

Interweave



Arts Assoc Inc.

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To the Australian Human Rights Commission,

As an organisation that creates innovative art processes that reflect the needs of youth and people experiencing disabilities, we would like to voice our objection to the recent application made by Village Roadshow, Greater Union, Hoyts and Reading Cinemas requesting exemption from the Disability Discrimination Act for a period of two and a half years.

If this exemption is granted, it will mean that Australians who are Deaf, hard of hearing, legally blind and vision impaired, including older Australians, stand to be excluded from having equitable access – through the lack of provision of captioning and audio description services – at ANY of the 125 cinemas (1,182 screens) owned by these four exhibitors.

To put this into perspective:

- Jointly, these exhibitors have 1,182 screens across Australia.
- They show approximately 30 movies per screen every week.
That's a total of 41,370 screenings per week (1182 screens x 5 sessions per day x 7 days)
- Of these, only 105 will be captioned and audio described. This is equal to less than 0.3% of all movies screened per week.

So at this pace, what these exhibitors are requesting is that they require a timeframe of 1,000 years to achieve universal access, that is, access to all screenings in their cinemas.

Given that a recent key element of the Rudd Government's National Arts and Disability Strategy is to:

Explore opportunities to enhance accessibility and inclusive practices in the film, television and broadcast industry. This may include programs in Auslan and efforts to increase captioning and audio-description services, particularly for government funded films, and promoting international best practice models which support casting artists with a disability.
(Focus area 4. Strategic development, 9. Film, television and broadcast industry)

www.cmc.gov.au/publications/nationalartsanddisabilitystrategy

...it would appear that the cinema exhibitors' above proposed exemption is not in the spirit of the goals of our National Strategy.

Regards,

Kim Schneiders

Chair/President

Interweave Arts Association Inc.

Creative Producer, Streets Alive Youth Arts Festival

Coordinator of the Access Arts Link

Outstanding Achiever, Tasmanian Community Achievement Awards, 2008