



Access for all at Sydney Opera House

*– New Access Strategic Plan puts accessibility at the heart of Opera House Renewal –
– 2016 accessibility program opens up new sensory possibilities for the arts –*

Sydney – Wednesday, 2 March 2016. NSW Minister for Disability Services John Ajaka, MLC, last night unveiled the Sydney Opera House's new three-year Access Strategic Plan and 2016 program of accessible performances.

Accessibility has been a key focus at the Opera House in the past decade, with significant progress achieved through successive strategic plans. The 2016-18 plan is particularly timely, coinciding with both the Opera House's Decade of Renewal and a period of government policy reform designed to give people with disability greater choice, independence and agency in pursuing access and inclusion.

NSW Minister for Disability Services John Ajaka, MLC, said: "The NSW Government is committed to ensuring people with disability have the same access to all aspects of the community. It is for this reason that last year I launched the NSW Disability Inclusion Plan at the Opera House, which provides a whole-of-government approach to creating a more inclusive community for people with disability. The Opera House's forward-thinking plan and program complement this, and I commend its efforts in working towards a truly inclusive society."

The Opera House's latest Access Strategic Plan focuses on five key areas: the building; performances and experiences; workplace; operations and customer service; and community leadership. Highlights include:

- Implementing accessibility improvements as part of building Renewal projects, including upgrades of the Concert Hall, function centre, entry foyers and lobbies, as well as a new Creative Learning Centre;
- Broadening the access program to offer health and wellbeing benefits for new sections of the community, such as people with Parkinson's disease, through performing arts, while continuing to enable Opera House experiences for those facing social and financial disadvantage;
- Fostering new collaborations between the Opera House, its resident companies and community groups to provide access to inclusive educational arts experiences for people with disability. This also involves sharing Opera House resources and equipment with smaller arts organisations and festivals.

All of this sits alongside improvements to Opera House services and facilities for patrons with disability across a number of venues and public areas, and innovative programming, such as sensory theatre experiences for audiences with profound and complex disability.

Sydney Opera House CEO Louise Herron AM said: "The Opera House is a very special place that belongs to all Australians. An essential part of Renewal is ensuring that it is truly welcoming and accessible to everyone.

"We are working to further improve physical access to this World Heritage-listed building, at the same time as exploring innovative ways to enhance everyone's artistic and visitor experience."

Opera House Accessibility Manager Jenny Spinak also announced a series of initiatives as part of the 2016 Access Program at last night's event:

- *Out There* – The Australian Ballet's education outreach program for school-aged children arrives at the Opera House for a week-long residency in August. Supported by Samsung and held in the Utzon Room, this series of workshops and performances for students with disabilities will provide a fun introduction to dance;



- Together with Dance for Parkinson's Australia, the Opera House presents its new Dancing Connections Series. Building on last year's *Dance for PD* program with the renowned Mark Morris Dance Group, each workshop will be linked to a specific dance performance. The first – a collaboration with The Australian Ballet – will infuse the themes, aesthetic concepts and movement materials of *Swan Lake* into the class;
- *ACO MOVE* offers music and movement classes for young people with disability. Students will be invited to go behind the scenes with the Australian Chamber Orchestra to see how the players prepare for a performance, while discovering new ways of making music and interacting with musicians;
- After a successful pilot last year, in collaboration with the Art Gallery of NSW, Starting with Art at the House gives students with intellectual disability the chance to visit the gallery and then take an Opera House tour. The full-day excursion offers stimulating and engaging workshops through discussion, role-play and the use of sensory materials. Students also have the opportunity to make their own artworks.
- In partnership with Lifestart, the Opera House's Accessible Babies Program and Sing Play sessions return, offering play-based activities alongside a number of performances for pre-school kids and their families.

Ongoing initiatives include: a partnership with the Museum of Contemporary Art to introduce students to visual and performing arts through a joint excursion to both venues; and The Balnaves Foundation Open House Program provides \$5 tickets to people who face barriers to accessing live performances at the Opera House due to social and financial disadvantage. Year-round accessible performances by Opera House resident companies and audio-described tours round out the 2016 program.

The Sydney Opera House Access Strategic Plan 2016-18 is available [online](#). You can also find full details of the 2016 Access Program on the [website](#).

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Sydney Opera House

The Opera House is a masterpiece that belongs to all Australians. One of the world's most recognised and celebrated buildings, it contributes significantly to the cultural life of the city. The World Heritage-listed Opera House welcomes more than 8.2 million visitors on site every year and hosts 1,900 performances attended by 1.45 million people. It is one of the world's busiest cultural precincts.