

Submission
No 24

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

Organisation: Bell Shakespeare

Date Received: 25 July 2024

INQUIRY INTO ARTS AND MUSIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN NEW SOUTH WALES JULY 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the NSW Inquiry into Arts and Music Education and Training. We are pleased to articulate our responses to the questions posed by government which we hope will help inform the further development of quality arts and music education in NSW.

Bell Shakespeare is Australia's national theatre company specialising in the works of William Shakespeare. We tour productions into theatres and schools across the country and deliver the most comprehensive and geographically wide-reaching education program in Australian theatre. We use Shakespeare's classic works as a vehicle for transformative learning.

Education is core to the Company's vision and mission and has been a central part of our offering since the company was established in 1990. Our national education program reaches, on average, 80,000 students and teachers face-to-face annually in every state and territory. Based at Pier 2/3 in the Walsh Bay Arts Precinct, Bell Shakespeare is proud to be a leader in Australian arts education.

Approximately 50,000 of the students we work with each year attend NSW primary and secondary schools and there is continuing high and unmet demand for our student and teacher training programs.

OUR NATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAM INCLUDES:

- The Players school incursions delivering live performances to primary and secondary school students;
- Student workshops (*primary and secondary*);
- Artist in Residence programs;
- Secondary School seminars;
- Student Scholarship programs;
- National Teacher Mentorship;
- A Youth Justice program delivered in three centres statewide;
- Open-access digital resources;
- Scheduled schools' performances within our major mainstage production seasons; and
- Subsidised and complimentary access to education programs for schools experiencing geographic and socioeconomic challenges.

WE DELIVER THE FOLLOWING SPECIFIC TRAINING INITIATIVES FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS:

- **National Teacher Mentorship**—a fully-funded, year-long mentorship and training program for 30 teachers, focusing on developing teacher capacity, skills and resourcing;
- **National Teacher Conference**—a biennial conference for teachers offered in hybrid format (onsite and livestreamed) focusing on the innovative teaching of Shakespeare in Australia;
- **John Bell Scholarship**—a performance-based training program identifying excellence in regional students seeking a career in the performing arts aged 16+, including audition workshops with 100 – 150 students annually delivered by Bell Shakespeare artists;
- **Work Experience**—an annual week-long onsite program for 12–18 students in Years 10 – 11 who are interested in a career in the performing arts, giving them direct insight and experience with all facets of a working theatre company from administration to production; and
- **Education Partnerships**—we work with tertiary institutions to support pre-service teachers and arts students, including the University of Sydney and the University of Melbourne.

RESPONSE TO TERMS OF REFERENCE

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

ARTS ORGANISATIONS AND CREATIVE PROFESSIONALS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS PARTNERS WITH SCHOOLS IN DELIVERING ARTS EDUCATION.

We believe that it should not rest solely on the shoulders of teachers to provide arts learning to their students. Students should have access to practising professional artists and arts organisations' expertise, and teachers should benefit from the knowledge and training that these experts are able to provide. We recommend that all schools are required to engage teaching artists and professional artists to work alongside teachers for short and long-term teaching engagements. Delivering one-off workshops through to long-form Artist in Residence programs will connect students to artists and art-rich learning, as well as boost teacher capacity and provide valuable teacher training via observation and co-facilitation on the job. These collaborations can greatly enrich the overall educational experience, fostering a more dynamic and innovative learning environment. Partnerships between schools and professional artists and organisations not only broaden students' artistic horizons but also help to cultivate a lifelong appreciation for the arts.

STUDENTS NEED TO SEE PROFESSIONAL ARTISTS AT WORK, IN ORDER TO CONSIDER THE ARTS AS A VIABLE CAREER.

Across our 34 years of operation, we have consistently toured live performance to young Australians in regional, remote and metropolitan communities. When young people see professional artists at work, they are introduced to the possibility and viability of a career in the arts, especially in regional communities where students may lack regular access to the live arts experiences. We recommend that all schools are required to embed live performances and arts experiences, delivered by professional artists, so that students can see artists at work.

Many professional artists and arts workers currently working or completing a degree or diploma at Australia's training institutions had their first introduction to the creative industries by participating in or seeing a Bell Shakespeare performance during their school years. Our productions and programs provide pathways and opportunities for young people to gain practical experience and mentoring in the arts, before they leave school.

(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 NSW

WE RECOMMEND TEACHERS HAVE REQUIRED AND MINIMUM PD HOURS IN ARTS-RICH LEARNING.

This will enable them to integrate creative practices into their teaching, bringing creativity and arts practice into classrooms to meet curriculum outcomes in imaginative ways. Through programs like the National Teacher Mentorship, we see first-hand the positive social and educational outcomes for both students and teachers when arts and cultural practices are embedded in teacher training and practice. Engagement increases, attendance rates increase, academic results improve and both student and teacher are active and engaged in learning.

All schools should have access to teacher Professional Development that embeds arts-learning at its core. We work extensively with regional NSW schools where teachers struggle with a lack of resources and collegial support. Often a drama teacher will have no colleague in their school, and so teacher PD and network building opportunities are particularly crucial to support regionally-located teachers. It is essential to ensure the availability of support for teachers and principals in delivering quality arts education to address these challenges, with a particular focus on prioritising resource allocation to regional and disadvantaged schools across NSW. These measures will ensure that all students, regardless of their location, receive an enriching arts education.

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

As outlined in 1 (a) (iv), we believe that arts organisations and creative industries be considered partners with schools in delivering arts learning.

WE RECOMMEND THAT SCHOOL PRINCIPALS UNDERSTAND AND CHAMPION THE VALUE OF AN ARTS-RICH EDUCATION, AND THE ARTS IN SCHOOLS.

We often work with schools where arts teachers are not supported by the school executive, and experience a lack of top-down support for the arts generally. It is crucial that school Principals understand and champion the value of an arts rich education as a key part of a whole education. Data and research, as well as case studies from arts organisations and schools, can be utilised to provide information on the proven value of the arts in education. Principal support is essential for integrating arts programs effectively and creating a school culture that values creativity across all aspects of the curriculum.

WE RECOMMEND THAT SCHOOL BUDGETS ALLOCATE RING-FENCED FUNDS FOR ARTS EXPERIENCES IN SCHOOLS.

Teachers should receive ring-fenced budgets for arts experiences in their schools that cannot be reallocated for other purposes. It is a NSW curriculum requirement for students to have live performance experience and therefore budgets should account for this to ensure all students have the opportunity to engage with the arts meaningfully. Too often we hear from teachers that would like to organise arts incursions or excursions, yet have limited or no budget to do so. We also regularly hear of arts budgets being reallocated to other school needs. Teachers should be confident that each year they have budget to organise arts experiences for their students.

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

WE RECOMMEND THAT ARTS ORGANISATIONS ARE ALLOCATED RESOURCES IN ORDER TO SUPPORT MORE STUDENTS WITH ON-THE-JOB CAREER TRAINING.

Bell Shakespeare cannot meet the student demand for its Work Experience program, and each year receives far more applications for the program than we can accommodate (generally 12–18 students per year are selected).

Bell Shakespeare, like many of our colleagues, offers Work Experience in a group format during an agreed week each year. The company allocates significant

human resources for the benefit of training and delivering access for students—a premium opportunity that is offered freely. An expanded program would require additional resourcing, but this would deliver considerable further opportunities for students to gain practical industry experience.

Organisations such as ArtsReady, provide practical year-long opportunities for school leavers to work in arts organisations whilst completing tertiary education. The ArtsReady in Schools program assists employers in the arts, cultural, and creative industries to engage young Australians in traineeships. Delivered by AFL SportsReady Limited, a not-for-profit organization specialising in education and employment for over 29 years, this national program prepares participants to graduate as job-ready for a wide range of support roles in the arts and creative sectors. The ArtsReady program could be a valuable resource for schools in partnership with arts organisations. An expansion of this opportunity could perhaps provide NSW government funded arts organisations the ability to directly host school-based or school leaver trainees providing further practical pathways and industry experience.

(x) measures of success in arts education

WE RECOMMEND A STANDARDISED RESEARCH FRAMEWORK WITH CONSISTENT OUTCOMES THAT ALL ARTS ORGANISATIONS MIGHT USE TO EVALUATE THEIR IMPACT, WHICH WOULD THEN BE A CLEAR AND CONCISE FORMAT FOR SCHOOLS TO ACCESS AND USE IN THEIR OWN DECISION-MAKING.

Research plays a crucial role in demonstrating the value of arts education and securing contributed revenue in support of our work. Bell Shakespeare has previously secured philanthropic funding to commission third-party research into the efficacy and impact of our programs. However, there is no standardised benchmark for arts education outcomes in research and reporting.

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

Recent meetings with a wide range of arts and cultural companies and institutions in the US and UK revealed that most in-schools programs are provided free of charge or are heavily subsidised for public/government schools. This means that cost is not a barrier for students who would not otherwise have access to the arts and arts-rich learning experiences.

Comparatively, while programs can be offered at a discount to socio-economically-challenged schools in Australia, the challenges of distance, population size, and school budgets mean many schools are unable to meet the cost of delivery and consequently miss out.

REPEATABLE, SUPPORTED ARTS INCURSIONS AND EXCURSIONS WILL DELIVER MEASURABLE SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, AND SUPPORT AND DEVELOP THEIR CREATIVE SKILLS WHILST DELIVERING NECESSARY VISIBILITY TO THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES AND PATHWAYS INTO THE SECTOR.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

A SUMMARY OF OUR RECOMMENDATIONS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- Arts organisations and creative professionals should be considered as partners with schools in delivering arts education;
- Students need to see professional artists at work in order to consider the arts as a viable career;
- Teachers should have required and minimum PD hours in arts-rich learning;
- School Principals must understand and champion the value of an arts-rich education, and creative practice in schools;
- School budgets should be allocated with ring-fenced funds for arts experiences in schools;
- Arts organisations should be allocated resources in order to support more students and school leavers with on-the-job career training; and
- A standardised research framework with consistent outcomes that all arts organisations might use to evaluate their impact, which would then be a clear and concise format for schools to access and use in their own decision-making.

PREPARED BY



Joanna Erskine Head of Education

.SHAKESPEARE 773B



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: 2023 John Bell Scholarship recipients at Bell Shakespeare HQ, Pier 2/3 Walsh Bay | Teachers training in the 2024 National Teacher Mentorship | 2018 John Bell Scholarship winner [REDACTED] (L) performs in 2024.