

Submission

No 99

## INQUIRY INTO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE 9-14 YEARS IN NSW

Organisation: Monkey Baa Theatre for Young People Ltd

Name: Ms Kerry Comeford

Position: Chair

Telephone: 02 93517938

Date Received: 14/08/2008

---

## Submission to the Enquiry into Children and Young People in NSW from Monkey Baa Theatre for Young People Ltd

Monkey Baa Theatre for Young People adapts Australian stories for the stage. Since 1998 the company has toured theatres and rural centres throughout Australia performing specifically to and for young people.

Monkey Baa also works with young people in rural and regional NSW in drama workshop settings and has recently completed a workshop program with young people attending PSFP (priority funded schools) in inner Sydney and Western Sydney.

Monkey Baa would like to make the following observations that may be relevant to the Enquiry:

- Research has shown that the inclusion of well designed arts programs have a major impact on all aspects of learning for young people.
- Involvement in the arts engages and motivates young people actively and personally, enhances creativity, builds stronger relationships within peer groups and improves problem solving skills.
- Young people find validation in attending theatrical presentations that are written specifically to reflect stories about their world in their words.
- Young people's theatre companies create specific programs and performances based on critical learning theory and constant interaction with their young audiences. Through a distinct voice, theatre can respond to, speak to and reflect the evolving needs and perceptions of young people and their constantly shifting and mutating youth culture.
- Cultural and aesthetic appreciation and participation cannot start too early. Children are entitled to the same rights as adults; therefore the same level of resources and funding that provide for adults should be allocated to the cultural, artistic and creative endeavours of young people. This is integral to building a critically aware, socially responsible and healthy society.
- The use of drama supports other literacy based programs in the school environment. The essence of drama is the use of enactment to improve a student's talking and listening skills, as well as the reading, writing and understanding of written text.

- The arts have the ability to develop the physical, social, emotional and spiritual growth in a young person's life. Beyond the recognisable tangible outcomes, there are wide ranging intangible outcomes such as patience, observation, risk taking in a safe environment, planning and social skills, working collaboratively and increased feelings of self esteem.
- Studies have shown that involvement in dramatic play has resulted in a reduction in 'risk factors' for marginalized youth, improved personal communication skills and builds a greater sense of community and social inclusion for these youths.
- The arts socialize and civilize, and contribute to the development of healthy, adaptable, individuals and societies.
- Young people can be better prepared for their adult lives through quality learning experiences in and through the arts.

It is Monkey Baa's observation that young people are severely disadvantaged in terms of arts related opportunities in rural and regional NSW. Whilst Monkey Baa recognises the extraordinary work generated through Arts NSW's Connect ED Program, limited funding means limited opportunities.

Monkey Baa Theatre for Young People urges the Committee to **recommend an increase in funding to Arts NSW for Arts/Education linked programs** with particular reference to the NSW Youth Action Plan specifically Action 29, which supports arts activities for young people in regional NSW.

Monkey Baa Theatre for Young People urges the Committee to **encourage Arts NSW to accelerate its plan to implement a Youth Arts Policy** detailing initiatives that inspire and involve children and young people in the arts.

*'The arts create the optimal conditions to engage students actively in learning that matters to them – a quality identified by researchers from cognitive science, student engagement and youth development as the key to deep understanding and self directed learning.'*

*The Third Space: When learning Matters*