

# GENDER EQUALITY PROJECT EQ - EQUALISER (ADELAIDE)



EQ Adelaide participants. Project delivered by Music SA in partnership with City of Adelaide, Music Development Office and Adelaide City of Music. Photographer Morgan Sette, courtesy of Music SA

## AGENDA 2030 - SDGs



## CULTURE 21 ACTIONS - COMMITMENTS

1. CULTURAL RIGHTS
2. HERITAGE, DIVERSITY AND CREATIVITY
5. CULTURE AND ECONOMY
6. CULTURE, EQUITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

**COVID, INCLUSION, WOMAN/WOMEN, GENDER,  
EQUITY, DIVERSITY, EMPOWERMENT, ECONOMIC,  
WELL-BEING, CREATIVE INDUSTRIES**



EQ Adelaide launch at The Lab. Project delivered by Music SA in partnership with City of Adelaide, Music Development Office and Adelaide City of Music. Photographer Samuel Graves, courtesy of Music SA

## 1. Adelaide and culture

Music is the heartbeat of Adelaide through our year-round festivals, on street performances and live music venues. In 2015 Adelaide was designated as a UNESCO City of Music to acknowledge the city's long and rich musical history, commitment to best practice, and active contribution to national and international partnerships that promote creativity and strengthen participation in cultural life.

Despite the global impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2021 Adelaide was named the 3rd most liveable city in the world and most liveable city in Australia. Adelaide's festivals, live performances and arts and cultural activities went ahead safely in 2020 and 2021, and these continue to be important platforms for the promotion of community resilience and wellbeing.

EQ-Equaliser was a UNESCO Cities of Music program delivered by South Australian not for profit organisation Music SA in partnership with Adelaide UNESCO City of Music and supported by City of Adelaide, South Australia Government's Music Development Office and Headspace — an Australian non-profit organisation for youth mental health. This gender equality project connected and supported the wellbeing of fifteen women and non-binary people aged 18-25 through music during the COVID-19 pandemic.

EQ is a response to chronic disadvantages for women and gender diverse people globally in the music industry including less pay and being underrepresented on radio playlists, festival line-ups, award nights and major industry boards where strategic decisions are made for the sector. In addition to the glass ceiling women working in the music sector are congregating in occupations where most employees are women such as music teaching in comparison with more technical roles such as sound engineering and music production dominated by males.



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**EQ CELEBRATES ADELAIDE'S CULTURAL DIVERSITY AS A SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE AND A VITAL COMPONENT OF CITIZENSHIP.**

## 2. Project goals and implementation

### 2.1. Main goal and specific objectives

EQ's main goal was to provide opportunities for women and non-binary people to participate in cultural life as culture creators and to amplify their creativity, perspectives and voices. In line with the cultural capabilities of the 2020 Rome Charter the EQ project fosters a more inclusive and sustainable city by:

- Enabling a space for women and non-binary people to discover their cultural roots so that they can recognise their identity and place in the city.
- Providing the means, resources, training and education for women and non-binary people to create their own cultural activities.
- Encouraging women and non-binary people to share their creativity and voices through music while building international connections and collaborations with fellow UNESCO Cities of Music.
- Removing inequalities in access and participation so that women and non-binary people can enjoy cultural activities in Adelaide.

### 2.2. Project development

EQ is a global collaboration involving fellow UNESCO Cities of Music Norrköping, Hannover and Auckland. EQ – Equaliser (Adelaide) was realised through cross-sector partnerships and a common goal to provide opportunities for women and non-binary people to participate in the cultural life of Adelaide, and to amplify their creativity, skills and voices through new connections and networks.



EQ Adelaide participants. Project delivered by Music SA in partnership with City of Adelaide, Music Development Office and Adelaide City of Music. Photographer Morgan Sette, courtesy of Music SA

Following an open call for participants fifteen women and non-binary people aged 18-25 were engaged to take part in the free six-week program which provided professional development opportunities in songwriting, sound recording, production, choreography, and filmmaking. Highly regarded female music industry professionals in South Australia worked with the EQ participants to write and record 'Can't Keep us Down', a contemporary song about equality, acceptance, unity and diversity.

**[Can't Keep Us Down \(Official EQ Adelaide Music Video\) - YouTube.](#)**

The 'Can't Keep us Down' music video and a short documentary highlighting the benefits of the program from the participants' perspective were launched in April 2021 with a public event at The Lab, a multi-genre performance space supporting art and culture in Adelaide.

**[EQ Adelaide UNESCO Program - Official Documentary 2021 - YouTube.](#)**

One of the main challenges for the project was its ambitious timeline, however with the commitment and passion of mentors, participants and facilitators, the intended outcomes were achieved. The delivery of the program during the COVID-19 pandemic also added to the complexity of risks that had to be mitigated throughout the project including at the launch event.

**EQ –EQUALISER (ADELAIDE) PROVIDED OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN AND NON-BINARY PEOPLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CULTURAL LIFE OF ADELAIDE, AND TO AMPLIFY THEIR CREATIVITY, SKILLS AND VOICES THROUGH NEW CONNECTIONS AND NETWORKS.**



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## 3. Impacts

### 3.1. Direct impacts

The EQ project provided an empowering opportunity for women and non-binary people to share their vision for a more equitable future through music. The project was a successful initiative with positive impacts amongst the group of participants and the wider music ecosystem. In the process of composing and recording 'Can't Keep us Down' participants learned about the value of creative collaborations while building meaningful relationships and support networks across the wider music ecosystem both locally and internationally through the UNESCO Cities of Music collaborations. These new relationships have been positive for the participants' ongoing professional development. They have continued to work with the program mentors on things such as private dance tuition, press photos and film.

EQ also provided an opportunity for people that were in a vulnerable situation due to the ongoing impacts of COVID to come together and work towards a shared goal. In addition to positive wellbeing outcomes the creative process opened a space for participants to look deeper into their cultures and celebrate their different backgrounds.

**THE EQ PROJECT DEMONSTRATES THAT CULTURE HAS A STRONG ROLE TO PLAY IN REDUCING INEQUALITIES THAT AFFECT VULNERABLE PEOPLE INCLUDING WOMEN AND GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLE AND IN THE LOCAL ACHIEVEMENT OF THE SDGS.**



### 3.2. Assessment

EQ-Adelaide was a successful project with both individual and collective outcomes. The official documentary, by Morgan Sette, captured the importance of this music project for participants and its ability to create an inclusive and safe space for them to share their voices and perspectives: "Something that I've taken away is how much I appreciate music and connecting to people through music and I hope the next round of young people are able to develop that as well because I think that's just a really valuable thing to have in your life".

### 3.3. Key factors

EQ - Equaliser raised awareness for gender equality in the Adelaide music industry while showcasing the talent and making visible the contributions of local women and non-binary people to the cultural life of the city. The project also provided professional development opportunities for younger voices aspiring to work in the music sector.

### 3.4. Continuity

The continuity of EQ and/or the development of other creative projects and initiatives for gender equality into the future requires broad consultative processes engaging women, non-binary people, and other vulnerable communities to ensure community ownership.

Funding programs to support the music industry should continue to prioritise representation, inclusivity and belonging through gender equality criteria, and funding distribution should continue to be evaluated overtime. Internationally, there are opportunities to work with fellow UNESCO Creative Cities of Music to collectively understand and tackle some of these challenges.

## 4. Further information

The City of Adelaide was a candidate for the fifth "UCLG – Mexico City – Culture 21" International Award (February – June 2022). The jury for the award drew up its final report in September 2022, and requested that the Committee on Culture promote this project as one of the good practices to be implemented through Agenda 21 for culture.

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