)
- **Neurodiverse** or Autistic
- Physically impaired
- **Deaf, deaf or hard of hearing**
- Neurological (including cognitive impairment, Epilepsy or Alzheimer’s disease)
- Intellectual or learning differences
- Blind, low vision or vision impaired
- Acquired Brain Injury

Disabled workers often feel that employers have lower expectations of them because of their disability status, and they are perceived as lazy or incapable. These attitudes create inequity, which prevents disabled people from working well and teams from collaborating effectively.

For research purposes, individuals’ disability status is often grouped into categories to help define the accessibility challenges faced by people sharing similar lived experiences – although it is important to recognise that every person’s experience of disability is unique. Disabled people from every known category are already working in the Australian screen industry.

Although these categories can show us that disabled people in the screen industry describe their experience of impairments in a variety of ways, they also reduce the full spectrum of lived experience of disability into artificial groups. These categories should be seen as indicative of a wider range of experiences and identities.

See Appendix C

“Disability’ doesn’t just mean wheelchairs and guide dogs. The vast majority of disability and chronic illness is invisible, which is still largely unacknowledged.

- Disabled Producer, age ~40s, Non-binary person

Key Finding #4 Disabled people should be recognised in the screen industry as experts on their own capabilities and access requirements

Disabled people want to speak for their own experiences. They should be trusted as the best source of knowledge about their own experiences.

Disabled survey respondents report that employers sometimes do not trust them to know their own access requirements, experiences and capabilities. Disabled people often find this attitude frustrating and insulting.

It is important to listen to disabled people and treat them as experts on their own experiences and capabilities. Even if you have a similar impairment or lived experience of disability as another person, or know another person with a similar lived experience, each person’s preferences are unique and should be prioritised.

Employers and colleagues should acknowledge disabled people as experts on their own access requirements. You don’t need to know any medical details about your colleagues – you just need to be open to what they tell you about their skills, professional aspirations, and access requirements. Disabled people are also entitled to privacy and they should not be expected to share personal details of their experience, especially in a work setting.

When creating stories about disabled people and characters, it is important to centre disabled people in the creative team, and listen to them. Disabled writers, producers, directors, performers, cinematographers, editors and musicians are the experts required to tell stories about disabled people and characters. Disabled workers bring a wealth of experiences, perspectives and insights that add richness and authenticity to screen imagery and narratives. Disabled people and characters are currently underrepresented on Australian screens – there should be more realistic disabled characters and stories of disability.[13]

Appreciating disabled people as experts in disability culture, pride, identity, and appropriate representation is crucial to shaping strategic change in the screen industry. Industry bodies, including companies, guilds and government agencies, must establish formal processes for routine consultation with disabled people in order to appropriately inform their priorities, decisions and actions.

See also Key Findings #10 and #11 on talking about disability.

“ We need authenticity; we need the people who have actually experienced things to tell their own stories.

- Non-disabled Producer,
age ~ 50s Woman

Disabled people improve the screen industry

Key Finding #5 Disability can make our screen work better

Disabled respondents and interviewees frequently report that their disability status impacts their work in positive ways, despite the industry's inaccessibility. Many respondents remark that the screen industry benefits from the particular strengths and skills that they have because of their disability status, rather than despite it.

Disability gain is an idea that challenges the ableist understanding of disability as a loss, instead framing it as a source of all kinds of strengths. Many disabled survey respondents explain that their experience of navigating inaccessible environments has made them more creative and better problem solvers. **Neurodivergent** respondents suggest that because they look at the world differently, they can offer screen projects a different creative perspective and more effective ways of doing things.

Films, television shows, festivals and screen experiences benefit from the unique contributions of disabled people. Disabled workers frequently suggest that their involvement is essential for creating compelling and authentic screen storytelling, which Australian and international audiences are craving. Disabled screen workers make the stories we tell more diverse and more representative of our community.

Key Finding #6 Disabled people enhance the screen industry

Disabled people are adept creative workers, who provide unique perspectives and skills. These qualities enhance the work culture of the screen industry.

Research shows that increasing diversity within teams of people working together boosts creativity and productivity.[3] Many survey respondents explain that being disabled by their social environment gives them empathy for others, a crucial skill for working collaboratively. The screen industry would benefit from providing safe environments for diverse skills, insights and approaches.

The benefits of including disabled workers outweigh any potential costs. The screen industry should recognise that it is often cheap and easy to provide the **accommodations** that allow disabled people to participate in screen workplaces. The costs of exclusion are huge in terms of potential commercial, legal, creative and social consequences.

Disabled respondents say that their disability status impacts their screen work:

6%

Positively

36%

Negatively

41%

Both positively and negatively

17%

Not at all

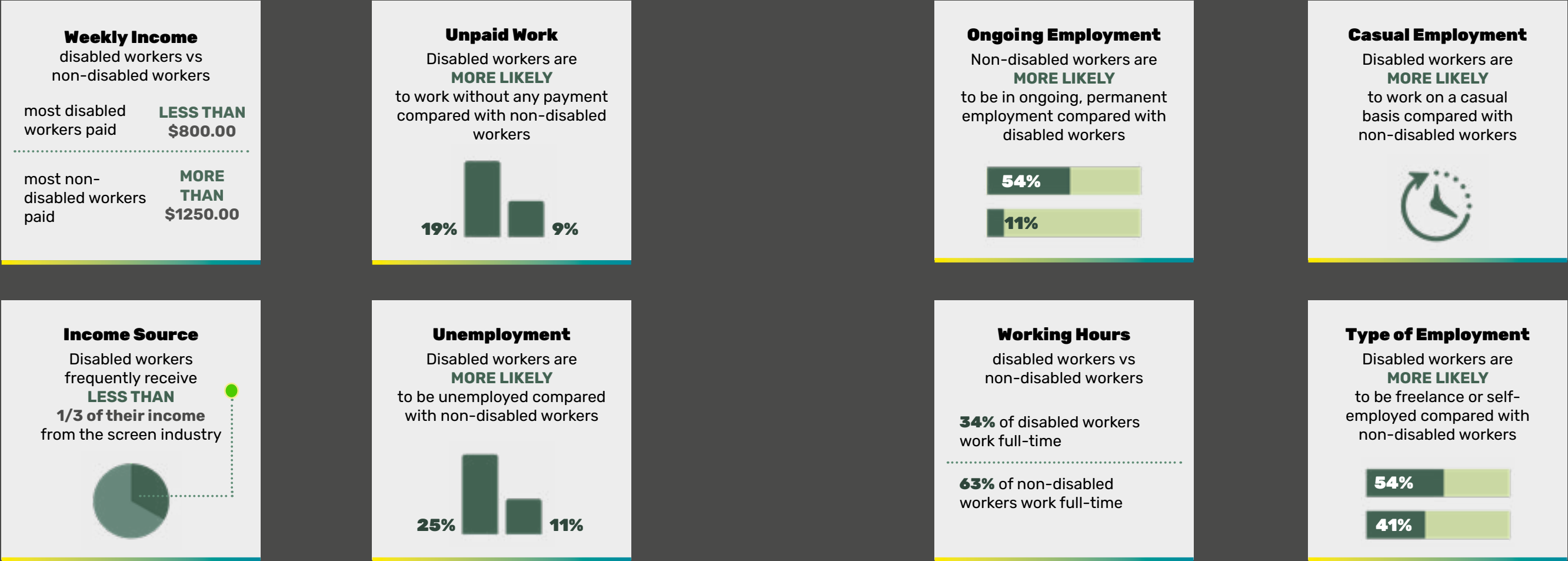
“ We're bringing a perspective to the table that opens your production up to maybe new audiences; different ways of creative problem solving, different ways of working.

- Disabled Producer and Editor,
age ~30s, woman

Key Finding #7 Disabled people experience a more precarious, lower paid, and less powerful position in the screen industry than their non-disabled counterparts

Disabled people in the Australian screen industry consistently experience worse working conditions than non-disabled people. This demonstrates systemic discrimination against disabled workers.

See Appendix D



“ That idea of who is the best person for the job... there are still some pretty outmoded ideas about what that person looks like and how they operate in the world.

- Disabled Writer, age ~30s
Genderfluid person

“ People just see a disability. They don't see potential, or they don't see the talent that is already there.

- Non-disabled person in Finance and Funding, age ~60, man



Image description: On one side of a TV studio, a white man with a moustache using a wheelchair interviews a white man using a wheelchair and a white, hard of hearing woman. The other side of the studio is a crowded mess including a disabled man operating a TV camera, cameras, lights and cables.

Key Finding #8 Disabled workers routinely face prejudice in the screen industry

A concerning number of disabled people routinely encounter stigma, stereotyping, exclusion, bullying and harassment in their work in the Australian screen industry. Disabled workers commonly identify people's attitudes as the underlying cause of many of the barriers they come up against. Disabled screen workers report that they encounter prejudice in all kinds of settings, from networking events and job interviews, to working in offices or on sets.

Disabled screen workers describe being made to feel unwelcome and unsafe at work, and sometimes even being physically attacked. It is significant and disturbing that four survey respondents report having been physically attacked at work in the last year, because of their disability.

Social exclusion is a common experience for disabled people, and a common form of discrimination. Disabled people report that they frequently encounter unpleasant comments – from remarks about their presumed capacities to personal insults and offensive jokes.

Disabled screen workers consistently draw attention to widespread negative **stereotypes** and stigma against disabled workers in the screen industry. Disabled workers are sometimes made to feel like the **'token'** diversity hire, where the workplace avoids genuine commitment to **inclusion** and **accessibility**.

Disabled respondents share experiences of employers expressing impatience at, and concern for the financial burden of, requests for simple **accommodations**. These experiences reveal a lack of understanding of the different ways disabled people work and the legal obligations of employers.

'Unpleasant experiences' include unpleasant comments, unfair treatment, exclusion, bullying and harassment.

Most disabled respondents have not had any unpleasant experiences directly related to their disability status in the past year (53%).

38% of disabled respondents had at least one unpleasant experience directly related to their disability status in the last year.

Based on the responses of people who report unpleasant experiences at work due to their disability status, the most common types are:

- adjustments or accommodations not supplied (49%)
- inaccessible environments and schedules (41%)
- exclusion from groups (38%)
- promotion, employment or selection of someone else over you (36%)
- been insulted, called names, or threatened (29%)
- felt you cannot go to, or be at work (29%)

Since this survey question focuses on experiences in the last year (2021), these

responses are shaped by working conditions during pandemic restrictions and lockdowns. Some disabled respondents indicate that they had fewer unpleasant experiences due to their disability status while working from home, while some respondents suggest that they had more unpleasant experiences.

Many disabled people do not feel safe reporting unpleasant experiences, even in an anonymous survey. Notably, when asked about unpleasant experiences related to disability status, 9% of disabled respondents chose 'Prefer not to say,' and a further 18 disabled respondents chose to skip this question entirely. We acknowledge that the question may also raise unpleasant feelings. We highlight these findings in the hope that a future Australian screen industry will be safer and more supportive for disabled workers.

See Appendix E.

The COVID-19 pandemic impacts disabled workers more severely

The Covid-19 pandemic impacts disabled screen workers more severely and in different ways compared to non-disabled screen workers.

- Disabled respondents were more likely to have lost work due to the pandemic (28%), compared to non-disabled respondents (19%).
- Non-disabled respondents were more likely to continue doing the same kind of work in a different way during the pandemic (41%), compared to disabled respondents (28%).

Most common pandemic impacts reported overall:

- I do the same kind of work, but in a different way (e.g., working from home) (34%).
- I have lost work or found it harder to find work (24%).
- My everyday work has become harder (19%).
- My work has not changed a lot (14%).

Disabled workers are more likely to be vulnerable to Coronavirus infection, experience more severe illness, and experience long-term consequences.

Although almost all of the public health restrictions have been wound back at this stage of the pandemic, disabled workers are keen to note that the pandemic is still having widespread and devastating impacts. This shapes the work options available to disabled people, many of whom will keep working remotely.

79%

of non-disabled workers overwhelmingly report that their colleagues are willing or very willing to work alongside disabled people

49%

of disabled workers report that their colleagues are willing or very willing to work alongside disabled people

47%

of respondents only sometimes disclose their disability status at work

24%

of respondents never disclosed their disability status at work

Key Finding #9 Disabled and non-disabled screen workers have very different perceptions of how disabled people are treated

There is a clear disjuncture between how disabled people experience the attitudes of their co-workers, and how non-disabled people perceive this. Disabled screen workers often notice reluctance from non-disabled colleagues to work with them. However, there is a significant lack of awareness of these experiences by non-disabled people in the screen industry.

Disabled survey respondents consistently call for greater awareness and understanding to shift attitudes towards disabled workers. In interviews, non-disabled workers are more optimistic about improvements being made in the industry, perhaps because they do not recognise the prevalence and degree of the attitudinal barriers that disabled workers describe.

Key Finding #10 Disabled people find talking about their disability status at work is often dangerous and stressful

Survey respondents and interviewees express serious concern about talking with employers and co-workers about disability.

Disabled people highlight talking about their disability status in the workplace as a particularly complex issue. Some people feel they are obliged to discuss their lived experience of disability because it is visible, its impact is obvious, or it is part of their professional reputation. Many people find that sharing information about their disability status at work leads to discrimination.

Disabled screen workers overwhelmingly emphasise the dangers of choosing to share their disability status. While acknowledging that sometimes disclosure is crucial for their own safety and wellbeing, many respondents explain that they have been mistreated after sharing their disability status.

“For me the number one barrier has probably been stigma – people assuming that it’s going to be more difficult to have you working on the production, or that you’re not capable enough to do the work that you are hired to do.”

– Disabled Producer, age ~40, woman

Talking about disability at work is a key challenge

Disabled respondents who cannot ‘choose’ whether to disclose and respondents with ‘invisible disability’ note similar experiences of discrimination in the workplace. They have lost work opportunities, been **stereotyped** as a ‘lazy’ employee, and been excluded from professional relationships with colleagues. They have had their personal information spread around the workplace without their consent. Disabled people express understandable reluctance to discuss disability with employers, because this has been met with negative and dangerous consequences.

Key Finding #11 Disabled screen workers want employers to talk about accessibility

Disabled workers note that they would prefer employers and contracting agents to initiate everyday conversations about **accessibility** with all employees and freelancers. Talking about disability and accessibility is a key opportunity for employers and contracting agents to show they value their workers and freelancers. It can help to build trust and partnership. It can be an important step towards

greater participation and increased morale. It must be followed up with action to support accessibility.

Despite the danger, screen workers find that sharing information about their disability status can be positive. It can open up lines of communication and allow full participation in some workplaces. Some respondents also feel a personal responsibility to highlight disability as a central part of their identity and make disclosure possible for future disabled screen workers.

Disabled workers highlight the energy that it takes to share disability, because preparing for the possibility of negative responses is stressful. Respondents report using a range of strategies for sharing their disability status and **access requirements**. Many people only share their disability status after being employed. Some respondents feel they need to ‘prove’ themselves as capable workers before sharing their disability status. Some downplay their disabled experience, only sharing the impact of certain symptoms or diagnoses with trusted colleagues. While these issues are complex, employers can take simple actions to make this less stressful and more straightforward.

Accessibility needs your attention

With a deeper and broader understanding of **accessibility**, the Australian screen industry could benefit from a much wider and richer pool of talent.

What is accessibility?

Accessibility is the practice of supporting people to participate fully in workplaces and communities. This involves creating environments, activities, ideas, communication, media, and technology that all people can fully and easily use, regardless of disability. Examples of accessibility measures include Large Print, Plain English, screen reader compatibility, and speak-to-text features on websites. Accessible public spaces and offices might have wide doors and hallways, plentiful seats, ramps, wheelchair accessible toilets, and braille signage. It is important for accessibility to be flexible and responsive to each disabled person's **access requirements**.

Australian employers are legally required to make **reasonable adjustments** for disabled workers, to support them to work in suitable ways. This applies to all employers, whether workers are paid or unpaid, casual or permanent. Governments provide support for employers to make reasonable adjustments through schemes such as JobAccess.

Key Finding # 12 Disabled workers find it difficult to access the screen industry

Many disabled screen workers explain that there is a lack of understanding about accessibility in the industry, even around physical access.

Production and post-production spaces commonly have limited physical access for staff or visitors. For example, it is common for workplaces to be located upstairs or to have no accessible toilets. People often meet with potential collaborators in spaces that are physically difficult to enter, or spaces that impede communication, such as busy cafés. Entry-level jobs in the screen industry often include manual labour, which is inaccessible for many disabled people.

Disabled respondents also note that networking events, conferences and festivals are often inaccessible. They can be noisy and may not have places to sit down, and online networking events often do not have captions. Disabled workers explain that they develop their own strategies for negotiating inaccessible workplaces, which takes advance planning. As a result of these added challenges, many disabled respondents describe feeling like a burden to their collaborators, employers and workplaces.

Key Finding # 13 Some disabled people are excluded from the screen industry

The pervasiveness of accessibility problems makes it impossible for some disabled people to break into the industry or build careers. It was difficult to capture responses from these disabled people in our research, given their exclusion from any form of entry into the industry. However, we saw some indications and inferred others. For example, non-disabled interviewees explain that their experience

“There have been issues around access that I don't think were taken care of correctly and the expectation was to work in unfair ways for me to overcome it.

Disabled Producer, age ~30s, man

working with known disabled people, people who share their disability status, or people who share access requirements has been extremely rare. Even some disabled interviewees state that they rarely work with other disabled people. This reflects the total inaccessibility of the current industry for some disabled people, particularly people who cannot avoid identifying as disabled and requesting access requirements.

Key Finding #14 The screen industry should be more accessible for everyone

The screen industry is inaccessible for many non-disabled workers, too. The long hours, inflexible schedules, tight deadlines, and high stress levels are accepted as norms of screen work, but they make many roles inaccessible for a variety of workers, including disabled people, parents and carers. Such conditions impede a sustainable work-life balance for all workers.

The industry needs to focus on **universal access**: greater flexibility in schedules and conditions would benefit all workers, disabled and non-disabled people alike. When employers initiate conversations with all workers about accessibility, they will find that accommodating flexibility can be straightforward and cost-effective. A wider acceptance of remote work would be useful for many disabled screen workers and would also benefit those living in regional and remote areas.

The poor working conditions in the screen industry can harm workers' health and wellbeing. Some workers in the screen industry

have endured experiences and sustained injuries in the course of their work which caused ongoing physical and psychological impairments or conditions. Very long working hours, which are common on many sets, can increase the risk of accident, injury and mental illness.

The recent 'Wider Lens' report on people working in Australian camera teams found that, "The work model in the film industry is destructive to workforce wellbeing and threatens sustainability and future growth." [16]

More accessible workplaces and working practices increase people's productivity. More compelling and more commercially successful screen content will be produced when the industry is made more accessible for all workers.



Image description: In a TV studio, a camera points at a host, Jason Clymo, a white man sitting casually in his wheelchair with one foot rested on the other knee.

Flexibility is crucial for an accessible screen industry

Key Finding # 15 Disabled people find the screen industry particularly inflexible

Disabled screen workers identify inflexibility as the underlying cause of many barriers to **accessibility**. Accommodating workers' **access requirements** inherently requires some flexibility, because each person's **accommodations** and **adjustments** are tailored according to their own preferences and needs. Most notably, rigidity about working processes and schedules hinders accessibility.

Many respondents find that their employers are inflexible when presented with access requirements such as working from home, using different technologies, or completing tasks in alternative ways. Rigidity about when and where to meet potential collaborators or hold networking events entrenches biased hiring patterns. Disabled respondents explain that because of the industry's inflexibility, they have lost jobs and their careers have stalled.

In particular, inflexibility around long and intense working hours excludes disabled people who live in **crip time**: those who might require rest breaks, time off for symptom management, or take longer to complete some tasks. On a larger scale, the industry does not account for the slower pace and career breaks that some people need to manage their experience of disability, leaving them without clear career pathways. Many disabled interviewees report that the image of a successful screen worker is someone who amasses a list of credits at breakneck speed, and any other kinds of experience are commonly viewed as unsuccessful.

In interviews, disabled screen workers note that disability **inclusion** and support is markedly better in their experiences working in other industries, including other creative industries. This observation came from people who have

worked in a wide range of other industries. "Other industries that I've been in, they're just flexible and understanding," reports a disabled crew member in her 30s. A recent survey reports a higher rate of disabled people working in the Australian publishing industry, when compared to the participation rate in the screen industry. [28]

Many respondents and interviewees view the screen industry as exceptional, with unique characteristics that make it unlike other industries. Many see the screen industry as particularly competitive, demanding and stressful. The industry's work culture sometimes prizes extreme conditions and frowns upon necessary supports such as sick leave. Employment structures and practices often lack mechanisms that are common in other industries, including workplace inductions and human resources staff. The nature of creative work can make people feel more personally involved and vulnerable. Some respondents and interviewees suggest that this exceptionalism is used as an excuse by screen workers for the screen industry's inflexibility and inaccessibility.

Key Finding #16 The screen industry needs to be more flexible

Flexibility is central to making the screen industry more accessible. Several interviewees and respondents note that the creative people in the screen industry should channel their creativity towards the ways they think about work processes.

Importantly, flexibility in scheduling and arrangements is needed to account for the variety of ways disabled people work. More flexible working hours and hiring practices would allow more disabled workers to gain experience and pursue careers in the industry.

In interviews, screen workers mentioned that some parts of the industry are comparatively more flexible, and they also afford relatively greater **accessibility**. For example, documentary filmmaking is seen as more flexible than scripted film and television production. Documentary crews must be adaptable in order to record their subjects in their everyday or extraordinary activities. The attitude and organisation of documentary crews is marked by a willingness to respond to what the ‘talent’ is doing. Other parts of the industry can learn from this, to foster a more responsive culture for everyone.

Disabled screen workers suggest that discussions about accessibility are most effective when they begin early in the working process or collaboration. Working in more flexible ways can increase accessibility and worker morale, and it can also increase creativity and productivity.

Key Finding #17 The screen industry needs widespread change

Survey respondents and interviewees emphasise the need for overarching, structural change across the screen industry. Disabled interviewees consistently suggest that attitudes and flexibility are the key factors that could produce significant change.

Disabled workers observe that when there is a genuine willingness to work with disabled

people, everyday barriers become easier to address. Importantly, disabled workers say that their best working experiences are facilitated by discussions about accessibility early in the working process. Too often, disabled workers are underestimated and ignored, but this can change readily with a focus on understanding and attitudes.

Disabled people must be centred in decision making and leadership roles in the screen industry, so that priorities and practices are informed by **lived experience of disability**. There are currently few disabled people in positions of power, and this has significant implications throughout the screen industry and the content it produces.

Nevertheless, screen workers note that disabled people are a minority and non-disabled people must work to produce change, in consultation with disabled people. Education to raise awareness about disability and accessibility issues can provide a basic platform for change, particularly in attitudes, but also in daily practice. Notably, an equal number of disabled and non-disabled survey respondents identified a ‘Lack of awareness of disability issues’ as a key challenge, which suggests screen workers are receptive to training initiatives.

The significance of attitudinal barriers is underscored by the main challenges disabled survey respondents identify:

- A lack of awareness of disability issues
- Attitudes of employers
- Difficulties getting adjustments or accommodations
- A lack of industry infrastructure or flexibility

Disabled people already work in our industry, but routinely face prejudice and discrimination. We have considerable work ahead to benefit from more disabled people working in the screen industry. Fostering greater **inclusion** will enable the industry to benefit from the talents of disabled workers and the latent workforce. It will attract more people to the industry and stem talent drain.

Disabled workers suggested the following changes would have the greatest impact:



Better understanding by employers, colleagues and crew of the impacts of disability



Easier to arrange **adjustments** and **accommodations** for disabled people in workplaces



Targeted funding for disabled creatives



Disability Action Plans on all projects

Interestingly, non-disabled respondents prioritised routine budgeting for accessibility more highly than disabled respondents. This underscores the wider view that attitudinal change is very important to disabled people. While there is value in normalising and accounting for accessibility in routine project planning, disabled workers emphasise that budgets will naturally follow the priorities of the people creating them.

Disabled interviewees suggest that funding for disabled workers needs to be strategically targeted at multiple levels. For example, it should include funding worker ‘attachments’ or ‘shadowing’ arrangements to help people early in their careers build skills and networks, but it should also provide ongoing opportunities and support. It should include dedicated funding to support development and production led by disabled people in key creative roles.

There should also be strategies for valuing and recognising diverse pathways towards success, so that non-targeted funding is allocated in a fairer way. Government funding can be a mechanism for driving change, such as a requirement for all funded projects to include a **Disability Action Plan**.

Note: See Appendices F and G

What is a Disability Action Plan?

- A document used by employers and organisations to formalise accessibility processes.
- The plan should determine clear lines of communication and responsibility to implement workplace accessibility measures, including routine steps to provide disability accommodations and adjustments for particular workers.
- It should include explanation of how the organisation approaches disability **inclusion**, and how discrimination should be reported and addressed. Each Disability Action Plan can be tailored to the particular work of an organisation.

Recommendations for the Australian screen industry to improve participation and inclusion of disabled workers

Training

- Encourage widespread participation in disability equity, accessibility and inclusion training to foster greater awareness and understanding at every level throughout the screen industry.
- Promote ongoing training to support continuous improvement.

Accessibility

- Normalise discussing and implementing **access requirements** to support all workers across the screen industry.
- Encourage widespread use of **Disability Action Plans (DAPs)** to formalise lines of communication, resourcing and responsibility.
- Implement new standards in government agencies for budgeting and reporting that incentivise the use of DAPs.
- Make festivals, conferences and networking events accessible.

Consultation

- Formalise processes for regular dialogue between disabled screen workers, disabled-led organisations, government agencies, guilds and associations.
- Measure employment participation and inclusion, and evaluate effectiveness of new practices.

Innovation

- Embrace greater creativity and flexibility in standard industry practices, from recruitment and job-sharing to communication and scheduling.
- Recognise that implementing innovative working practices can be cost-neutral or improve cost-effectiveness.
- Recognise that accommodating disabled workers increases equity, **inclusion** and sustainability for all workers.

Government funding

- Target funding for disabled key creatives to prioritise storytelling by and about disabled people.
- Target funding to recognise and support sustainable careers for disabled workers.
- Allocate money for **access requirements** on all government-funded projects.
- Revise all funding streams to ensure they recognise and support diverse career trajectories.



Conclusion

This report focuses the attention of the Australian screen industry on disability for the first time. The key findings describe how we create social inequity and exclusion through everyday actions and common attitudes. Voices of respondents and interviewees illustrate the detail and devastation of systemic discrimination faced by our disabled colleagues. This report also points to essential solutions that will improve the way we work and the content we produce.

This research is consistent with what we know about ableism in similar creative industries and in screen industries in countries with similar cultures.[29] However, countries like the United Kingdom and Canada already have initiatives specifically targeted to address ableism in their screen industries. Previously, we had very little evidence of how disability was experienced and treated in the Australian screen industry; now that we have the evidence, it is essential that we address the systemic and everyday inequities and prejudices.

To create this change, we need widespread and targeted action across training, consultation, innovation, policy and funding. This requires clear leadership and close, ongoing engagement with disabled people. This research finds undeniable evidence of the need for change, but also willingness to learn, understand and act to make the workforce more inclusive and accessible.

Future research will be crucial to help the screen industry understand how attitudes to and experiences of disability persist or change. It would be particularly valuable to capture the experiences of disabled people who have been entirely excluded from the Australian screen industry, in order to gain greater insight into how this happens and how it can be rectified. More detailed data and analysis of intersectional experiences of disability would provide more insight into how screen workers are marginalised and how this can be addressed. In particular, researchers must endeavour to collect more survey responses from non-white people, who form a large

proportion of the Australian population, but are not well represented in this research or the screen industry. Greater efforts to implement accessibility and inclusivity in research design will deliver more effective and meaningful results.

Diversity is a key issue across global screen industries. Screen stories are an important way that we understand the experiences of different people and conceive of our community. Audiences at home and around the world seek diverse and authentic screen stories. Yet disabled people are being left behind, particularly in the Australian context. Discrimination within the screen industry echoes and reinforces the prejudice disabled people encounter across society. Failing to support the participation and inclusion of disabled people threatens the screen industry's capacity to create authentic and compelling screen stories.

Disabled people belong in the Australian screen industry. Our participation is essential, our stories are vital, and our work can contribute significantly to the growing economic, social and cultural power of the Australian screen industry.

“ I look forward to the day when surveys like this are not necessary, as people with different abilities will be highly valued and integrated into mainstream media and entertainment.

- Non-disabled performer, age ~60s, woman



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Appendices

Appendix A: Survey Questions

1. What is your age in years?
 2. What is your gender?
 3. What is your ethnic background?
 4. Do you have a disability, impairment, chronic illness or long-term condition? Or are you Deaf?
 5. What kind of screen content do you work on?
 6. What is your current or most recent role in the screen industry?
- If you work more than one job, please think about the one that you usually work the most hours in.
7. In the job you just described, which of the following categories best describes how much you work?
- Options: Full time hours, part time or casual hours, not currently working, other.
8. What kind of employment arrangement do you have for this role?
- Options: Freelance or self-employed, Permanent ongoing position, Fixed-term contract, Casual basis, Unpaid or volunteer.
9. How has the Covid-19 pandemic most affected your work in the screen industry?
 10. Can you tell us what your weekly income from the screen industry was during the past year? Please provide your best estimate, before tax or other deductions are removed.
 11. Can you give us your best estimate of the proportion of your total income that came from your work in the screen industry?
 12. Which kinds of impairments or conditions do you live with?* Select all that apply.
- Options listed in Appendix C.
13. Has your disability or condition impacted your work in the screen industry?*
- Options: Positively, Negatively, Both positively and negatively, No.
14. Before you begin a new role, do you disclose your disability or conditions to your employer or your team?*
 15. We know that disclosing disability can be a tricky topic. If you would like to tell us more about how you deal with disclosure, we would like to hear it.*
 16. In the past year, have you had any unpleasant work experiences directly related to your disability or condition?* This can include unpleasant comments, unfair treatment, exclusion, bullying, harassment, etc.
 17. How willing do you think your colleagues are to work alongside disabled people in the screen industry?
 18. What do you think are the main challenges facing disabled people in the screen industry? Choose up to 3 answers. Options listed in Appendix F.
 19. What changes do you think would most improve working conditions for disabled people in the screen industry? Choose up to 3 answers. Options listed in Appendix G.
 20. What would you like people in the screen industry to know or do regarding disability and disabled workers? Please give as much detail as you like.

* Questions 12-16 were only displayed to disabled respondents.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Interviews were semi-structured, and the following questions are indicative of themes raised by researchers for response by interviewees.

1. Can you give me an overview of your career in the screen industry? What roles have you worked in, what kinds of productions have you worked on?
2. How does media shape understandings of disability in Australia at the moment?
3. Why is it important for disabled people to tell our own stories?
4. Do you have lived experience of disability? Has your identification as disabled changed over time, and if so, how?
5. How do you think disability impacts work in the screen industry?
6. How are access requirements approached in your experience?
7. What does disability discrimination mean to you? Can you tell me about an example of disability discrimination you've experienced or witnessed?
8. What do you do to address ableism and disability discrimination at work?
9. What's your experience been of working with (other) disabled people in the screen industry?
10. In your experience, what are the biggest challenges for disabled workers in the Australian screen industry?
11. What do you think are some key changes that would improve inclusion for disabled people in the screen industry?
12. What does accessible screen production look like?
13. What do you do if you get something 'wrong' when it comes to disability inclusion?
14. Why do you think people in the screen industry don't talk about disability much when we talk about other aspects of diversity and inclusion?

Appendix C: Categories describing lived experience of impairments

Table: Categories describing lived experience of impairments (as self-identified by disabled respondents)

Categories describing lived experience of impairments	Responses
Chronic illness or condition	25%
Psychological or psychosocial Including anxiety, psychosis and depression	19%
Neurodivergent or Autistic	15%
Physically impaired	14%
Deaf, deaf or hard of hearing	6%
Neurological Including cognitive impairment, epilepsy or Alzheimer’s disease	6%
Intellectual or learning disability	4%
Blind or vision impaired	4%
Acquired brain injury	3%
Other	2%
Speech loss or impairment	1%
Deafblind	Less than 1%
Dual sensory impairment	

Appendix D: Income brackets and proportions

Table: Reported weekly income

Income	Overall	Disabled workers	Non-disabled workers
\$1,750 or more per week	25%	12%	37%
\$1,250-1,749 per week	19%	18%	20%
\$800-1,249 per week	12%	12%	13%
\$400-799 per week	10%	11%	8%
\$1-399 per week	17%	22%	13%
Nil or negative income	17%	25%	9%
Median weekly income	\$800 – 1,249	\$400 - 799	\$800 – 1,249
Median annual income	\$41,600 – 64,999	\$20,800 – 41,599	\$41,600-64,999

Table: Proportion of total income coming from work in the screen industry

Proportion of total income from screen industry	Overall	Disabled workers	Non-disabled workers
No income from screen industry	14%	19%	9%
1 – 30% of income	19%	27%	11%
31 – 60% of income	8%	9%	7%
61 – 99% of income	14%	15%	13%
All income from screen industry	45%	30%	60%

Appendix E: Kinds of unpleasant experiences reported by disabled workers

Kinds of unpleasant experiences at work	Respondents
Adjustments or accommodations not supplied	49%
Inaccessible environments and schedules	41%
Exclusion from groups	38%
Promotion, employment or selection of someone else over you	36%
Been insulted, called names, threatened	29%
Felt I cannot go to, or be at work	29%
Other	23%
Assigned to low status or less well-paid job	22%
Felt unsafe	22%
Ongoing harassment or bullying	20%
Poor reviews even when I do a good job	18%
Been physically attacked	4%

Respondents who selected ‘Other’ specified unpleasant experiences including: offensive comments, sexual comments, belittling treatment, and employers not believing that an employee has a disability.

Appendix F: Main challenges facing disabled people in the screen industry

Main challenge	Overall %	Disabled Respondents %	Non-disabled Respondents %
Lack of awareness of disability issues	44	43	44
Lack of industry infrastructure or flexibility	39	26	51
Attitudes of employers	34	35	33
Difficulties getting adjustments or accommodations	32	33	32
Long hours or weeks	22	25	19
Lack of stable or long-term employment	19	19	19
Transport and physical access to workplaces	17	14	20
Lack of role models or positive media coverage	13	14	12
Attitudes of colleagues	13	16	10
Insufficient government funding or benefits	13	13	12
Inaccessible networking or community events	8	11	5
Lack of local or regional opportunity	5	5	5
Other	5	6	4

Respondents could select up to 3 options.

Appendix G: Changes that would most improve working conditions for disabled people in the screen industry

Improvements	Overall %	Disabled Respondents %	Non-disabled Respondents %
Better understanding by employers of the impacts of disability	33	33	33
Easier to arrange adjustments and accommodations for disabled people in workplaces	33	30	35
Including 'Access' as a line item in production budgets	27	20	35
Targeted funding for disabled creatives	26	28	24
Disability Action Plans on all projects	26	21	30
Better understanding by colleagues or crew of the impacts of disability	26	25	19
Mentoring or training programs		26	20
More flexible working hours	19	19	18
Employment quotas and regular reporting	19	22	15
Trained disability inclusion staff on all projects	16	14	18
Greater job security	14	16	12
More accessible networking events	11	13	9
Other	6	8	3
Greater support of unions and guilds	5	6	4
	4	6	3

Respondents could select up to 3 options.

Glossary

Glossary

Ableism: Prejudice and discrimination against disabled people. This might appear as stereotyping, exclusion, or reluctance to provide accommodations.

Accessibility: The practice of creating environments, activities, ideas, communication devices, media, and technology that all people can fully and easily use, regardless of disability. It is important for accessibility to be flexible and responsive to changing requirements.

Access requirements: The changes needed to support disabled people to participate fully in a job, space, activity, service or interaction. These might include changes to physical access – for instance, providing wheelchair accessible toilets. This could include providing assistive technologies, such as subtitles in digital meetings or screen reading software. It could also include changes to emotional access – for instance, making disabled people feel safe and welcome in the workplace. Different disabled people have different access requirements. Ask people about their specific requirements. In the screen industry, a document detailing someone's access requirements is sometimes referred to as an 'Access rider' or 'Access passport'.

Accommodations: See Access requirements.

Adjustments, Reasonable Adjustments: A legal term used to describe changes employers make to support employee access. See Access requirements.

Crip time: A concept that explains how disabled people experience time differently. For instance, crip time addresses the fact that disabled people need more time to navigate inaccessible environments. Crip time acknowledges the time taken up by symptoms: the need for extra recovery time, career breaks, or time off for doctors' appointments. Crip time also challenges the idea that all people should move through a specific set of life stages at certain periods: for instance, learning to read as a child, or moving out of the family home in early adulthood. It is an empowering concept that embraces the diversity of disabled people's experiences.

Deaf/deaf: In Australia we capitalise the 'D' in Deaf to refer to people who use Auslan (Australian Sign Language) and identify as part of a rich culture and language community associated with signing. Deaf with a lowercase 'd' refers more generally to the condition of having hearing loss. Those who are deaf do not identify as being part of Deaf culture and community.

Disability Action Plan: A document used by employers and organisations to formalise accessibility processes. The plan should determine clear lines of communication and responsibility to implement workplace accessibility measures, including routine steps to provide disability accommodations and adjustments for particular workers. It should include explanation of how the organisation approaches disability inclusion, and how discrimination should be reported and addressed. Each Disability Action Plan can be tailored to the particular work of an organisation.

Disability gain: The idea that disabled people hold unique, important and desirable qualities, and including disabled people enhances our society. Disability is a 'gain' because it offers different, creative ways of looking at things and navigating the world. Disability gain challenges the idea of disability as a burden, loss, or deficit.

Disability justice: A social movement that works to create disability equity and justice through interdependence and community. Disability is understood as a marginalised identity that intersects with other dimensions of identity, like sexuality, class, gender and ethnicity. Disability justice understands ableism as a form of oppression that is inextricably linked with other forms of prejudice against historically marginalised communities.

Disability pride: Challenging ableist attitudes by feeling proud of your disability status and celebrating disability community, history and culture.

Hard of hearing: Refers to mild to severe hearing loss, where a person may have some hearing or use assistive technology to communicate primarily through speech.

Identity-first language: Many disabled people embrace disability as a central aspect of their identities and their choice of language reflects this. For instance, "I am a disabled person." Ask people what language they prefer. See also Person-first language.

Inclusion: The active practice of providing opportunities for and encouraging everyone to participate in all parts of society, especially those that were previously inaccessible or unwelcoming. This might consist of participation in professions, workplaces, education, and community living. Inclusion involves making sure organisations, companies, and institutions have policies and practices in place to ensure a diverse range of people feel valued and can participate fully. Accessibility is one aspect of inclusion.

'Invisible' disability: Disability that is not immediately apparent when you see or interact with someone. For instance, many chronic illnesses are invisible.

Lived experience of disability: The individual experiences of disabled people. This does not include the experiences of carers, support workers, friends, or family members of disabled people.

Neurodivergence/Neurodiversity: The idea that all brains have variations, and that neurodivergent people – people who have conditions such as ADHD, Autism, or dyslexia – are not inferior but a part of natural human diversity that should be respected.

Person-first language: Many people choose to focus on their personhood rather than their impairment and their choice of language reflects this. For instance, "I am a person with disability." Ask people what language they prefer. See also Identity-first language.

Psychosocial disability: A term used to describe disability that relates to lived experience of mental health conditions. Includes depression, anxiety and schizophrenia.

Reasonable adjustments: See Adjustments.

Social model of disability: Understands disability as socially constructed, resulting from the discrimination and barriers created by society. The social model proposes that society disables people, rather than their bodies, minds, or medical conditions, and so society must change to create full and equal participation by all.

Stereotype: An assumed but simplistic, generalised and inaccurate idea of a particular kind of person. For instance, disabled people are commonly stereotyped as pitiable, lazy, heroic and scary. Stereotyping disabled people is a common expression of ableism.

Tokenism: The practice of making small efforts that give the appearance that an organisation, company or industry values inclusion and access without genuine commitment through funding, employment, training and action.

Universal access: Creating systems, procedures, designs and buildings that accommodate everyone in the community. Universal access makes things as easy to navigate as possible for all people with a range of access requirements.



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