



Midsumma

**Disability Inclusion
and Access Plan**

2024–2027

 **midsumma
festival**

midsumma.org.au

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Acknowledgment

Midsumma Festival was founded on the lands and waters of the Bunurong, Taungurung, Dja Dja Wurrung, Wadawurrung and Wurundjeri (Woiwurrung) peoples of the Kulin Nation.

We continue our work on, and bring together visitors from, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lands.

Midsumma acknowledges that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are the First Peoples of these lands, and pays respect to First Nations Elders past and present.

Midsumma recognises their continuing spiritual and cultural connection to the land and acknowledges that Aboriginal sovereignty has never been ceded.

Midsumma Festival takes place between High Summer and Late Summer according to the Wurundjeri calendar of seasons, on whose land much of the festival takes place.

Alternative Formats

Our Disability Inclusion Action Plan will be made available in alternative formats:

- PDF**
- Word**
- Easy English**
- Auslan**
- Audio file**

Midsumma acknowledges the multiple and often intersecting barriers to participation in arts and cultural events for First Nations peoples, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; including newly arrived communities, long standing communities and refugees.

More detailed information about the ways in which Midsumma aims to support our artists and communities facing multiple barriers to participation are contained within our Strategic Plan and do not form part of the scope of this plan, which is focused on d/Deaf and Disabled artists, audiences, staff and community members.

Key Terms

Diversity

Midsumma recognises that LGBTQIA+ communities are diverse in our genders, desires and in the social barriers we experience. We seek to include, and plan to consult with d/Deaf and Disabled LGBTQIA+ people who may also experience ageism, racism, the effects of colonisation and other social barriers.

LGBTQIA+ communities

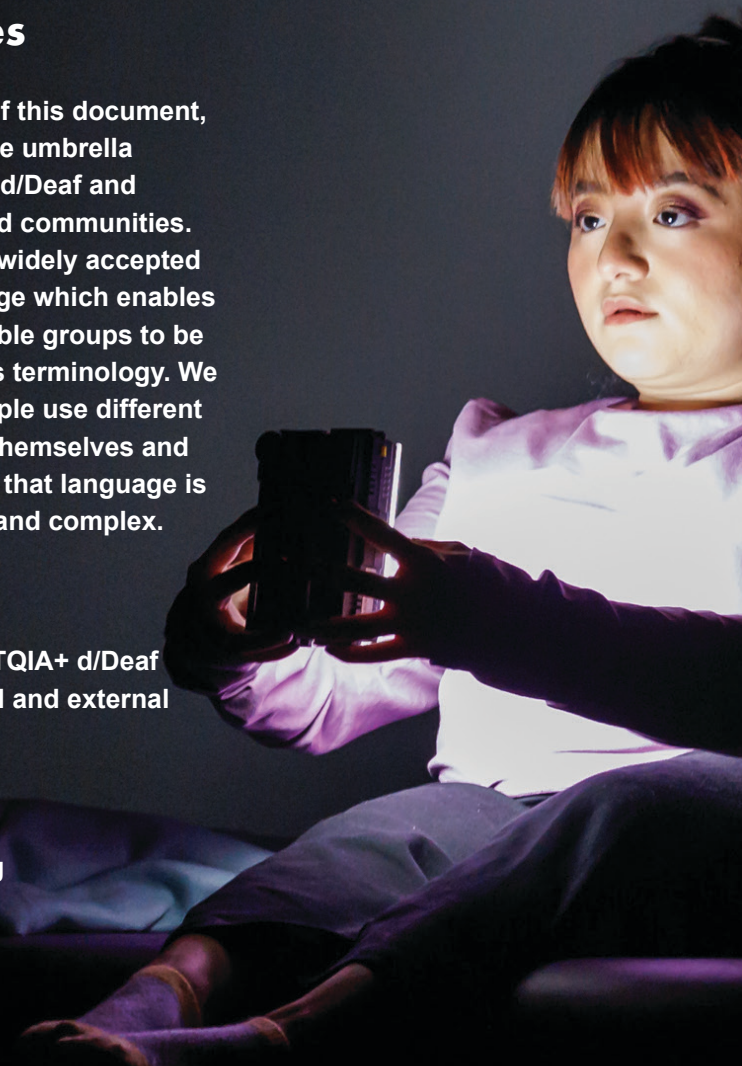
We use this acronym to refer to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual and other expressions of gender and sexuality that we don't know about yet. We understand our communities are diverse with a range of interests, identities and expressions.

d/Deaf and Disabled artists and communities

For the purposes of this document, Midsumma uses the umbrella term(s) LGBTQIA+ d/Deaf and Disabled artists and communities. This is in line with widely accepted benchmark language which enables the broadest possible groups to be included under this terminology. We recognise that people use different terms to describe themselves and their identities and that language is political, personal and complex.

Midsumma engages in ongoing conversation about language and key terms with members of our LGBTQIA+ d/Deaf and Disabled communities, and we aim to incorporate recommendations and learnings into our internal and external communications. Some examples of other preferred terms include:

- Queer disabled artists
- Queer crip community
- Deaf, disabled and neurodiverse artists
- Autistic artists
- Queer Deaf artists/communities
- Artists with lived and living experience of complex mental health
- Chronically ill
- Hard of hearing



Key Terms

Social Model of Disability

We use the social model of disability as a framework for understanding the lived experience of disability. The key idea in this framework is that a person is disabled by their environment.

Midsumma is committed to removing as many barriers as possible to accessing our events, opportunities, programs and employment for d/Deaf and Disabled artists and audiences.

Queer

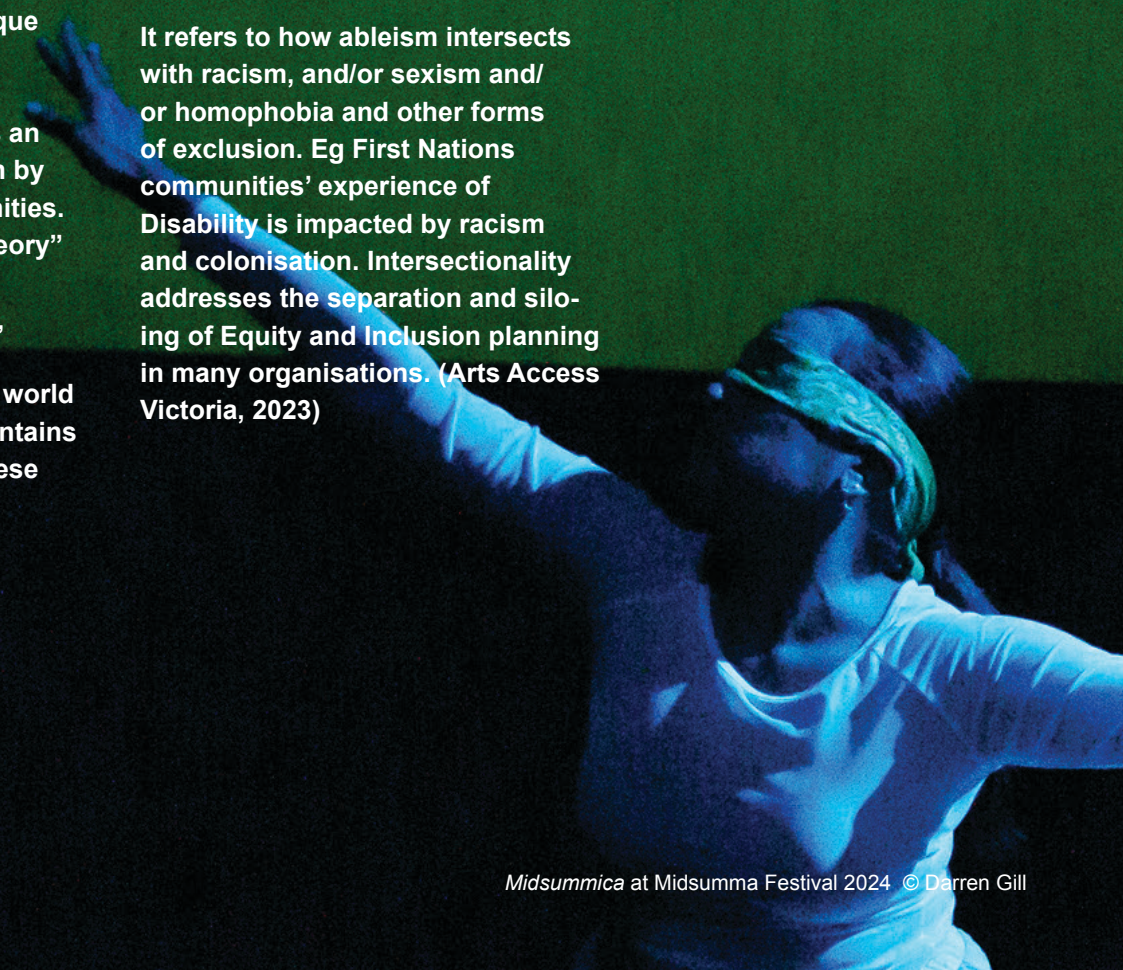
We acknowledge that the term “Queer” can relate to identity, politics, theory and arts. Midsumma is an organisation committed to supporting artists of all marginalised genders and sexualities to explore their unique creative expression.

We believe that “Queer Arts” is an artistic sensibility that is driven by LGBTQIA+ artists and communities. We understand that “Queer Theory” is a political movement that dismantles traditional systems, structures and beliefs, and encourages people to view the world through a different lens and contains within it a call to decolonise these systems and structures.

Intersectionality

For the purposes of this document, we use intersectionality to mean a description of how multiple systems of exclusion and injustice impact on many people.

It refers to how ableism intersects with racism, and/or sexism and/or homophobia and other forms of exclusion. Eg First Nations communities’ experience of Disability is impacted by racism and colonisation. Intersectionality addresses the separation and siloing of Equity and Inclusion planning in many organisations. (Arts Access Victoria, 2023)



Introduction

“Inclusivity means not just ‘we’re allowed to be there,’ but we are valued. I’ve always said: smart teams will do amazing things, but truly diverse teams will do impossible things.” — Claudia Brind-Woody

Midsumma is proud to be a national leader in d/Deaf and Disabled access and engagement initiatives. We are committed to ongoing improvements to ensure our events and programs are as accessible and inclusive as they can be.

Midsumma is working at multiple levels of organisational structure, programming, audience and artist development and event delivery to improve accessibility and inclusion for artists, audiences, staff, crew and volunteers year on year.

Midsumma recognises the importance of creative and community spaces that address the intersecting barriers that d/Deaf and Disabled artists and audiences face, and support process over outcomes.

Midsumma is proud to deliver Midsumma Pathways, our skill development and mentorship program which was established in 2018. Each year we work with up to 12 creative LGBTQIA+ members of our communities who also identify as d/Deaf, Disabled, neurodiverse, and/or chronically ill.

We are committed to building capacity within the industry to ensure that we continue to see more d/Deaf and Disabled artists programmed at venues and festivals around the country and overseas.



A Note from the CEO, Karen Bryant

Midsumma has always been about diverse communities celebrating inclusion in the most meaningful of ways. We do festivals because they bring people together, tell important stories and share vital perspectives. They open us up to new realities and previously unknown possibilities. We do mentorship and career development programs for d/Deaf and Disabled artists because we understand these communities face additional barriers to employment and participation. We are committed to making change in our sector, and this begins with providing opportunities to artists and communities facing additional barriers to participation. We aim to create safe(r) cultural spaces to support inclusion in the broadest possible sense. We care about the communities we work with, and strive to create spaces where people feel they can belong.

This Disability Inclusion and Access Plan has been developed over a period of 2 years while we rigorously consulted, tested, drafted and re-drafted a robust and meaningful plan that formalises our commitment to the LGBTQIA+ d/Deaf and Disabled communities. We are grateful to the advocates, artists, audience members, Midsumma Pathways alumni and community members who have contributed to this plan, and to our staff who have worked collaboratively to bring feedback and ideas from these conversations into an action plan that can support Midsumma's delivery of our Access and Inclusion priorities into the future.

'Increased engagement with disability cultures' is one of Midsumma's 9 Strategic Priorities, and we pride ourselves on the improvements we make year on year in the Access and Inclusion space. After many years of building credibility and trust with d/Deaf and Disabled communities, over a quarter of total attendees to Midsumma events (more than 30%) identify as d/Deaf, Disabled or hard of hearing. We believe that this Disability Inclusion Action Plan demonstrates Midsumma's ongoing organisation-wide commitment to Access and Inclusion and we look forward to continuing to welcome LGBTQIA+ d/Deaf and Disabled artists, audience and staff members into our programs and events in 2025 and beyond.



Midsumma Mission

Midsumma actively challenges the status quo, as a progressive arts organisation that supports, educates and continually evolves. We provide platforms, places and spaces for creative expression that will strengthen the cultural voices of our LGBTQIA+ communities and broaden the language of our allies. We support inclusivity for all within our activities, while also working to create an environment where all members of our communities feel safe, supported and included, where their core human rights of dignity and equality are recognised and honoured and where they are free from discrimination of any kind.

Who We Are

Midsumma was established in 1988.

We are the largest LGBTQIA+ arts organisation in Australia. We support LGBTQIA+ artists and audiences to share their creative work, leading conversations that shape queer arts and culture.

We work year-round on the development of LGBTQIA+ artists and artworks through mentorship programs and capacity-building initiatives, providing artists and culture-makers with support to develop their careers and artforms.

We present a three-week Festival every year which is called Midsumma Festival.

Access and Inclusion Working Group

The Midsumma Disability Inclusion and Access Plan (DIAP) will be implemented by Midsumma, and will be maintained by the Access and Inclusion Working Group, which includes senior management representatives from each department including Programming, Marketing, Production and Artist Development.

The working group includes

- Head of Production and Operations
Michael Ryan (2024-present)
- Artist Development Manager
Harriet Devlin (2023 – present)
- Acting Program Manager
Pieta Farrell (2024-present)
- Marketing and Communications Manager
Timothée Nicot (2024-present)

This group meets monthly to ensure actions and goals are on track in accordance with the timeline. The broader group of Midsumma seasonal staff are briefed on the relevant sections of the DIAP at the commencement of their season with Midsumma.

Consultation, Collaboration and Review

This DIAP has been written in consultation and collaboration with a range of organisations and individuals who have been engaged in various ways through Midsumma Festival, Midsumma Pathways, through Midsumma's Key Access Organisations and the Midsumma Access and Inclusion Advisory Group. Consultation has been actively sought through both formal and informal channels. Formalised working relationships, working groups and advisory groups are documented below.

Conversations with every LGBTQIA+ d/Deaf and Disabled artist we have worked in Midsumma Pathways and Midsumma Festival also informed the development and implementation of this plan. While not always specifically or formally documented, these interactions contribute to the spirit of this work and the genuine desire and intent for ongoing conversation and collaboration with community.

From 2023, formalised feedback from d/Deaf and Disabled artists and communities is documented each year for internal reporting, accountability and process improvement.

This plan has been reviewed by Arts Access Victoria and will be revisited with Key Access Organisations and Midsumma's Access and Inclusion Advisory Group every 3 years to ensure Midsumma remains engaged, accountable and in consultation with community.

Evaluation

Midsumma will evaluate this DIAP yearly in March-June following the Midsumma Festival. Midsumma will work with Key Access Organisations and community members to edit and adjust the DIAP according to community feedback and needs.

Midsumma also offers a survey each year to Festival artists and audiences.

The next Midsumma DIAP will be for 2027-2029.

Midsumma Access and Inclusion Advisory Group

As at June 2024 :

- Kathryn Beaton
- Margherita Coppolino
- Francois Jacobs
- Belinda Locke
- Leisa Prowd

Key Access Organisations

Expression Australia

Expression Australia and Midsumma established an annual community engagement partnership in 2022 which champions the needs of the d/Deaf LGBTQIA+ Community through direct and regular consultation with Rainbow Project Officer, Luke King and Grants Manager, Sherrie Beaver. Both organisations are committed to ongoing community engagement and partnership.

Auslan Stage Left

Auslan Stage Left have been working with Midsumma since 2018 to deliver specialist Auslan interpretation at performances and public events. Auslan Stage Left have a key role in service and information provision (Auslan videos) to Deaf audiences.

Vitae Veritas

Vitae Veritas and Midsumma established a community engagement partnership in 2022 which aims to make Midsumma Festival more accessible and inclusive to blind and low vision (BLV) communities and individuals. The 2023 Midsumma Festival was audited by Nilgun Guven and Francois Jacobs who have provided a series of recommendations which will form part of the second section of this DIAP.

Vision Australia Radio

Midsumma and Vision Australia Radio established a community engagement partnership in 2023. Through this partnership, Vision Australia Radio will work with Midsumma to provide alternate formats of programs and information, and to broaden the reach of Midsumma to the BLV community.



Focus Area 1

Changing attitudes and removing barriers to participation for LGBTQIA+ d/Deaf and Disabled artists and communities

Actions	Department Responsible	Timeline	Measurement
Yearly access and inclusion training for Midsumma staff and volunteers.	Artist Development / CEO	Annually, September	Training feedback, volunteer reports, event surveys, direct emails, Auslan videos, and meetings.
Access Coordinator support role engagement for Midsumma Festival.	CEO / Production / Programming	Annually, August/September	Recruitment and budget line maintenance.
Volunteer briefing for signature events (Midsumma Carnival, Pride March, Victoria's Pride).	Production / Programming	Annually	Briefing feedback, volunteer debriefs.
Prioritisation and delivery of Midsumma Pathways mentorship program.	CEO / Artist Development / Partnerships	2024/2025 and beyond	Program readiness with secured funding.
Building relationships with service providers and organisations supporting d/Deaf and Disabled communities.	Artist Development / Programming	Ongoing	Partnership records with key organisations.
Championing access and inclusion across all levels of organisational structure.	CEO / All staff / Midsumma Access and Inclusion Working Group	Ongoing	Regular updates to communication channels and advisory group records.
Visibility and representation of LGBTQIA+ d/Deaf and Disabled artists in programming, marketing, and promotions.	Programming / Artist Development / Marketing	Ongoing	Representation in programming, credited imagery, and content by LGBTQIA+ d/Deaf and Disabled artists.
Appropriate language usage following community standards.	Programming / Marketing & Communications	Ongoing	Proofed marketing content, discussions with advisory committees.
Considering access needs from the first experience with Midsumma.	Programming / Marketing / Ticketing & Presenter Services / Production / Administration	Annually	Accessible formats for milestones and ticketing feedback.
Participation in relevant industry discussions and networks.	CEO / Programming	Ongoing	Attendance and learnings shared.
Continuous engagement with LGBTQIA+ d/Deaf and Disabled artists and communities.	All Departments	Ongoing	Feedback and engagement reports, co-working with access organisations.

Focus Area 2

Identifying and removing barriers – in our offices, event sites and digital/ website

Actions	Department Responsible	Timeline	Measurement
Develop multiple access points for event registration.	Ticketing & Presenter Services	June to September annually	Measure artist participation systems.
Midsumma Presents programming works with accessible venues.	Programming	Annually	Prioritise accessible venues.
Develop accessible ticket booking experience for audiences.	Ticketing & Presenter Services	Ongoing	Gather user feedback during off-season.
Create promotional Auslan videos for key activities.	Marketing & Communications, Programming	June, Nov, Jan-Feb	Track Auslan video views.
Annual access review of Signature Event sites.	Production, Artist Development, Programming	March-June annually	Action consultation recommendations.
Add row signage at Midsumma Carnival for wayfinding.	Production, Marketing & Communications, Access Coordinator	2024 Festival	Provide additional signage.
Draft audio descriptions and accessible drop-off details for events.	Production, Marketing & Communications	2024 Festival	Update website with drop-off details.
Collaborate with key access organisations for audits and feedback.	Production, Programming, Marketing & Communications, Artist Development	Ongoing (MOUs renewed annually)	Action recommendations, complete MOUs.
Incorporate access feedback in post-Festival reports.	Artist Development, Programming	Year-round	Implement feedback in next planning.
Identify and respond to gaps for LGBTQIA+ d/Deaf and Disabled artists.	Artist Development, Programming	Year-round	Offer bespoke programming as needed.
Ensure website accessibility and readability.	Marketing & Communications	Jan-Feb annually, future by 2028	Alt text, Level 1 Headers, limit flickering.
Ensure office building accessibility.	CEO	March-Dec 2024	Ensure entrance and bathrooms are accessible.
Establish and consult advisory groups for feedback.	Artist Development, Programming	June-Aug 2023	Consult advisory groups post-Festival.

Focus Area 3

Reducing barriers for LGBTQIA+ d/Deaf and Disabled people to obtaining and maintaining employment

Actions	Department Responsible	Timeline	Measurement
Midsumma Pathways program opens for applications when resourced.	Artist Development, CEO	Ongoing	Program opens when resources secured.
Prioritise employment of LGBTQIA+ d/Deaf and Disabled workshop facilitators and mentors.	Artist Development, CEO	Ongoing	Consult artists for facilitator and mentor choices.
Include Pathways Advisory Group in budgeting and program design.	Artist Development, CEO	Ongoing	Advisory Group included in program planning.
Offer Midsumma Pathways Alumni skills development workshops.	Programming, Partnerships, Marketing & Communications	Ongoing	Workshops offered as needed.
Support Midsumma Pathways Alumni to register work at Midsumma Festival.	Programming, Partnerships, Marketing & Communications	Ongoing	Support provided for registration.
Provide paid opportunities for Alumni in year-round and Festival programming.	Programming, Partnerships, Marketing & Communications	Ongoing	Paid opportunities given as required.
Designate Midsumma Pathways Coordinator role for a disabled arts worker.	CEO	Ongoing	Role maintained for disabled worker.
Monitor targeted employment opportunities; review as part of DIAP in 2026.	CEO	2026	Employment opportunities reviewed in DIAP process.
Advertise roles through Key Access Organisational networks.	CEO, HR Specialist, Marketing & Communications	Ongoing	Monitor advertisement locations.
Review recruitment, contracting, and onboarding processes (2024/2025).	CEO, HR Specialist, Marketing & Communications	2024/2025	Review processes with focus on Access and Inclusion.
Encourage d/Deaf and disabled applicants for roles.	CEO, HR Specialist, Marketing & Communications	Ongoing	Encourage diverse applicants.
Maintain and engage Advisory Groups.	All	Ongoing	Maintain active advisory participation.
Involve d/Deaf and Disabled artists in decision-making and co-design.	All	Ongoing	Ensure inclusive selection processes.

Focus Area 4

Promoting inclusion and participation of LGBTQIA+ d/Deaf and Disabled people in the community

Actions	Department Responsible	Timeline	Measurement
Deliver Midsumma Pathways mentorship and career program.	Artist Development, CEO	Ongoing	Funding secured, program delivered.
Participate in industry discussions and networks on access and inclusion.	All	Ongoing	Attendance documented, learnings shared.
Increase provision of information in accessible formats annually.	Marketing & Communications	Annually	Annual improvement in accessible information.
Develop Signature events to offer inclusive audience experiences.	Production, Programming, Artist Development	Annually	Consult community and adjust based on feedback.
Engage key access organisations to involve LGBTQIA+ d/Deaf and Disabled communities.	Artist Development, Programming, Marketing & Communications	Annually	Maintain partnerships, invite underrepresented communities.
Support independent artists in Open Access Program to prioritise access and inclusion.	Ticketing and Presenter Services, Programming, Artist Development	Annually	Access line in budgets, share venue resources.
Provide Auslan interpreters for Midsumma-programmed work at Carnival.	Programming, Artist Development	Every year, January	Auslan interpreters provided as needed.
Provide Audio Description and guide support at Midsumma Carnival.	Programming, Artist Development	Every year, January	Audio describers provided annually.
Offer clear and accessible invitations for connection.	All, Ticketing and Presenter Services	Ongoing	Accessible invitations shared via website and communication.
Provide detailed event site descriptions (per Vitae Veritas recommendations).	Production	2025 Midsumma Festival	Detailed site descriptions provided.
Develop a centralised Access page on the Midsumma website.	Marketing & Communications	Ongoing	Access page established and maintained.

Focus Area 5

To hold the nuanced identities of our artists, audiences, staff, volunteers and stakeholders with care and compassion; to champion opportunities for full expression of these diverse identities.

Actions	Department Responsible	Timeline	Measurement
Program works by artists facing intersectional barriers.	Programming	Annual	Diverse artists included in Festival program; demographics reported.
Select communication content that represents diverse identities.	Marketing & Communications	Annual	Marketing assets feature diverse identities.
Deliver mentorship programs for LGBTQIA+ artists with barriers.	Artist Development, CEO	Ongoing	Mentorships delivered for artists with participation barriers.
Provide Access and Inclusion briefings for volunteers.	Volunteers Coordinator, All	Annually	Briefings include d/Deaf and Disabled artists.
Support volunteers with intersecting social participation barriers.	All, Volunteers Coordinator	Annually	Support provided for volunteers with participation barriers.
Facilitate partner and stakeholder engagement with communities.	CEO, Partnerships Manager	Ongoing	Partners engage with diverse Midsumma communities.
Listen and engage in respectful dialogue with communities.	All, CEO, Artist Development	Ongoing	Feedback incorporated into processes; respectful dialogue encouraged.

Contact

Harriet Devlin (she/her)

Artist Development Manager

Harriet Devlin is a performer, producer, and arts worker specialising in inclusive project design that meets the access needs of diverse artists and communities. Currently, as Artist Development Manager at Midsumma Festival, Harriet works to embed accessibility and community engagement across the festival.

She also leads Midsumma Pathways, a year-round mentorship and career development program for queer artists with disability. Harriet is a NAATI-accredited Auslan interpreter, a member of the Rawcus Ensemble, and holds a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Melbourne and a Diploma of Interpreting from RMIT.



Contact Midsumma

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