



Youth Disability Advocacy Network Inc

Perth, Western Australia | www.ydan.com.au | ABN: 73 373 467 358

Honourable David Templeman MLA
**Minister for Local Government;
Heritage; Culture and the Arts**

7th Floor, Dumas House
2 Havelock Street
WEST PERTH WA 6005

8 March 2019

Dear Minister

The Youth Disability Advocacy Network Inc. (YDAN) is Western Australia's peak representative organisation for young people with disabilities. YDAN operates primarily as a human rights organisation that seeks to address the exclusion of young people with disability in a rapidly changing society. YDAN is becoming widely acknowledged as a leader in the field of current youth participation and advocacy and has received awards to this effect – namely a WA Youth Award 2018 and the Senses Australia 2018 Teresa Way award.

We are writing to you today in response to a growing number of reported incidences of discrimination and inaccessibility at many arts events across Western Australia and the nation.

As part of our ongoing commitment to advancing the rights of young people with disabilities in WA, YDAN maintains an online network for our members for the purposes of socialisation, mentorship and advice. What is concerning is the increase in requests for advice sought after being humiliated and degraded when accessing arts events – including officers of YDAN's Executive Committee, Deputy-Chair Rebecca included.

In response to these reported incidences, I (Rebecca) took it upon myself to start a petition and began compiling experiences from concert goers with disabilities, particularly those who are wheelchair users, from across Australia.

This petition has recently surpassed 20,000 signatures and supports the notion that this is an issue that many Australians and Western Australians wish to see resolved. We invite you to view this petition here: <https://bit.ly/2IZOKDI>

With the growth of this petition, a number of wheelchair users have shared their experiences of discrimination and inaccessibility at concerts and related events with YDAN. From being threatened with removal from the venue if they were to remain where they were (despite their ticket allowing them in that standing area), to only being allowed to sit with a companion and isolated from friends and family, to not going out because of difficulties with accessibility, to the difficulties with having to ring up to book accessibility tickets.

Unfortunately, Western Australia is not immune to these issues.

Only recently a story was circulated of a wheelchair user who was not permitted entry to a standing pit at Eminem's Perth concert at Optus Stadium. This was despite the wheelchair user accepting any 'safety risks'.

It was only this past week that I myself experienced discrimination while attending Rita Ora's concert at Metro City in Northbridge. Upon entering the building, I was told I would not be able to get down to the stage and dance floor (where the other patrons would be) due to stairs. This inaccessibility meant I was put in a segregated area off to the side (with other wheelchair users in the same boat) and was unable to use my ticket to its full potential.

As you may be aware, the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) (the DDA) makes it against the law to treat you unfairly because of your disability. This extends to accessing public places, and the provision of services including provided by entertainment venues.

We would love to have a discussion with you about this incident of inaccessibility experienced and how it could be resolved, as well as how to improve the accessibility and attitudes of other venues.

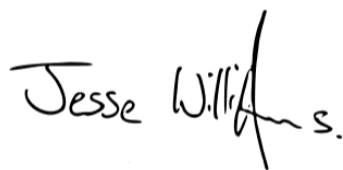
The arts play a vital role in social cohesion and encouraging positive pursuits for young people, it can have a profound impact on communities often making them feel much more alive. The arts also provide a unique mechanism for young people to express themselves, giving a place and sense of belonging to people who otherwise may not find one – an important aspect for people with disability. It is imperative that the arts, and the venues that showcase them, are accessible to all.

YDAN has been liaising with the Department of Communities, as we are aware the State Government is developing a 10-year plan to build an inclusive community which supports and empowers people with disability. In realising this commitment to inclusion, we hope that you will take us up on our offer to meet and have a constructive dialogue about event venues in Western Australia.

Yours faithfully



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"Dedicated young people advocating for the rights and inclusion of all youth living with disabilities in WA"

