

**Submission
No 83**

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

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CRONULLA HIGH SCHOOL

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Parliament of New South Wales
Joint Select Committee on Arts and Music Education and Training in New South Wales
6 Macquarie St, Sydney NSW 2000

Wednesday 24 July 2024

Dear Committee,

I write this submission on behalf of all families and students at Cronulla High School, as well as our future students currently attending feeder primary schools.

Although I am invested in all terms of reference, I write in response to the following:

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

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

One of the most rewarding parts of my job is delivering quality music education to all students in Year 7 and Year 8, regardless of their background or experience. However, for many of these students, and in some cohorts up to 80%, I will be their only ever teacher with a music degree.

Quality music education must begin in early childhood and primary education. Parents are very aware of this. Each year, public primary schools are losing potential families to the Catholic and Independent systems, and increasingly, access to music education through programs such as *Amadeus*, is the deciding factor.

Each year, my Year 7 intake to Concert Band and Vocal Ensemble dwindles, and although the impact of COVID-19 lockdowns on music education is still ongoing, student access to classroom and co-curricular music education in primary school is the most significant factor. Although I have worked extensively with our feeder primary schools to develop music partnerships, my context in Cronulla is consistent with colleagues across New South Wales.

In our current public education system, a student's access to music education is tied to funding, and how the arts are valued in a school's culture and leadership. This includes a school's capacity to staff Music classes, a school's capacity to develop co-curricular programs, and a family's capacity to afford tuition.

However, if tomorrow's public education system enables access to quality music education for all students, this will enable continuity between early childhood, primary, and secondary. More importantly, it will produce a more musically literate and culturally aware next generation.

To this end, I would like to see two outcomes from this inquiry:



CRONULLA HIGH SCHOOL

(1) Every public primary school in New South Wales employs an accredited Music teacher K-6, either permanent full-time or permanent part-time, to ensure that every student has access to one hour of classroom music each week, and;

(2) NESA and the NSW Department of Education recognise Music K-6 as a teaching code.

I do not believe that a system such as *Amadeus* in Sydney Catholic Schools, where every student from Year 3 is required to learn an orchestral instrument, is beneficial or sustainable. Instead, if every public primary school employs one permanent teacher with a Music degree or major, they will be best qualified to decide which instrumental and/or vocal ensembles and opportunities are most suitable for their school context.

I am aware that you will be having face-to-face meetings once all written submissions are received. I would be very interested to contribute to this as a public school teacher, not on behalf of any music education organisation.

Due to its size, the NSW Department of Education has more potential than any other system in Australia to set a precedent for quality music education. As a committee, I implore you to enact these simple but significant changes to secure a quality music education for all current and future students. Once again, this will contribute significantly to a more musically literate and culturally aware next generation.

Thank you,

Thomas McCorquodale
Teacher Music
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Bachelor of Music (Music Education) – Sydney Conservatorium of Music, University of Sydney
Australian Kodály Certificate Secondary Level 1 – Kodály NSW
Certificate of Performance in Piano – Australian Music Examinations Board (AMEB)

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Susan Geldart
Deputy Principal
Cronulla High School

