

**Submission
No 13**

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

Organisation: Musical Futures International

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Musical Futures International

**Submission to the Joint Select Committee on Arts and Music
Education and Training in New South Wales**

Inquiry into arts and music education and training in New South Wales

July 2024

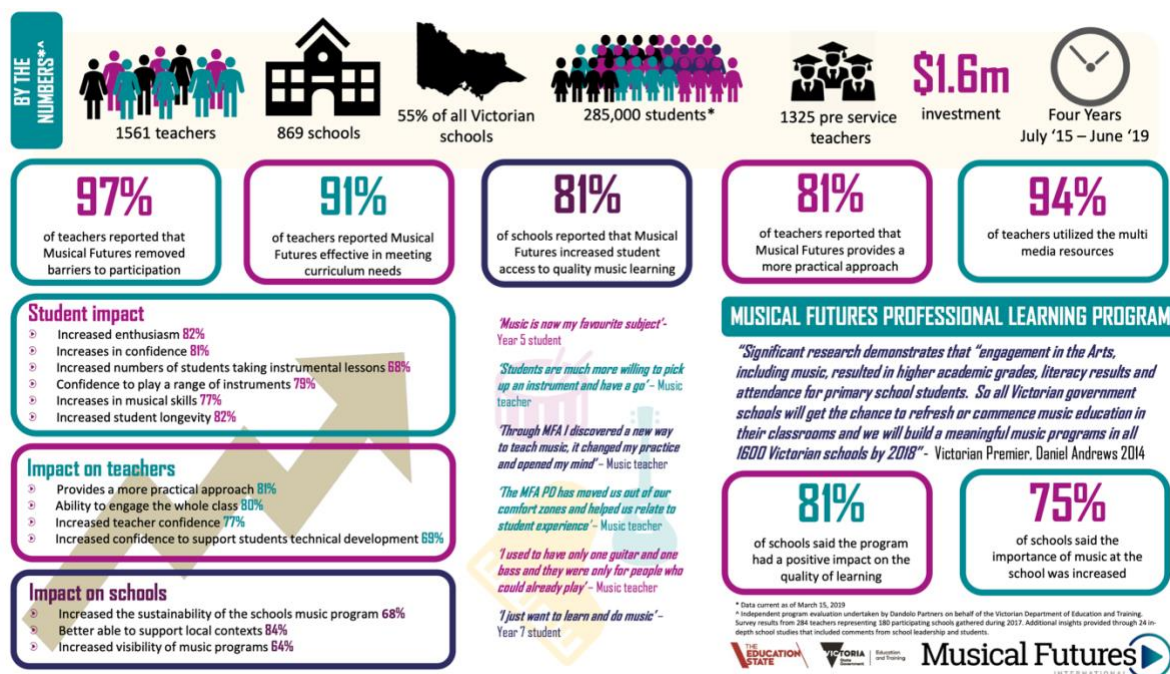
About Musical Futures International

Musical Futures International is a not-for-profit organisation providing professional learning, curated teaching resources and community network support to music educators in the delivery of learner-led, future-focused and engaging music programs in Australia. The organisation moved its headquarters to NSW in 2024. It is built on a rich and continuing history of supporting the professional learning of music teachers, primarily in Victoria, but also throughout the other states of Australia, with thousands of teachers undertaking professional learning through Musical Futures programs.

Musical Futures International was established in 2012 and initially operated under the name 'Musical Futures Australia', following a 2010/11 Musical Futures pilot program undertaken with a select number of schools in Victoria and Queensland. This successful pilot led to a further roll out to nearly 300 teachers in Victoria, South Australia and Queensland and, in the latter half of 2012, 47 more Victorian schools took part in Musical Futures professional learning as part of the Strategic Partnership program with the Victorian Department of Education.

This program led to the wider adoption of the Musical Futures approach throughout the state of Victoria to help increase access to music education in over 800 schools (approximately half of Victorian schools). Musical Futures Australia worked directly with the Victorian Government (Labour) and the Department of Education and Training to roll out Musical Futures across Victoria between July 2015 and June 2019, with around 1600 teachers receiving professional learning and more than 285,000 students impacted by the Musical Futures approach. A widespread external evaluation of the program by Dandolo Partners¹ found that 97% of teachers felt that Musical Futures approaches removed barriers to student learning, with 81% of students agreeing that the programs increased enthusiasm and confidence with music, and 84% of schools noting that Musical Futures approaches helped to better support local contexts and improve the sustainability of music programs.

See below for an infographic showing the overall impact of the Musical Futures roll out in Victoria:



In 2016, Musical Futures Australia expanded to become Musical Futures International Inc. Supported by The NAMM Foundation (USA), it began to roll out a comprehensive workshop and consultancy program to international schools, government education institutions, private and studio instrumental practices, music schools, higher education institutions and academia in Australia, New Zealand, Asia, and The Middle East.

¹ Dandolo Partners (2017). Musical Futures Australia professional learning program evaluation: Final report.

Since 2018, Musical Futures International has worked with over 3000 teachers and delivered more than 100 workshops across the world.

Today, Musical Futures International hosts annual professional learning events, including 'Listen & Play Your Way', a NESA-accredited professional learning day in Sydney, the 'Winter Jam' in Melbourne and Auckland, and the 'Big Gig' in Perth, Bangkok, Kobe and Mumbai. Thousands of teachers continue to choose Musical Futures International as their preferred provider of professional learning in music education.

Musical Futures professional learning is supported by a comprehensive online resource platform for teachers and an active free community based in social media. In a recent survey, 85% of teachers suggested they "couldn't live without Musical Futures resources" and many suggested that they felt validated and supported in providing engaging and relevant music programs for their students.

Musical Futures also works directly with several Australian universities to support Initial Teacher Education (ITE) including, University of Melbourne, the University of Sydney and the University of Newcastle. Support is provided via guest lectures, professional learning for academic staff and provision of Musical Futures resources for coursework.

Musical Futures International is now co-directed by Chris Koelma and Anna Gower who support a team of contracted, school music education trained and accredited facilitators in Australia and the Asia region.

Chris Koelma is a music educator who trained in NSW and taught in NSW public primary and secondary schools. He then lived and worked in Argentina and Malaysia for a combined total of 10 years as a Director of Music in large international schools, before moving back to Australia to take up a post as lecturer in Music education at the University of Newcastle. He also established 'Music Teachers In International Schools', a global professional learning network for music educators working in international schools around the world.

Anna Gower is a music educator currently teaching at in international school in Bangkok, Thailand. She has been the education director for Musical Futures International since 2016 and has been instrumental in the development of professional learning programs and resources throughout the history of Musical Futures both in the UK and Australia. Anna was a key member of the team supporting the initial development of the Musical Futures approach in the UK and has led on the international expansion of Musical Futures. Anna is a widely respected voice in global music education and regularly delivers workshops in Australia.

We would be pleased to appear before the Committee to provide further information about the Musical Futures International program. Depending on the Committee's hearing schedule, it may also be possible for us to facilitate expertise from our global team to assist you in your deliberations.

Musical Futures – a background

Through the Music Manifesto, founded in 2004 by the Blair Government, the United Kingdom moved from a low level of school music provision towards universal music education provision. While school children are the ultimate beneficiaries of Musical Futures, the program is actually about *providing teachers with new skills and the confidence to deliver a new approach to music education*. Musical Futures is an approach, not a curriculum or syllabus. It has been integrated with various curriculum structures around the world with astounding success. Importantly, Musical Futures is a highly efficient way of commencing or increasing music provision at a school level, and leaves in place an easily **sustainable** program which involves the entire school community.

Musical Futures is a new way of thinking about music making in schools. It brings non-formal teaching and informal learning approaches into the more formal context of the school music classroom. It supports active, contemporary music-making, drawing on the existing passions young people have for music and reflecting and building upon these in the classroom. It is designed to address the paradox that exists around music and teenagers; music is a most significant part of their cultural and leisure time pursuits, yet often remains an unpopular and insignificant role in their school life.

Over £4 million (circa AU\$7.5 million) has been spent to date in developing the Musical Futures program in the U.K. This was originally funded by The Paul Hamlyn Foundation. The core of Musical Futures is about providing new skills to teachers. *The program's key investment is in teachers*. The aim is to create engaging and practical classroom music that fosters performances throughout the school. Research across jurisdictions worldwide shows that one of the key barriers to the effective delivery of school music is teacher skills and confidence. Musical Futures is very carefully targeted at allowing teachers and schools to make much more of existing resources, providing a music education to whole classes of students in a more meaningful and cost-effective way than traditional approaches.

Musical Futures provides a model for engaging all young people in music-making at a time in their life when music is not only a passion, but a big part in shaping their social identity. Musical Futures is therefore primarily designed for secondary schools, with a particular focus on the U.K.'s Key Stage 3, which is analogous to Years 7-10 in Australia. Here in Australia, Musical Futures Australia tested the program with years 5 and 6 as part of the 2010/11 pilot and found that the approach could be used just as effectively with primary students and teachers. In fact, the Victorian trial of the use of Musical Futures in years 5 and 6 has resulted in the program being extended to those age groups in the UK, such was its success. The subsequent development of the 'Everyone Can Play' program provided teachers with resources specifically designed for use with younger students. Originally created and piloted with students in Year 2, the 'Everyone Can Play' resources are most popular with Year 3 and 4 and have been used widely with years 5 & 6 as well. Musical Futures approaches have also been successfully adapted and used with lower primary in Victoria in conjunction with play-based learning approaches that originate in early childhood education. This means that the approach can be used from primary, across into lower and middle secondary school before students choose either HSC or VET music programs.

Importantly, Musical Futures is a highly efficient way of commencing or increasing music provision at a school level, and leaves in place an easily sustainable program which involves the entire school community. Musical Futures is an evidence-based approach now with significant national and international academic research into the efficacy of the program to support student engagement and build teacher confidence and competence to deliver engaging classroom music teaching. In fact, Musical Futures is the most researched music education pedagogy this century.

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Executive Summary

Musical Futures International welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Inquiry into arts and music education and training in New South Wales by the Parliament of NSW Joint Select Committee on Arts and Music Education and Training in New South Wales.

This submission seeks to draw the Committee's attention to:

- How the NSW Education system might provide school-based music learning to the vast majority of NSW school children;
- The importance of providing more school music to the students of NSW schools; and,
- Models which provide cost effective, sustainable and engaging music programs in NSW classrooms.

The provision of school-based music is haphazard. Members of the Committee may recognise the names of several state system schools where music has something of a heritage and reputation. For each of these well provisioned schools there are many, many more that cannot offer an effective and sustainable program. In fact, the Stevens Report, commissioned by the Music Council of Australia in 2003 found that 77% of Australian State School children nationally still have no access to effective school music programs, compared to only 17% of independent school students.

In our view it is unlikely that this situation has changed in any substantive way over the past two decades. If anything, it may have been further weakened.

Why is it important that students have access to music in schools? Ignoring for the moment the intrinsic values of music and its economic value and importance as a key part of the creative sector, an effective music education supports the other educational objectives of Government, such as:

1. Improving student engagement with school
2. Improving student self-esteem, confidence and teamwork
3. Providing students with another area in which to achieve and be successful
4. Providing opportunities to be creative and work collaboratively
5. Assisting in the transition between primary and secondary schooling
6. Improving literacy and numeracy rates
7. Improving educational outcomes for Indigenous youth and disadvantaged young Australians, especially those from low socioeconomic backgrounds

There is now over 60 years of research into the benefits associated with music learning. The importance of music education and the benefits that come through participation within school education is now well understood and thoroughly documented and this submission seeks to highlight this research to the Committee.

There are several key questions on the issues of school music that require addressing. These are:

- **Equity of access.** The poorer the family, or the less well-resourced the school, the less likely it is that students will have the opportunity to access the benefits of school music. In short, the children of aspirational Australian families are the most likely to miss out on school music.
- **Sustainability.** Music is an area of the curriculum that has proven itself to be difficult to sustain. Its continuity is susceptible to teacher change, timetabling issues, physical resources and inequities of

access within schools themselves. Furthermore, the nature of the delivery of many music programs increases the difficulty in sustaining programs. As a result, comparatively few schools have sustainable programs.

- **Teacher skills and confidence.** This is especially an issue in the primary sector. The fact is that most teachers are left with only a rudimentary understanding of music because of their experience of music in school and the low level of music learning during initial teacher education. This undermines their confidence to sing, play or engage their students musically in class.

While we have sought below to highlight many of the deficiencies and issues for music within NSW schools, our focus is on how these deficiencies can be reversed and removed. A music education can help students prepare for further education, employment and their future role within our community. The challenge is how this can be achieved *sustainably*.

While there are many criticisms of the level of music provision within NSW schools, it should be said that the HSC curriculum and VET programs are sound in their approach. According to NESA, around 5000 students are engaged in music at Year 12 each year. Generally, these students are well served in our opinion by the course offerings available to them at this level. In fact, the NSW HSC Music 1 curriculum is widely regarded as a well-rounded and exemplary music course for its breadth and student-centredness.

Beyond any policy framework, it is the delivery of programs and curriculum that is critical to the outcomes or reforms that may take place because of this Inquiry. In our opinion, and through the comments we will provide, we believe that the following items will be critical success factors including:

1. Support for quality teaching, professional learning and workplace skills
2. Support for school leadership to take risks and to try new ways and new ideas
3. Provide students with relevant and engaging programs and activities
4. Develop stronger partnerships by encouraging the sharing of resources between schools
5. Strengthening accountability and transparency

Musical Futures International believes this inquiry provides an excellent opportunity for the Committee to work collaboratively with state education authorities and music organisations to improve the provision of music education in schools in NSW.

Key Submissions

- Despite its proven links to intellectual development, in particular in the areas of literacy and numeracy, and its role in personal and social development, music education has a low status within NSW state school curricula.
- The curriculum itself though is fundamentally sound and it could be argued that it is in fact the best curriculum in the country.
- The primary issue is the ability of schools to deliver that curriculum. Music learning is frequently not of a continuous, sequential or developmental nature. Music education therefore lacks, in many instances, a core place in the curriculum and access by students is haphazard. Perhaps music is offered in only one of four terms, or music is done only periodically or when there is a school event and is substituted with other activities in between.
- Quality music education is highly variable and especially variable in primary schools. Students who are lucky enough to have a classroom teacher with a musical background are likely to be able to participate in music-making. Teachers without that background are generally far less able to deliver the curriculum.
- Classroom music – the typical classes offered in Year 7, 8 or 9 lack relevance to the student. Often the result is a teenage child who is disengaged by school-based music. The contradiction is that the vast

majority of these students place a high value and importance on music in their private life. The approach to classroom music has de-coupled the *learning of music* from the *making of music*.

- This low status and inconsistent approach to music is contrary to the role music plays in:
 - the development of the individual;
 - its place in the community, and;
 - the scale both in value and employment opportunities in the music industry and the broader creative sector it serves.
- Behavioural and neurological research has demonstrated positive linkages between music learning and the development of mathematical and language skills, particularly among younger (pre and primary aged) children. Music has been shown in this research to aid spatial relations, patterns and sequences in mathematics and the development of vocabulary and memory in literacy.
- These non-music outcomes of music participation should be considered as tools to assist in the development of numeracy and literacy skills in children.
- Confidence, self-esteem, a sense of achievement and the willingness to take risks with learning are just some of the social and personal skills that have been shown to be enhanced through music education. As music is a social art, it is best created with others. Classrooms and groups within schools therefore provide the ideal environment to develop these skills.
- A principal cause for concern is the significant shortcomings evident in initial teacher education in music, in particular the generalist primary teacher who will, in the majority of NSW schools, take responsibility for a student's initial music learning. The issue is simple. Too few undergraduate teachers have a background in music and their course of study at university as part of a teaching qualification is insufficient to allow them to develop a music skill of their own or an understanding of the pedagogy. The result is that many teachers have too little skill and vastly too little confidence to deliver effective music programs.
- In-service professional learning opportunities in music are also very limited in NSW, so it is very difficult for a teacher to improve their skills in music teaching over time. What is available tends to be built around pedagogies that are the best part of 100 years old (Kodaly, Orff, Dalcroze, American Band approach and so on). These approaches, while still generally sound, are not contextualised to the contemporary student who lives in a world of electronic music, bands, streaming and playlists. Relevance and engagement become a serious issue, as does teacher satisfaction.
- The music sector offers significant vocational opportunities and Australians are highly regarded within the international music world. Generally speaking, students who are strong in music do have access to programs that will continue to develop their skills to a high level. The Australian Institute of Music (AIM), JMC Academy, and regional conservatoriums provide pathways for some of these students. Amongst players of orchestral instruments, The Sydney Conservatorium of Music has also played a significant role in the development of these students over the years.
- Opportunities for a career in the music or creative sector using musical skills are significant, but musical careers should not just be seen through the prism of performance. Vocational musical opportunities also exist in the creative side, composition, arranging and production. The VET music program is quite successful in this regard as evidenced by the number of tertiary institutions offering music qualifications, other than music teaching within NSW.
- A key issue to the provision of music and the educational and vocational outcomes lies with the pedagogies used to teach 21st century students in music. The driver behind Musical Futures is that music learning in the 21st century requires a 21st century context. That context includes the students' personal relationship with music through:
 - YouTube,

- Social media,
 - Gaming; and,
 - Personal playlists.
- Much of the current approach often does not consider that many students have powerful compositional tools on their computers and phones, such as BandLab, Soundtrap and GarageBand, and that many are already composing, creating and promoting those pieces through social networks, YouTube and other streaming platforms. It also ignores the significant amount of informal learning of music that takes place via the internet, mostly via Youtube, featuring the guitar, bass, drums and electronic production tools, which are by far the dominant instrument types. Yet the dominant form of large-scale music participation is the concert band, an ensemble that is made up of woodwind and brass instruments. Within these traditional ensembles there is usually a place for *one* bass guitarist, *perhaps* a guitarist and a drummer or two, if the second drummer plays percussion. A number of schools have well developed concert band programs, but in many schools, this has failed to get traction over a long period of time. Despite its success in some schools, it is a creation of the 1920's and lacks relevance, creates sub-groups like 'band geeks', and reinforces the extraordinary gulf that exists between school music and 'our' music.
 - The quality of initial teacher education, curriculum issues and resourcing in music education means that Australian students are not, as yet, benefiting from the focus on creativity that is being fostered internationally. In environments such as the UK, Finland, Singapore and others, music plays an important role in developing creativity. The types of music learning fostered through Musical Futures with its emphasis on creating, arranging, jamming and publishing will enhance a broader holistic learning focus on creativity.
 - The Australian Government, through the 'National Review of School Music Education'², has at its disposal a very well-crafted document that highlighted many of the issues evident in the Australian context. The NSW Government contributed to its content at the time and many of these recommendations can readily be applied to NSW schools. The recent 'Music Education: A Sound Investment'³ report, commissioned by Alberts: The Tony Foundation, has reinforced many of these ideas. Musical Futures was able to apply many of these recommendations within the Victorian context, including delivering on the provision of high-quality teaching resources, delivery and support of initial teacher education in music, continuous professional learning for 1500+ teachers, development of approaches that suit contemporary students, and an approach that improves the musical skills of teachers.

The best way to, in our view, repair music education provision within NSW is to:

- Maintain the existing curriculum (with the welcome introduction of the new 7-10 syllabus from 2026).
- Implement cost effective programs in areas of need or opportunity that:
 - Focus on programs that develop teaching skills.
 - Provide a more engaging approach for contemporary students that makes their school music more relevant to their personal music.
 - Provide opportunities for students to share, create and publish their work.
 - Concentrate on approaches to school music that deliver value for money – that can maximise resources within schools and share resources across schools - especially across primary and secondary school.

² Pascoe, R., et. al (2005). National review of school music education: augmenting the diminished.

³ Collins, A., Dwyer, R., & Date, A. (2020). Music education: A sound investment. Alberts, The Tony Foundation.

Current provision of music education in New South Wales

Music education provided through specific funding for music education in schools

Funding directly to schools

Currently there appears to be very little information regarding the amount of funding from the NSW Government directed at music education provision in NSW. In primary schools, teachers receive a compulsory 6-10 hours of teacher education in music during their entire undergraduate degree, and then often begin working at a school where little/no musical instruments or resources are provided. What resources are provided are often broken, in disrepair, or irrelevant to current student interests in music-making and creativity i.e. simple percussion instruments and recorders.

The recent unveiling of the Creative Communities initiative ([see here](#)) makes no connection to how creativity or music will be supported in NSW schools, apart from the mention of embedding schools teachers into a Powerhouse Parramatta team to make curriculum connections.

There has been mention in recent NSW government media releases of some funding being used to lift standards of “important” facilities in schools, including performance spaces ([see here](#)), but no tangible figure is provided.

Some other funding for music education in schools has come via the Regional Conservatorium funding program. Programs such as the ‘Schools Program’ at the Conservatorium of Newcastle offer a ‘school band program’ and a ‘school tuition program’, both of which offer limited opportunities to students in 3 public primary schools in the Newcastle area, whilst the other 21 public primary schools in Newcastle do not benefit from this provision.

Funding via external program providers

A second source of funding that has been used in other states is direct to external program providers. Musical Futures International has benefitted from the support of the Department of Education in Victoria through the initial pilot program (2010), the Strategic Partnership Program (2012) and the Victorian Department of Education Musical Futures professional learning program (2015-2019). There are other providers to benefit from similar arrangements in Victoria.

The important thing in our view is that spending on these types of initiatives should only be done when there is a tangible and sustainable benefit left behind. This is best demonstrated through the development of teaching skills, confidence and capabilities through the professional development of teachers, and evidenced through internal and independent evaluations of said programs.

The worst kind of expenditure in this area is when specialist teachers or programs are parachuted into schools or locations, the program is delivered, funding is reduced or removed at some future point and the status quo is resumed. There is a short-term gain for the students participating in these programs or activities, but there is little likelihood that a sustainable program will result.

Music education provided through non-specific funding, for example, general student resource package funding

The funding available to music through general funding arrangements is highly variable and somewhat haphazard. Generally, the availability of funds mirrors that of the status of music in that school. It is natural for

funding to be more readily available where an area of activity is considered important and valued than where it is not.

We know of instances in primary schools where the 'music' budget is as low as \$50 per annum. Clearly music is not a priority in these schools for one reason or another. On the other hand, other schools will invest heavily in their music programs.

Our experience though is favourable toward schools allocating their resources to music when it:

- is shown that it can be delivered to **all** students
- is sufficiently engaging for students to want to be involved
- represents good value for money
- can engage existing teacher resources more productively

In the case of each of the Musical Futures pilot schools, an investment by the school was required. Primarily this was an investment in equipment (drums, guitars, ukuleles, basses & amplifiers) that would enable whole classes of students to participate, as well as enabling the efficient use of available space.

In the attached Musical Futures pilot report compiled by Dr Neryl Jeanneret (Appendix 1), table 1 shows the basic school information for the 10 Victorian schools involved. Each school, with the exception of Carranballac College, required some equipment in order for them to be involved in the pilot and to be effective in the program delivery. The funds for this equipment came from the schools' global budgets. The average expenditure was around \$7,500 with three schools requiring up to \$15,000 worth of equipment. The pilot programs in these schools involved selected classes with the average participation per school of around 130 students for an average equipment cost per student of around \$59. When you consider this equipment has the potential to provide a music education resource for the whole of Years 7-9, then the equipment cost per student on average across these schools falls to less than \$20 per student.

Securing the resources that a program needs is often a challenge, however, when the value of this approach was demonstrated to a principal and where there was a desire on behalf of the school to offer or improve music provision, the monies were found.

In these schools there was also no need for any additional teachers - the program was delivered by the classroom teacher with or without an instrumental music teacher assisting, depending on the location.

Mostly the program was delivered using existing, but reconfigured, standard classrooms that were allocated for music use.

With many barriers removed, principals have been willing to invest in Musical Futures because it is accessible, provides quality, sequential and ongoing music learning, is relevant and engaging for the student, reinvigorating for the teacher, affordable and sustainable.

Music education provided through parent contribution

Parental support for music in State system schools is something of a Catch 22. There needs to be something to support for there to be support.

The Australian Music Association research paper: *Australian Attitudes to Music* (2001 & 2006), showed that many parents believe that *the study of music is part of a well-rounded education* (95%) and that *all schools should offer instrumental music as part of their regular curriculum* (91%).

So, support for music by parents is strong.

This is evident in schools where music programs do exist. Many have 'Friends of Music' groups, active alumni programs, and so on. Parents are often having to spend money on equipment and resources, or to create opportunities for students – such as music trips or camps.

Parental contributions, either through fees or through special music levies, are commonplace in Independent and Catholic schools, so again there is a clear willingness to support music, provided there is something to support.

This is seen in several state system schools where the school or parents group engages one of several third-party providers to deliver music education on a fee for service or subsidized fee for service basis.

There are some excellent providers, and the best ones operate within the school and are integrated into the school program. They teach within school hours, have a clear remit and are accountable to the principal or head of the arts curriculum area. They can demonstrate a well-developed curriculum, lesson plans, learning objectives and so on.

Outsourced parent paid programs may be criticized as elitist as they exist only for the students whose families can afford lessons. This is particularly true where this paid program is the only music available at the school. It also begs questions as to why we are offering music if we can only offer it to relatively few students without parental co-payment.

The concern is that these groups and their teachers are too often not integrated within the school, have no connection with the curriculum offered, are not trained teachers, are not accountable, utilize young inexperienced teachers and provide little support.

So, there are several means through which parents can, and do, provide funding support for music in their children's schools. The issue that we frequently see in schools is that the status of music is diminished and that the barriers to creating or reinvigorating programs are real, and that considerable effort is required to start or restart a program.

These barriers include:

- Lack of support from the school leadership (often a result of past failures or experiences)
- The lack of appropriate learning models (only choir, band, classroom music theory or appreciation)
- Difficult in accessing teachers
- Issues of integration with other school curriculum, timetable and activities
- The number of specialist resources available

We have seen many instances of enthusiastic parents having to overcome these barriers, some successfully and others without success. We believe that all schools will have some parents willing to support the music program. What they need in return for their support is a sense that their efforts can result in the commencement or rejuvenation of programs.

Primarily, the need for parental funding of music programs, especially in the initial stages, is reduced if the music program is classroom-based and operates within the timetable and curriculum, in much the same manner as history, mathematics or science. Funding for these subjects by parents is not seen as a necessity for the subject to be offered in schools. Funding for music is only required when there is a significant element of the program being offered or perceived as an "extra-curricular" or "co-curricular" activity. Many schools will want to stage concerts or a school musical, but this is only possible when a program has a proven track record, and both the school and parent community are invested it is success.

The extent and quality of music education provision in NSW schools

As we have indicated earlier, both the extent and quality of music education in NSW is haphazard. Quality is highly variable, with some schools (generally those with some history of providing music education) delivering results of the highest standard. These schools are generally well-resourced and have built up those resources

over several years. This situation is more likely to be found in a secondary, rather than a primary school, but there are examples of well-resourced primary schools.

More typically we see schools that struggle both in terms of their ability to provide music education and with the quality of those programs. The issues are typified by:

- Limited (or no) access to specialist teachers.
- Programs and approaches that disengage students, offering content that is culturally and socially irrelevant to the contemporary student.
- High levels of disengagement from teachers.
- An approach that is teacher-centred and does not consider the students' inclination towards shared and co-operative learning in music.
- Approaches that do not consider the students' enthusiasm for music and music-making in their private life.
- Specialist teachers that are operating in a 'vacuum', separate from the classroom music teacher, so music practice and music theory are unconnected.
- Participation in instrumental learning being limited to comparatively few students (a concert band program for example typically engages 30-70 players and there may be in the *best* schools a beginner, intermediate and senior school band).

In primary schools, the problem is greater because relatively few schools have access to specialist music teachers and, as a result, the music curriculum is often ignored or delivered in the most rudimentary way. From our experience working as Arts education lecturers in current pre-service teacher programs (at the University of Melbourne and the University of Newcastle), it is clear that generalist teachers lack the **skills**, but more importantly, the **confidence** to be effective teachers of music. For a teacher with limited or no musical skills of their own, the subject quickly becomes very daunting and exposing. Plus, we are aware that many lecturers involved in delivering these courses in NSW universities have little/no experience teaching music in NSW primary schools. This is echoed by the recent 'Fading Notes: Music Education for the Next Generation of Primary Teachers Report' in which course decision-makers believed that university students have only low to moderate confidence and competence to teach music at the end of their degrees⁴.

Combined, these factors lead to a failure to deliver anything meaningful in many schools. In some schools, there is a history of one failure after another when it comes to delivering music education. Far from benefiting the students, these attempts often result in failure and in turn result in the abandonment of support for programs by the principal and school community leadership.

Future optimum provision of music education in NSW schools

Optimum use of targeted funding

Any initiatives that result from this inquiry process will require targeted funding. We are proposing that a series of developmental programs be implemented within the NSW school system where there is interest and need. Any blanket funding, should that be possible, would not affect the changes required where required.

On this basis, we recommend funding be provided to the following initiatives. Each of these initiatives is scalable and each of them can be modified over time to reflect improvements to music education access and quality in NSW schools. They allow areas where music is well-established to continue more or less unaffected but will significantly boost access and quality where needed.

We recommend two program initiatives. These are:

⁴ Collins, A., Dwyer, R., & Date, A. (2020). Music education: A sound investment. Alberts, The Tony Foundation.

- Musical Futures International professional learning
- Undertake co-operative music education packages with universities to improve music skills prior to graduation

These initiatives will be detailed later in this submission.

The benefits of targeting the funding in this way are:

- Long term and sustainable improvements in teachers' skills through either in-service professional learning provided under the Musical Futures International Programs or improvements to the skills of teachers emerging from teaching institutions in coming years
- Access to music education is significantly increased for both students and schools
- Access is improved where it is most needed or most desired
- The outcomes are sustainable over time and do not require permanent additional funding after a period of establishment
- The approach to learning is more engaging for the students, more satisfying for teachers and because much of the activity is based around group learning and participation, the musical and non-musical outcomes associated with making music are maximised

Optimum balance of central mandates and supports

Even if the NSW Government proposed a mandated place for music education in NSW primary schools because of this inquiry, it could not be delivered in the short term, such is the degraded nature of music in many of our schools.

Applying a mandate at this time would also result in many schools either ignoring the mandate, dismissing it as impossible to achieve or, schools would suffer more failures in an attempt to deliver against that mandate. Both outcomes are counter-productive.

In any case there is, to some extent, already a 'mandate' in so much that music is included in the NSW K-6 Creative Arts curriculum. The issue is not the mandate but the ability to deliver against the curriculum. Once again, we reiterate that there is nothing fundamentally wrong with the NSW K-6 Creative Arts, 7-10 Music or HSC Music curricula, and in fact they each contain much to be admired. The ability of the system to deliver against these curricula is the issue.

It is therefore support rather than a mandate that is required currently and, in particular, effective programs and initiatives that build access, teacher skills and confidence, school and community support, as well as the musical and non-musical benefits of music education within NSW schools. Musical Futures is one such initiative that has a proven track-record of successful implementation, especially in Victoria. With the correct implementation, that combines intervention at the pre-service teacher level and in-school professional learning, an approach can be developed to deliver an effective and sustainable quality, sequential and ongoing music education, accessed by most children in the state from K-12. And all within the context of the current NSW curriculum.

Programs and initiatives proposed by Musical Futures International

Initiative #1: Musical Futures in-school professional learning

Not surprising our proposal begins with the adoption of Musical Futures as a 'model' program for the renewal and extension of music education within NSW schools. The approach is now well-proven with over 3,000 UK schools and over 800 Victorian schools implementing the approach, as well as already being in used in more

than 400 schools in South Australia, Western Australia, New South Wales and Queensland. Furthermore, Musical Futures International has facilitated the adoption of this approach in international schools in Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, The Philippines, India, Hong Kong, China, Japan, Korea, Canada and Brazil.

The benefits are:

- It is a mature, well-researched approach to music teaching, not just a band-aid solution.
- It requires next to no development costs.
- There is already existing infrastructure to support it and a cohort of experienced trainers and mentors in Australia.
- It can provide a relevant and engaging musical environment of large numbers of students in both primary and high schools, from Years 3 to 10.
- It is an ideal precursor to HSC and VET Cert II and III programs, or the perfect follow up to early primary programs.
- It is efficient in terms of teaching cost and cost-effective in terms of the investment of schools in resources and equipment.
- It can be used as a supplemental program for schools where well-established music programs already exist or as the fundamental approach for schools where more traditional approaches have failed or fail to gain traction.
- It is focused on current teacher development.
- Existing classroom teachers can be trained in the approach as well as any instrumental music teachers connected to a school.
- It delivers non-musical benefits in areas including behaviour, socialisation, literacy and numeracy.
- It is capable of making a significant contribution toward universal access to music education in NSW schools.

What is required by the NSW Department of Education?

- A policy position that supports the development of music programs for **all children** in NSW public schools.
- Funding for trainers and professional development workshops, teacher release, trainer travel and some materials.
- Seed funding support for schools in need.
- (Medium to long term) Enable the creation of specialist or leadership positions in music in schools (primary mostly) across the state.

Outcomes

Over an initial 4-year period Musical Futures professional learning could be delivered to up to 1,600 teachers in primary and secondary schools across the state in more than 800 schools. Within the first four years an estimated 160,000 to 180,000 additional NSW students per annum would be accessing a sustainable, engaging music program between years 3 and 10. The schools targeted would be those with little or no current music provision.

Based on our experience in Victoria, the cost of delivering this program of professional learning and support to schools within NSW would be approximately \$480,000 per annum over a period of four years. It is likely that for subsequent years the cost for delivery could be reduced perhaps \$190,000 to \$220,000 per annum.

In brief, the approach is to provide:

- Initial professional learning for groups of schools.
- Follow up professional learning within the school.
- The formation of area clusters or regional networks and the facilitation of teacher networking days.
- Online support and hundreds of curated and teacher-tested resources for delivery of the Musical Futures approach. This includes full packages of ready-to-deliver programs of work, mapped to the curriculum.

Attached to this document are 5 appendices. These include research reports from:

- Ofsted (2006) Reporting on the initial trials and development of the Musical Futures teaching approach in Nottingham and Hertfordshire schools in the UK
- Institute of Education, University of London. This much larger scale report gathered information from several UK schools, teachers and students where the full Musical Futures approach had been adopted.
- Report on the Victorian Musical Futures Pilot Program. This study by the University of Melbourne review the outcomes for the Victorian school pilot of 2010.
- Musical Futures Australia professional learning independent report compiled by Dandolo Partners on the 2015-2017 Victorian schools program.
- Summary of the Dandolo Partners Musical Futures Australia professional learning report.

Combined these reports demonstrate the development of Musical Futures into a proven approach and show how its implementation can have positive impact systemically and for individual schools.

Initiative #2: Tertiary co-curricular professional learning for pre-service primary teachers in music fundamentals

Musical Futures programs focus on teacher professional learning. Because of inadequacies in initial teacher education in music there is a need to for intervention with current pre-service primary teachers at the tertiary level.

The biggest barrier for the effective implementation of many school music programs, especially in primary schools, is the lack of skills and confidence amongst teachers. In the absence of specialist primary music teachers, it is assumed the classroom teacher can deliver music learning. Too frequently they cannot.

The key issue is that while music teaching forms part of the learning within an undergraduate teaching degree, the time allocated to music is insufficient unless the student has previous musical experience. The time spent learning music as a primary teacher is, in the words of one music educator, 'just enough to frighten them'. It is a case of too little too late.

The lack of musical experience for many trainee teachers comes from a lack of opportunity, which stems from a lack of music in our schools. We are suggesting that there is the opportunity to provide some music fundamentals teacher education as a subsidised co-curricular activity while future primary teachers are in pre-service.

The concept would provide:

- 12 months of basic pre-service teacher education in music, undertaken alongside their university course.
- It would be an opt-in offer.
- Provides focus on voice work plus some guitar, keyboard and ukulele accompaniment skills.
- An introduction to basic music production and electronic music skills.
- Some development in the whole-of-class approach that could be then used with Musical Futures resources.
- Pre-service teacher education sessions with the Musical Futures team, delivered in Sydney and at regional locations where teacher education takes place.

There would need to be an incentive for university students, such as a subsidized or no-cost offer, or recognition of additional skills/credits through NSW universities.

This approach will reduce the level of remedial in-service music education required and is a scalable program capable of engaging as few as 100 students to as many as 1,000 per annum. This approach has been successfully tested at the University of Melbourne and a strong collaborative framework between our organisations continues today.

In terms of costs, we believe that 30 contact sessions per annum could be delivered in-line with the tertiary calendar. Cost per student would likely run to around \$1500 to \$1800 per annum. There needs to be sustainable cohorts, but the program is scalable to budget. A target 1,000 students continuously would make a significant difference to the provision of music in schools in a relatively short time for an annual cost of perhaps \$1.5 to \$1.8 million per annum.

The Musical Futures International team would be capable of running this program in NSW and already has significant connections with a number of universities who include elements of the Musical Futures approach in their programs.

Recognition of music learning prior to enrolment in a tertiary teaching course

While the NSW curriculum includes music, there is no requirement for teachers to demonstrate musical skill unless they are preparing for a role as a specialist teacher. While there remains no recognition or promotion of the need for non-specialist primary teachers to have skills in music, there is little chance of increasing the numbers of prospective primary teachers with musical skills.

It also appears that the lack of these skills breaches one of the prescribed NESA Graduate Teacher standards, being Standard 2, *Know the content and how they teach it*. Very few primary teachers know the content they teach deeply where music is involved. In fact, a recent study has suggested that only 14% of graduates could confidently and competently teach music to Australian curriculum grade 6 level⁵.

We recommend that the Government work with NESA to improve this situation by actively promoting the need for teachers in primary schools to have skills and experience in music (and other arts), and that having such skills are an advantage in terms of student engagement and holistic success in reaching educational outcomes.

Universities should also encourage the acquisition of these skills in their recruitment and application materials for aspiring teachers. Some effort in this area, at probably little or no cost would, in time, improve the proportion of teachers entering NSW schools with at least a base musical skill.

Recognition or advanced standing for primary teachers who can demonstrate higher levels skills such as music would be a way of providing an incentive for teachers to acquire these skills.

Review of program funding/grant arrangements – programs should be focused on teacher professional development and workplace skills

There are numerous programs available to teach music and there are an equally significant group of providers willing to offer up an approach.

⁵ Alberts: The Tony Foundation (2023): *Fading Notes: Music Education for the Next Generation of Primary Teachers Report. A summary paper of key findings and solutions on the provision of music education in Australian primary teaching degrees*

Care is needed to ensure that the focus of the programs is on the development of teachers' skills, not just the provision of resource platforms or programs that offer no sustainable solution. Programs where the provider comes in and substitutes the teacher deliver no benefit as any benefits gained while the program is funded are lost when funding is removed or reduced.

The only way in which music access, quality and outcomes are improved is by developing the skills of the existing teachers and by ensuring future teachers come into the service appropriately skilled. This will take time.

Examination of specialist music schools in Sydney and in key regional areas

As access to a quality, sequential and ongoing music education increases because of these initiatives, so will the number of students wishing to further develop their skills. It would be expected that some of these students will want to consider a vocation in one form or other within the music, entertainment, arts or creative industries.

To accommodate this there will need to be pathways available for students. Currently, there are specialist performing arts schools with long established and successful programs such as the Sydney Conservatorium High School, Hunter School of Performing Arts, Newtown School of the Performing Arts, among others. Students with advanced skills will need to be able to access such schools in the future and we recommend that the Government consider how best to service the needs of these students. One option perhaps is through the establishment of a series of regional specialist music schools in Wollongong, Newcastle, Armidale and other major population centres.

It may be worth noting that in our previous experience working in Victoria, this approach meant that the specialist school seemed to gain all of the best teaching skills and this left the non-specialist schools without access to teachers and resources. It created a have and have not situation, some of which remains evident still today. If, however, this was revisited in an environment where programs like Musical Futures were in place, then most, if not all schools, could provide an adequate level of music education until at least Year 10 before the most advanced students were to attend specialist schools or other students opted for music production or technology classes through VET programs.

Optimum balance of music-specific funding, non-music-specific funding and parent contribution.

We believe that all three forms of funding will need to be utilised in the re-development of music education provision in NSW schools.

In our view, as the employer of teachers and as the creator of the curriculum, the NSW Government will need to provide some specific funding for music. That funding should be directed to the development of teachers' skills and initiatives that will improve access to music, improve student engagement and improve quality and outcomes. By removing or reducing the most significant barrier to having a successful music program: the capacity and the capability of the teacher; schools can, and will, find the non-music specific funding necessary to get programs launched and support them beyond their start-up phase.

Parent contributions will follow (as they always do) when they see things that they are proud to support and, where their children are actively engaged in programs they enjoy and want to be part of.

Music education at this level, especially in primary schools, need not be prohibitively expensive. Too often though, music education doesn't offer a strong enough value-for-money proposition. It involves too few students, it is costly and complex in terms of organisational time, the outcomes are often difficult to see as they are evidenced in more qualitative ways, student dissatisfaction is high and, if a teacher leaves, there is

often a lot of equipment left lying around in cupboards unused, sometimes for years. This does not have to be the way forward.

There is a need though to kick start programs and developments and these require Government monies and initiative. If this development work is focused on the schools that want to start, re-start or re-new their music programs, then we are likely to see a shared commitment and investment from the school and school community, as well as Government. That was our experience during the Musical Futures pilots and during the Musical Futures professional learning programs in Victoria. We believe this experience is repeatable in a large number of schools in NSW, where a proposition based on value-for-money and sustainability can be delivered by an experienced team.

Conclusion

For over a decade, Musical Futures has proven itself to be an approach to music education that delivers:

- Ease of access.
- High levels of participation across Years 3-10.
- Strong musical outcomes using an efficient mode of delivery.
- Reliability/sustainability for school leadership.
- Improved student engagement.
- Increased teacher enthusiasm.
- Value for money for schools.
- Additional non-musical benefits including improvements in attendance and behaviour.

The approach has been shown to be incredibly effective in Victorian schools over the last 10 years just as it has been in the UK. The issues in music education in the UK that contributed to the creation of Musical Futures in 2003, are very similar to those faced by NSW schools today.

While the students attending a Musical Futures school are the primary beneficiaries, the approach invests in teachers and teaching skills, which results in sustainable long-term benefits.

Musical Futures can be used to start a school music program, renew or revitalize programs or, add an alternative approach to the music education already taking place in schools with established programs, but where universal provision has not been achieved.

Musical Futures programs can be initiated quickly (for example, from proposal to delivery in Victoria was just 6 months - including the Dec/Jan holiday period), is scalable across NSW and has a pre-existing organisation and experienced team to roll out the program.