

Submission
No 2

INQUIRY INTO ARTS AND MUSIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Sydney Conservatorium of Music

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I am making this submission as the Dean of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, The University of Sydney. I acknowledge that the SCM is located on the lands of the Gadi people and the site of First Nations first contact with Britain. On this site, music has been the means through which people have made a deep engagement with critical knowledge required for survival, historical memory, education, and culture. The SCM is privileged to continue this tradition with the provision of high-quality tertiary, secondary, and community music education.

For the ease of inclusion in this inquiry, I choose to respond to each of the terms of reference in the order in which they occur.

(a) the quality and effectiveness of arts and creative industries education, including:

(i) progress towards a long-term goal of quality arts and creative industries education

Education policy for creative arts education is largely aspirational. For instance, the ‘Creative communities arts culture and creative industries policy’ explicitly state a commitment to support NSW children’s education in collaboration with major arts organisation. However no active process to do so has been described. With this single example, we can extrapolate that it is easy to create a passionate document, but without process and allocated funding, not much will change. Any idea of the development of a long-term goal should be very clearly articulated with an accompanying road map of activity and financial support. The same document recommended this inquiry – so I am very glad that this is happening.

(ii) the present level and status of formal arts and creative industries education across all levels, including primary, secondary, and tertiary levels

Primary, secondary and tertiary levels of arts education represent completely different situations. At the moment public school children are disadvantaged by a curriculum that proscribes limited engagement with musical activity. Science now demonstrates that musical activity in primary schools enables a higher level of engagement with other symbolic areas such as maths and language – there should be MORE opportunities to make music rather than fewer. Non-public school students are advantaged as there is a broader opportunity for out of curriculum, or co-curricula music study. Instrumental and ensemble experiences are a proven means of achieving cognitive and emotional goals that last a life time. It seems unfair that only students with a financially privileged background can experience this. Queensland has a completely different model where ALL school children are funded by the state to engage in music lessons and ensemble activity.

Tertiary music and arts education is directed at students who have already come to an understanding of the strong and compelling use of music as a means of interpreting, negotiating and extending thinking. Universities, TAFE and private providers fit this space well. All of these areas need support to ensure that the arts facilities are up to date and capable of preparing students for a 21st Century approach to music making. Here there are major emerging professional areas that go well beyond traditional musical performance work and heading towards the development of film, electronic, games, and other sonic landscapes. The reputation of NSW tertiary music schools is high internationally with Sydney Conservatorium being in the worlds top twenty institutions. What places it there

is the quality of education and facilities, and orientation towards work readiness, a focus on First Nations led music, and an eclectic and inclusive approach to music making.

(iii) robust and evidence-based arts and creative industries education in initial teacher education courses in the tertiary sector

There is only one specialist music education degree taught in NSW - the Bachelor of Music Education at Sydney University, there is also a PG version of the same. All other courses are education degrees that *may* have some music units added. There is no formal means of formal accrediting instrumental teachers for school environments (the accreditation is the problem, not the ability). For instance, the Bachelor of Music Performance includes education units of study, but that is not accredited by NESA despite the high quality of the performers craft and teaching ability. All BMusEducation students are immediately employed as specialist music teachers in schools.

(iv) the role of arts organisations and creative professionals in education and the development of creative skills across the arts

Many arts organisations receive extra grant funding if educational and outreach activities are included. This is laudable, but professional performing organisations do not necessarily have the skills to undertake a sustained teaching role in schools. Instead, there is an 'excursion' mentality with the excursion rarely meeting curriculum roles. However, for some children, especially in regional areas, these are the only professional live music that they encounter.

(v) the contribution of the national performing arts training organisations in New South Wales and the adequacy of the support they receive

There is no doubt that any evaluation of national performing arts training orgs is of incredible value to young people and their communities. However, it seem that everything is done on a very tight budget, or, reduced in size to fit a budget. There is nothing systematic about funding these sorts of activities.

(vi) the efficacy of the current primary and secondary school curriculum in delivering learning outcomes in arts and creative industry-related subjects

This is currently a very difficult space. The requirements of school curriculum could be described as adequate. However, they do not lead to the development of real skill unless your school is private and parents are capable of providing funds for 'extra' lessons. This is an inequitable and unsustainable position.

(vii) the availability of support for teachers and principals in delivering quality arts education, and ensuring that an inclusive approach is taken towards resource allocation for regional schools across New South Wales

Regional schools, and in particular – the Association of NSW Regional Conservatoriums – play an essential role for arts/music education and are chronically underfunded. At a recent meeting of the directors of the ANRC I noted that the funding provided for each member is simply NOT ENOUGH to ensure viability. Nearly every regional con is struggling with the costs associated with building space and musical

resources. Most receive modest state funding *that is directed towards salaries*. This only does half the job. If the conservatorium is in a large regional area (such as Orange), then there is community support (that is still not enough), smaller areas (such as Young and Gunnedah) are barely surviving month to month. If the State were serious about arts education, then this is a CRITICAL space to support.

(viii) the most effective approach for the arts, culture, and creative industries to co-ordinate with the education system to support the development of creative skills

Funding, real estate, qualified teachers...

(ix) ways that students can learn entrepreneurial skills and gain industry experience to ensure they are job-ready

The Sydney Conservatorium has in industry readiness course that is applied across the final year of study (fourth year). Mirroring industry, the students work in eclectic groups to prepare an artistic response to a societal problem (homelessness, climate change, cultural diversity etc). During the year the students work on the creative project along side a mentor. They receive weekly classes from industry professionals, how to write grant applications, WHS, tax laws, securing venues, creating a business plan, working with diverse people, finance, technology (etc). In the end, the students produce their final creative work as well as a professional level 'pitch' for their work that is presented to industry professionals. In this way we have systemised a work readiness initiative. Students also have formal placements in industry as part of their studies.

(x) measures of success in arts education

It would be astonishing if we could say that every primary and secondary aged students has had the chance to have a series of instrumental lessons, participated in a musical ensembles, created a work of art, participated in a dramatic production ...

(xi) factors influencing student decisions to pursue further arts education, including but not limited to course choice, course location and the method of study

Research from SCM has shown that students make their choice to study music at a tertiary level when they are about in year 10. To make that choice they will have had earlier opportunities in childhood to experience hands on music making. They may have had instrumental lessons as a supplement to regular schooling. They will have had a school that had a variety of music programs that they could be involved with. They would have parents who value arts education in general. Most importantly, they will have a school that is well resourced to teach Music 1 or Music 2 curriculum in years 11-12. Timetabling these subjects is important such that they do not cross over other subjects of importance for students (such as having history and music taking the same space in the timetable when students often choose these subjects in combination). To make a career choice in music, young people need to have real practical experience in music making (regardless of genre) and there are simply very many schools that do not have teachers with formal musical experience, or the appropriate infrastructure.

(xii) notable approaches to arts and creative industries education in other jurisdictions

Non-school educators (such as youth choirs or ensembles) take a large weight off the formal education systems through the provision of high quality extra- curricula

experiences. Relying on these is inequitable as only students whose parents have an income to invest in this are able to attend.

The Queensland government supports instrumental and ensembles experiences through the recognition through work rights and curriculum of peripatetic music teachers. European schools have a stronger, funded, commitment to music education.

(b) the quality and effectiveness of music education and training, including:

(i) progress towards a long-term goal of quality music education, including actions to address identified barriers

In NSW music education for children interested in music education have a basic experience within school. Outside school they can experience individual music lessons or community ensembles. For many students taking AMEB exams can help structure these experiences. Funding and opportunity are the main barriers.

(ii) the present level and status of formal music education across all levels, including primary, secondary, and tertiary levels

Responding with a focus on tertiary education. The Sydney Conservatorium is the flagship music educator preparing performers in a wide variety of genres, composers, sound designers, creative industries, opera, music theatre, music education, pop music. Students audition to secure a place and the quality of students is high. There is 87% employment of students in the industry concurrent with their studies. This is a four year degree.

UNSW, UTS, Macquarie, WSU – all provide three year degrees in music or sound production. There are a plethora of full-fee paying private institutions as well (AIM, Excelsior, AFTRS for instance). There are also Diploma level courses (and one Creative Arts Degree) located in TAFE. All of these institutions prepare students for professional music making and all are largely successful. The international

(iii) robust and evidence-based music education in initial teacher education courses in the tertiary sector

SCM provides a four-year evidenced-based music education degree. The degree has the dual purpose of the development of school educators who have high musical capability. These specialist music teachers are incredibly valuable in the school system. However, many schools are reliant on teachers with other areas of subject expertise to teach the music curriculum. This scenario is a disaster. There should only be specialist music teachers in the classroom.

(iv) the role of regional conservatoriums and creative professionals in music education

The Regional Conservatoriums group is vital for the promulgation of music education at pre-tertiary and community levels. Each member is working in drastically different circumstances that are related to the wealth of the area (or real lack of it), the size of the region, the community support for music education, the relationship with local schools, the interest of local industry, and the quality of the premises in which they work. Each is currently supported by a 'State Grant' that on the whole pays for administrative support. In my interaction with the group I find that there is little financial support for instrument acquisition, building maintenance, website development, marketing, financial acquittal, or any kind of 'special' musical activity. The Regional Cons are vital for children

and communities and deserve the form of support such that their directors do not have to constantly write requests for funding to support things that should simply be BAU.

(v) the efficacy of the current primary and secondary school curriculum in delivering learning outcomes in music related subjects

I have no comment here.

(vi) the availability of support for teachers and principals in delivering quality music education and ensuring that an inclusive approach is taken towards resource allocation for regional schools across New South Wales

Once again, regional wealth variation has a direct impact on the quality of music teaching in schools in regional areas. The size of the school dictates how many teachers are available for any subject area. In smaller, remote, schools it is very likely that specialist music education is not available.

(vii) the most effective approach for the music and the creative industries to co-ordinate with the education system to support the development of creative skills

Most professional creative arts organisations are required to include regional areas as part of their application for funding processes. This is a great idea that contributes well the musical life and enjoyment of local communities. But these same arts organisations are also required to ‘teach’ in schools as part of their remit. These sorts of ‘incursions’ are short term (a couple of hours a year) and do not constitute a sustainable practice. Most of the professionals engaged in this are keen, but do not have pedagogical experience. Musica Viva has a robust and regular program of working in regional schools and the majority of their professional musicians are also music educators. Incursions into schools need to be undertaken with purpose with qualified musician/teachers, with musical material that supports the curriculum, and that actively involve children in the activity (rather than being bystanders).

(viii) ways that students can learn entrepreneurial skills and gain industry experience to ensure they are job ready

As written higher in this document, The Sydney Conservatorium has in industry readiness course that is applied across the final year of study (fourth year). Mirroring industry, the students work in eclectic groups to prepare an artistic response to a societal problem (homelessness, climate change, cultural diversity etc). During the year the students work on the creative project along side a mentor. They receive weekly classes from industry professionals, how to write grant applications, WHS, tax laws, securing venues, creating a business plan, working with diverse people, finance, technology (etc). In the end, the students produce their final creative work as well as a professional level ‘pitch’ for their work that is presented to industry professionals. In this way we have systemised a work readiness initiative. Students also have formal placements in industry as part of their studies.

(ix) measures of success in music education

The Alberts group have published a sensible description of what quality music education looks like: https://www.alberts.co/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Alberts_Music-Education-Quality-Framework_A4_V3.pdf

However, this document pertains rather to the content, delivery, and cognitive approaches of music educators rather than the outcomes for student learning.

From a child's perspective, success in music education is the ability to interact frequently with peers in music making. Measures of success for the state would include the numbers of students engaged, the length of time that they have to engage, the variety of different musics that they explore, the number and qualifications of teachers, the funding schools and community groups receive, and positive changes in students other scholastic areas (such as language learning). Social measure of success are the frequency of diverse groups making music together, and the frequency of concerts/musical activity that are oriented towards community settings.

From Europe we can explore the quality assurance philosophy and process for music education in tertiary institutions. <https://musique-ge.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/2023.11.10-MusiQuE-Revised-Standards-for-Institutional-Reviews.pdf>

In this document two important student focused elements are articulated:

a) Educational Processes looks into topics related to the sum of the total work and processes of learning and teaching that take place in classrooms, studios, performance spaces, reading rooms, practice rooms and during individual study;

b) Learning Resources and Student Support addresses topics related to all means and resources and the ways in which these make learning and teaching be conducted most effectively and in a most sustainable way

(x) factors influencing student decisions to pursue further music education, including but not limited to course choice, course location and the method of study

Research from SCM indicates that students make a decision to undertake tertiary study in/around year 10 in school. Success factors are related to having positive musical experiences coupled with positive self-esteem stemming from those experiences. Prior to year 10 students are prepared for the choice through classroom and extra-curricula musical experiences. Success in year 10 leads to the choice of either music 1 or music 2 courses – both of which are suitable preparation for tertiary study. Music is a very practical art and it is usually not possible to study from a remote location. Consequently most music students will choose a university that is proximal to home. The SCM is the largest tertiary school in NSW with a comprehensive and specialised four year course, with UNSW, UWS, Macquarie, and Newcastle providing three year studies. UTS has a specialised sonic arts course. Private colleges provide full – fee paying courses. TAFE provides diploma level courses as well as one Bachelor level course (Creative Arts) at Ultimo.