

Submission  
No 53

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

**Organisation:** National Association for the Visual Arts Ltd

**Date Received:** 25 July 2024

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Joint Select Committee on Arts and Music Education and Training in New South Wales  
NSW Parliament

25 July 2024

**Re: Inquiry into arts and music education and training in New South Wales**

The National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Joint Select Committee on Arts and Music Education and Training in New South Wales.

NAVA is an independent membership organisation which brings together the many voices of the visual arts, craft and design sector to improve the fundamental conditions of work and practice. We do this through advocacy, education and the Code of Practice for the Visual Arts, Craft and Design. Our network comprises over 50,000 artists, students, teachers, academics, arts workers, galleries, industry bodies and art schools. NAVA has a national reach, with members in every state and territory, with more than 40% of those based in NSW.

NAVA has long been part of advocacy campaigns for the mandating of visual education in all schools around the country. NAVA asserts that the rapid development of the use of visual modes of communication (smartphones, tablets, digital cameras, computers etc), means that visual education has become as essential for young people as training in literacy and numeracy.

As noted by the Visual Arts and Design Educators Association NSW (VADEA) in its submission to this inquiry, Visual Arts is consistently the most popular subject within the suite of Creative and Performing Arts subjects. According to the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) Visual Arts in the HSC was ranked the 11th most popular subject with 8,178 candidates in 2022. In 2023, Visual Arts remained the 11th most popular subject, and is consistently the highest ranked subject with a submitted work.

Yet across some metropolitan and regional areas, parents are paying extra for private after-school classes in visual arts and craft to make up a gap in their children's education. Access remains a significant issue, with many children and young people having minimal exposure to strong visual arts practice at school and no access at home. This lack of encouragement leads to the perception held by many school students that visual arts practice and art history are not desirable career paths.

Debilitating cuts over many recent years have been made at all universities and TAFEs targeting the arts and studio-based learning in particular. Cuts to visual arts studios and courses have largely been the result of constrained budgets or education policy reforms which prioritise other areas of study. Over the last 5-8 years, the reduction in tertiary institutions offering art education courses, and the devaluation of the teaching profession have resulted in a significant shortage of Visual Arts trained teachers in primary and secondary schools. Consequently, teachers are often required to teach outside their subject area, or Visual Arts classes are being collapsed altogether, particularly in regional areas. (VADEA submission)

As highlighted by Museums & Galleries of NSW (M&GNSW) in their submission to this inquiry, there are no university courses in museum studies outside metropolitan Sydney. Additionally, the few remaining visual arts degrees are increasingly modified and restructured, with only one located outside the Sydney/Newcastle/Wollongong area. While TAFE NSW offers courses such as the Certificate IV in Arts and Cultural Administration (Galleries and Museums) online, the availability of in-person options remains limited. Again, access is an increasing concern, particularly for d/Deaf and Disabled people and people living in regional NSW.

The economic arguments for maintaining visual arts facilities and courses are not compelling. Quantitative metrics typically do not support the economic case for visual arts because they fail to capture its true value. Visual arts, craft, and design are resource-intensive disciplines. Ten to twenty years ago, many tertiary art schools provided ample studio space for students, supported by several teachers and technical assistants. Today, this has been reduced to a few fortunate departments with significantly fewer staff and considerably less space.

There are countless studies that demonstrate that training in the arts helps students learn the skills of creativity, innovation, agility, intellectual curiosity, resourcefulness, exploratory thinking, communication, teamwork, problem solving, emotional judgement, professional ethics, global citizenship, entrepreneurship and the courage to take risks; qualities which are becoming increasingly essential for the 21st century working environment.

### [Strengthening First Nations leadership and representation in the visual arts sector](#)

Many small-to-medium galleries and visual arts organisations across NSW do not have a single Aboriginal worker or Aboriginal advisory group. The agency of the Aboriginal arts sector requires strong investment in First Nations mid-career and leadership roles. Investing in First Nations-led institutions, industry centres, and spaces, which provide training and development, will support First Nations people in these roles. Support must also extend to skills training for artists and arts workers to represent First Nations communities on boards and Aboriginal advisory groups.

The [Productivity Commission recently reported](#) that while investing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and arts workers through skills acquisition, training and career development has been identified as a key objective for many arts funding programs, First Nations people remain under-represented in leadership and management roles in the visual arts and craft, such as in galleries and museums. There are limited accessible pathways towards employment in the arts sector and this limits aspirations for artists and arts workers, as well as creating a significant burden on those in senior leadership roles to mentor many people across a broad range of roles.

In its submission to National Cultural Policy in 2022, the [NSW Aboriginal Culture, Heritage & Arts Association \(ACHAA\)](#) notes there is dire shortage of suitably experienced Aboriginal arts workers across the community-controlled cultural centres, the regional and urban LGA public galleries and museums and the Sydney cultural institutions.

To support First Nations self-determination and representation across the NSW visual arts sector, NAVA recommends:

- Invest in First Nations-led education and training programs for visual artists and craftspeople.
- Invest in First Nations-led education, training, mentorship and skills development programs to support First Nations employment and representation in middle-tier jobs, leadership roles, boards, and Aboriginal advisory groups.
- Introduce paid internship programs where students have opportunity to gain experience.

## Integration and enhancement of arts education

To meet the evolving demands of the economy and nurture creativity and innovation, NAVA advocates for:

- Support for the university sector to employ visual arts, craft and design education academics and promote ongoing, essential research into visual arts education.
- Integration of art training provided by art faculties across other university and TAFE disciplines, in addition to training professional artists.
- Ensure that every student has access to a well-rounded arts education, enhancing their ability to imagine, explore, represent, and effectively communicate new ideas.

This approach aligns with [Creating Value: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey](#), September 2023, recent research by Creative Australia which reports that most Australians hold positive attitudes towards the arts, placing strong importance on the role of the arts in our education system.

- Three quarters of Australians agree arts and creativity should be an important part of education (74%). p11
- Younger Australians aged under 35 (84%) and parents with children under 16 (78%) have particularly strong arts attendance. These high attendance levels emphasise the vital role the arts play in learning, development and education. p13
- Nine in ten specifically-engaged 'culturally and linguistically diverse' (CALD) respondents believe creative activities should be an important part of education. p41
- Nine in ten specifically-engaged regional and remote First Nations respondents agree creative activities should be an important part of education. p45
- Respondents with a university degree or post-graduate qualification are more likely than those with a lower level of education (29% compared to 19%) to donate time or money to the arts. p52
- There is strong support for public funding for the arts for educational outcomes. The second top funding priority among Australians is ensuring young people have access to art and creative experiences to support their learning and development (65%). Parents with children under 16 place particular importance on art education for young people, with three quarters choosing ensuring children and young people have access to art and creative experiences to support learning and development in their top three funding priorities (74%). p62
- Arts participation is associated with better educational outcomes for students, including stronger academic performance, and arts-rich education improves students' motivation, engagement, attendance and school enjoyment. p92

## Quality and accessibility of arts education

NAVA calls for urgent improvements in the quality and accessibility of visual arts education across all levels:

- Primary and secondary schools to encourage, recommend and accommodate teachers in gaining specialist professional development in the visual arts.
- Reverse the policy change which enforced subsidies alignment with the NSW Smart & Skilled List, effectively removing subsidies from TAFE visual arts programs. This led to reduced course offerings and lower enrollments, particularly in regional areas, creating barriers for students who now must travel considerable distances to Sydney, Newcastle or Brisbane for specialised tertiary qualifications in visual arts.
- Increase support for museum studies courses across the state, which are largely limited to metropolitan Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong. This includes addressing the reduction in local visual arts programs and supporting the establishment of museum studies courses outside metropolitan areas.

## Professional development and teacher training

As noted by VADEA in their submission to this inquiry, there are several pathways to becoming a Visual Arts teacher but the number and quality of these opportunities have declined. Many tertiary institutions have closed relevant courses and undergraduate streams have been replaced by a Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) followed by a Graduate Diploma or Masters of Teaching. Very few universities in NSW offer undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in Education with a specialisation in Visual Arts. This reduction in available courses has led to significant consequences, contributing to the current teacher shortage crisis.

To enhance the effectiveness and sustained development of arts education, NAVA recommends:

- Invest in training for Visual Arts teachers for primary and secondary schools.
- Expanding the time allocated to arts subjects in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programs to ensure teachers gain comprehensive expertise in the arts. This is crucial for improving educational outcomes across subjects.

## Role of artists and arts organisations

The [M&G NSW 2022 Sector Census](#) reported that 56% of organisations partner with schools and/or education providers to deliver programs to young people. p29. As explained in their submission to this inquiry, this relationship with education providers is especially critical in regional areas, as for many young people this is their only access to experience cultural content in museums and galleries, and to connect with practicing artists.

School visits to galleries for viewing exhibitions, attending talks and participating in practical workshops should complement, but never be a substitute for a broad and ongoing school-based visual education program.

NAVA acknowledges the important work of Artist-in-Residence (AiR) programs in supporting teacher professional learning. A study by [Hunter, Baker, and Nailon \(2014\)](#) indicates that collaborative and reflective engagements with artists is beneficial in both pre-service and in-service teacher education, fostering a richer and more dynamic learning environment. In their research, teachers reported significant professional growth from the AiR experience, gaining new skills and knowledge in the arts, developing innovative pedagogical techniques, and deepening their relationships with students, artists, and the community.

Artists and arts organisations play a vital role in education and skill development:

- Schools need access to an Artist-in-Residence (AiR) program and be funded to give their students regular access to a range of cultural stimuli including excursions to galleries.
- Increase support for regional galleries and museums, which provide crucial access and enrich students' arts education, particularly in regional NSW. They offer after-school programs and opportunities for students to engage with practicing artists.
- Establish dedicated funding for small to medium galleries and organisations to deliver programs aligned with arts education. These institutions provide informal career pathways and professional development opportunities for artists and arts workers, enhancing their skills and career prospects.

Please contact me for any further information I can provide.

Sincerely,  
Penelope Benton  
Executive Director

