

**Submission  
No 275**

**INQUIRY INTO THE MUSIC AND ARTS ECONOMY IN  
NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Name:** Mr Joe Glaysher

**Date received:** 26 February 2018

---

Joe Glaysher

Born 1947. Formerly teacher of Visual Arts; photographer specialising in music photography (jazz and improvised music); painter and printmaker; musician performing in community bands and various projects in the Illawarra area, some involving magpies.

### **Music in Education.**

I recently attempted to discourage a young musician from training as a music teacher. I pointed out that I'd seen more Music teachers driven mad than teachers of all other subjects put together. "This is a subject that you love. The students regard it as a waste of time (and behave accordingly); their parents regard it as a waste of time; teachers of other subjects regard it as a waste of time; school administrations regard it as a waste of time; and the Education Department regards it as a waste of time. They will all get together and destroy it for you."

I recently had a long chat with a young musician, \_\_\_\_\_ from Perth. A trained guitarist and composer, and a trained Music teacher, he chooses to teach Design and Technology rather than music. He is protecting his own commitment to his art.

In a past life I worked at Airds High School, a Centre of Excellence for Music". It was, to say the least, a difficult school. In Year 7 students specialising in Music were streamed separately and formed a distinct community within the school. In those classes, regardless of the subject being taught, it was possible to talk to a class and be listened to. This was in marked contrast to the way most other classes at that school were conducted.

The fundamental problem is the absence of any meaningful music education in primary education.

Music is a subject which requires specialist teaching from the earliest years (this is not true of my own subject, Visual Arts).

Children do not learn to sing, to pitch the voice, to add a harmony, to beat out a rhythm, or most importantly to co-operate with others in their music making.

By the time they reach high school, embarrassed by their own perceived lack of musical ability, music has become just another aural signal that they receive, or possibly worse, a tribal signifier.

As an Art teacher I have brought music making into my teaching:

- a. a Year 10 class referencing Jon Rose's Great Fences of Australia project in exploring the sonic possibilities of their own environment and documenting their explorations on video.
- b. A Year 12 senior Art class on a two day workshop, run by composer/guitarist Gary Butler, performing John Zorn's Cobra and using its game-playing aspects to investigate postmodern practice in the arts.
- c. In the first lesson of the year with a Year 11 class group, using a technique coming from saxophonist Peter Farrar, I ended the lesson with the lights out, sitting the group in a circle, having them take out their mobile phones and, working in pairs, dial each other. They then switched their phones to "speaker" and spent 15 minutes experimenting with the ensuing feedback. They later wanted to stage this at a school assembly – but schools don't like mobile phones!

- d. A Year 10 group of about 100 students, unprepared, attended a performance of John Cage's "4'33", followed by a surprisingly lucid discussion.

Most of this happened without the approval of the Music staff and, in the last case, in the face of the open disapproval of the senior Music teacher.

### **Music in the Community.**

Wollongong has a surprisingly vibrant musical community centring on the Wollongong Conservatorium. In addition to its in-house projects its outreach programme includes the organisation of bands, with instrumental instruction, in several local primary schools. Eric Dunan's jazz programme has achieved distinction internationally and David Rooney, in addition to his work in schools, organises weekly rehearsals for a Community Orchestra (Classical), The Con Artists (a large World Music group of all ages) and the Curious Rendition Orchestra (a band for adults beginning or relearning music). These groups perform regularly in public not only in the immediate area but across Australia and Internationally.

In addition these groups spawn other groups. I know of at least 5 bands currently performing, in very different styles, that come from the Con Artists and a number of younger members of that group have gone on to study music at tertiary level. The same is of course true of Eric Dunan's students, several of whom have gone on to become leading members of Australia's jazz world.

For me, as a visual artist, musical performance is an important part of my creative practice. My studio work is extremely solitary and I often resent the distraction of "persons from Porlock". Performance in a band is essentially communal. There is the exchange of ideas, informal tuition, general banter that has been missing in my life since retiring from teaching. There is also the necessary discipline, both individual and communal, that is required to bring a piece through to performance standard. This has obvious mental health benefits for all of us and is cost effective on that level alone.