

DISABILITY ACTION PLAN 2016

The New England Conservatorium (NECOM) is a member of the Association of NSW Regional Conservatoriums that is supported by the Department of Education (DOE) under its Specialist Programs, Schools unit. The campus of NECTOM is located in the heritage-listed CB Newling Building in Armidale, known as the Old Teachers College and now held in trust by the University of New England (UNE).

As an organisation funded by the Department of Education, NECTOM is required to deliver programs that serve the needs of people with disability.

NECOM's Music Therapy Program was established in 2011 and has developed rapidly to fulfil a growing demand and need in the community. This unique program has earned overwhelming respect and support from the community for its innovative and diverse programs including:

- Individual and group music therapy sessions
- Early Intervention programs through PEDAL and local pre-schools
- School-based programs such as *Transition to School*, *Growing Through Song* and *Side by Side Choir*
- Programs for adults living with dementia and other age-related conditions.

NECOM's work in this sector is extremely important as it assists some of Armidale's most vulnerable and disadvantaged people - not only people with disability but their carers and family members responsible for their ongoing care.

NECOM's Disability Action Plan identifies 4 priority areas:

1. Developing and implementing new programs catering for Primary school children with disability.
2. To its best ability, promote accessibility to all NECTOM performances in a variety of venues, taking into account the physical limitations of some heritage venues or venues not under NECTOM control.
3. Training staff and review of procedures to ensure customers and clients with disability receive the same courtesy and attention, information and services as any other customers or clients.
4. Raising awareness of NECTOM's work with people with disability in the local community.

Actions

1. Developing and implementing new programs catering for Primary school children with disability.

Currently all NECTOM programs for children with disability are for either pre-school children (ie. early intervention) or secondary school students.

- Develop strategic partnership with Drummond Memorial PS Support Unit.
- Implement *Side by Side Choir* and *Growing Through Song* semester programs at Drummond Memorial PS.
- Evaluation of new programs in Term 4 to inform future planning for 2017.

- Source and apply for new funding opportunities to ensure continuation of Primary school program into 2017 and beyond.
2. Improving accessibility to all NECOM performances for clients with disability.
 - Improve communication to music therapy clients, carers and service providers to alert them to upcoming NECOM performances. Include statement about venue accessibility issues and assistance offered with notice.
 - NECOM Music Therapist to familiarise clients and carers with concert protocols prior to the event.
 - NECOM Music Therapist to attend concerts with clients to facilitate accessibility, ensuring clients feel comfortable throughout the performance experience.
 3. Training staff and review of documentation and procedures to ensure customers and clients with disability receive the same courtesy and attention, information and services as any other customers or clients.
 - Existing NECOM office staff provided with formal briefing on the DAP and disability awareness training; this training is built into the NECOM induction process.
 - Review of all NECOM literature to ensure appropriate use of disability specific language.
 - Review of program and enrolment info and forms to ensure accessibility for people with disability.
 4. Raising awareness of NECOM's work with people with disability in the local community.
 - Programs for people with disability continue to be included and showcased in mainstream NECOM concerts ie. *Side by Side* Choir in Winter Choral concert, *New England Sings!* and Christmas Choral concert.
 - School programs for children with disability (*Side by Side, Growing Through Song*) to be showcased in school environment through assembly performances etc.
 - Increased local media coverage of NECOM's programs for people with disability.
 - Continue to encourage clients of the NECOM Music Therapy program to attend NECOM concerts (see point 2).
 - Apply for local and national awards which recognise NECOM's programs for people with disability.
 - Improve visibility of the NECOM Music Therapy program in the NECOM community by inclusion of publicity material in Newsletter, wall displays, website etc.

DAP endorsed by NECOM Board 17 February 2016.