

**Submission
No 51**

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

Organisation: The Australian Children's Music Foundation

Date Received: 25 July 2024

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO ARTS AND MUSIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Australian Children's Music Foundation SUBMISSION 25 July 2024

About Australian Children's Music Foundation

The Australian Children's Music Foundation (ACMF) delivers long term quality sequential music education and instruments to children and youth-at-risk across Australia. ACMF's music programs are delivered in the following settings:

- Low ICSEA schools (mainly primary)
- Specialist Support Classes and Schools for Specific Purposes
- Youth Justice Centres

These settings ensure we're prioritising delivering music programs to those most in need and least likely to have access to a quality school music education. These settings include significant numbers of "particular cohorts of students who are more likely to encounter systemic barriers within the education system that make them less likely to achieve strong educational outcomes. These are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students living in regional, rural, and remote locations, students with disability, students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds, and students in the youth justice systems."¹

Over the past 20 years, ACMF has developed an extensive network of teaching musicians, educators, researchers, and partners across Australia who have the experience, knowledge and understanding that access to a quality music education nurtures imagination and creativity and develops musical competency along with meaningful benefits to:

- Students' broader educational outcomes,
- Students' resilience and wellbeing, and
- Social inclusion and engagement

The Australian Children's Music Foundation recently conducted a comprehensive Impact Report. This study was completed in three phases and included interviewing and observing key stakeholders including principals, schoolteachers, teaching musicians and students. The results confirmed the essential need for quality music tuition in schools. The report concluded that ACMF's work in the area of disadvantaged children's needs was unique, effective, and vitally important.

Problem

"Two thirds of Australian Primary Schools and one-third of secondary students do not have access to any school music education²." Music Education in NSW and Australia more broadly has accelerated over the past decade towards becoming a privilege for the wealthy and the talented few. This not only disadvantages Australian children and youth academically and musically, but it impedes wellbeing and inclusion more broadly.

With a greater emphasis on STEM over STEAM the curriculum (inadvertently) devalues music and the arts. "Current music education offerings reflect a broken system of failed curricular mandates³."

¹ Productivity Commission 2022

² Brasche, I & Thorn, B. Addressing dimensions of 'The Great Moral Wrong': How inequity in music education is polarizing the academic potential of Australian students, Arts Education Policy Review. 2018

³ ACARA 2023. Australian Curriculum: Music. AITSL 2023. Music Connects language and social skills.

This is compounded by a reliance on generalist primary educators who are not adequately trained, equipped, or supported to deliver quality music teaching confidently and effectively. “Compulsory music in general primary teacher education has declined by 53% since 2009, meaning student teachers only have 8 hours to develop essential skills and creative confidence⁴.” Also bear in mind many are likely to have had little to no music training themselves prior to teacher training.

The outcome of the de-emphasis of music (and the arts) in the curriculum along with the reliance on generalist primary educators who are not adequately trained or supported are that many of our children and youth are receiving no music education at all or only short-term music experiences. “To achieve cognitive, musical, and cultural development outcomes, a music education needs to be ongoing, active, structured, and sequential. One-off or short-term music experiences do not constitute a quality music education as they do not result in these outcomes on their own. However, they are an excellent complement to quality, ongoing music programs⁵.”

Despite the many developmental benefits music education offers the current system is compounding the erosion of classroom music and deepening inequity. How can we nurture an appreciation of music, the idea of a career in the music industry or grow our future audiences when the current state denies access to a quality music education for the many.

Response to Inquiry Terms of Reference

ACMF welcomes the opportunity to submit our views and recommendations to the Joint Select Committee on Arts and Music Education and Training in New South Wales. ACMF's response addresses those parts of the committees' terms of reference pertaining to the quality and effectiveness of music education and training and that are aligned to our core work in addressing inequity of access to music education.

As part of this inquiry ACMF puts to the committee that its report recommends the NSW Government:

- 1) commit to rebalancing educational focus towards STEAM as opposed to the decade's long prioritisation of STEM over other subjects.
- 2) prioritise eliminating the inequity of access to a quality music education so all children and young people, no matter their background, ability, or circumstance are enriched by the benefits of a quality music education.
- 3) support schools and teachers (particularly primary) to deliver a quality music education through upskilling generalist primary school teachers, increasing the workforce of specialist music teachers and building partnerships and allied support with musicians and organisations like ACMF.
- 4) improve and embed routine data collection on access to a quality music education in schools.

1. Rebalancing educational focus towards STEAM not STEM

“In recent years, music education has gained special relevance as part of the curriculum of compulsory education in most developed countries⁶,” “both for its learning benefits in itself and for its ability to promote the learning of other disciplines⁷.”

The current curriculum despite improvements is still open to interpretation e.g. music could be taught for just one term for only half an hour a week making it impossible to satisfactorily

⁴ Collins, A. & Hocking, R. *Fading Notes: The State of Music Education for the next generation of Primary Teachers*. 2023

⁵ Collins, A. Dwyer, R. Date, A. *Music Education A Sound Investment*

⁶ Carrillo C., Viladot L., Pérez-Moreno J. *Impact of music education: A review of the scientific literatura*. *Rev. Electrónica Complut. Investig. Educ. Music*. 2017

⁷ Rickard N.S., Vasquez J.T., Murphy F., Gill A., Toukhsati S.R. *Benefits of a classroom based instrumental music program on verbal memory of primary. school children: A longitudinal study*. *Aust. J. Music Educ.* 2010

cover all aspects of a quality music education and indeed curriculum guidance on what should be achieved.

ACMF recommends defining both what a quality music education is and how often it should be taught in order to drive real improvements in student outcomes and reduce inequity of access to a quality music education. ACMF recommends:

- A quality music education encompasses listening, singing, playing an instrument and composing/songwriting, is delivered by people with the musical skills, knowledge, and capability to teach music and it needs to be sequential and ongoing.
- 1 hour of music lessons per week for all school students K to 8 supported by additional opportunities such as band, choir or music experiences.

2. Build social inclusion and reduce inequity of access to a quality music education.

Build social inclusion and reduce the inequity of access through setting targets for delivery of a quality music education. In achieving these targets government support should be prioritised towards settings where “particular cohorts of students are more likely to encounter systemic barriers within the education system that make them less likely to achieve strong educational outcomes. These are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students living in regional, rural, and remote locations, students with disability, students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds, and students in the youth justice systems.”⁸

The link between music and emotions has “contributed to the value of music as a discipline that can be implemented in formal education to develop students’ emotional competence.”⁹ One of the other advantages of musical activities is that they can require collective participation, which “requires cooperation and coordination on the part of the members of a group, making them useful tools for the advancement of socio-emotional development.”¹⁰ In addition, the social interactions required for music-making offer many opportunities for students to develop their abilities to evaluate their own feelings and at the same time try to relate to the feelings of others.

Music education thus “has a strong impact on children and young people’s intellectual, social, and personal development and therefore on their psychological well-being.”¹¹

“Music occupies a special place in adolescence, with musical subcultures representing a powerful resource for the development of identity and values. Music interventions in youth justice settings with young people seek to improve health and behavioural outcomes by providing positive social experiences as well as addressing problematic attitudes and perceptions.”¹² “They seek to promote identity development by providing positive opportunities and resources at the same time as distracting from negative influences in their environment.”¹³ “Music ‘even helps to prevent youth crime’¹⁴.”

ACMF recommends:

- Setting a target of 100% of K to 8 students having access to a quality music education as defined in recommendation 1 by 2031 and interim targets of 50% by 2027 and 75% by 2029.
- Embedding multi-year music education through funding quality music education for 3 to 5 years with a prioritisation towards schools with low ICSEA scores. Some ongoing

⁸ Productivity Commission 2022

⁹ Campayo-Muñoz E.Á., Cabedo-Mas A. The role of emotional skills in music education. Br. J. Music Educ. 2017

¹⁰ Blasco (n 5)

¹¹ ibid

¹² Wilson D, Caulfield L and Atherton S. Good Vibrations: the long-term impact of a prison-based music project. Prison Service Journal, 2008

¹³ Daykin N, De Viggiani N, Pilkington P. Music making for health, well-being and behaviour change in youth justice settings: a systematic review. Health Promotion International. 2021

¹⁴ Kallio, A.A. The transformative potentials and politics of music in juvenile justice settings. Music Education Research. 2022

funding may need to be set aside beyond 5 years to support schools with high levels of disadvantage.

- Investing and embedding quality ongoing music education within all Youth Justice Centres complemented by additional music experiences such as songwriting, music production and recording and instrument tuition.

3. Support schools and teachers in delivering a quality music education.

There is no one solution to building a sustainable workforce to deliver a quality music education for all K to 8 students in all schools. ACMF sees a role for increasing generalist teacher skills and confidence to teach K to 2, but unless the generalist teacher has a musical background themselves it is unlikely they'll have the musical skills and confidence to teach beyond this without further training or allied support. This skills and confidence gap can be addressed through further professional development, employing specialist music teacher to teach years 3 onwards or from building partnerships with organisations such as ACMF which can place teaching musicians in class with the generalist teacher. In 2023 an annual poll by the Media and Entertainment Arts Alliance found 1 in 5 musicians make a full time living from their music and half are earning less than \$6000 a year from their talents. By adopting a range of actions, we can better support schools and teachers, reduce inequity and improve outcomes for students and better support musicians to make a living.

ACMF recommends the following:

- Increasing generalist primary school teachers' foundational music teaching skills and knowledge and understanding of the broad ranging benefits of music education by making at least one compulsory music education unit in primary education degrees.
- Increasing the availability and access to music education professional development for all early career teachers so those with a musical background can become a generalist teacher with a music specialism.
- Building partnerships and allied support with musicians and organisations such as ACMF to place teaching musicians in the classroom with a generalist teacher.
- Increasing the availability and access to classroom teaching based professional development and practical based qualifications for specialist musicians who have not undertaken pedagogical education.
- Making at least one compulsory unit of specialist music teacher training in tertiary music degrees.
- Exploring solutions to barriers preventing high school music teachers from teaching at primary level.

4. Improve data collection on access to quality music education in schools:

To ensure the data captured is consistent, can track against government targets and can more accurately identify inequity to inform prioritisation of support for children and youth who are facing barriers of access. ACMF recommends:

- Capturing data on the % of K to 8 primary students who have access to quality, sequential and ongoing music education, and the number of schools delivering music education which meets this standard.
- Consider using the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) Primary Teachers Survey commissioned by Alberts as the survey tool.
- The Department of Education report biennially on this as part of monitoring progress towards ensuring all NSW school children are receiving access to a quality music education and that this be made publicly available.

Attachment

1. Links to case studies and testimonials along with link to ACMF Impact report