

Submission
No 114

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

Organisation: Cultural Arts Collective and Scared Currents Inc

Date Received: 25 October 2024



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Ms. Julia Finn, MP
Chair
Joint Select Committee on Arts and Music Education in New South Wales

Dear Chairperson,

Re: Cultural Arts Collective & Sacred Currents Inc. Submission: Joint Select Committee on Arts and Music Education in New South Wales

We are pleased to provide comment for NSW Parliament's Joint Select Committee on Arts and Music Education. We see this dialogue with the Joint Select Committee as a way of exploring new means and possibilities to connect opportunities and address the sector challenges with arts and music education across NSW.

Who we are, what we do

Sacred Currents Inc and Cultural Arts Collective work in partnership to deliver a broad spectrum of arts and cultural projects that showcase the power of diversity. We lead transformation in our sector, through contesting the marginality of diverse artistic practices by bringing these into the mainstream via key partnerships and exposure to metro and regional audiences across NSW, Australia and beyond.

Collectively we have had over 30 years' experience with festival and new music development with culturally diverse communities across Western Sydney, NSW and Australia.

Sacred Currents Inc.

Our brand is to challenge and develop new concepts in the 'creation' and experience of Australian contemporary music. We develop and present **multi-disciplinary cross cultural new work** that challenges prevailing cultural narratives; and further incubate/seed the development and profile of artistic practices of culturally diverse artists. We create pathways for the projects/artists working across NSW and Australia with a range of partners including our foundation membership of the newly formed National Alliance for Culturally Diverse Music.

Cultural Arts Collective

Cultural Arts Collective is a dynamic and unique Sydney based creative enterprise that creates new work that pushes the boundaries of contemporary music and community engaged arts; through the emerging genre of culturally diverse music practice via new interpretation, composition and improvisation. Our adaptive approach is to create new platforms for artistic investigation and presentation that highlight the capacities and contributions of culturally diverse artists and building and sharing vital cultural capital (education, skills, experience, knowledge) through new sector development initiatives.

Our submission focusses on the following Terms of Reference items:

1. The role of arts organisations and creative professionals in education and the development of creative skills across the arts
2. Ways that students can learn entrepreneurial skills and gain industry experience to ensure they are job-ready
3. The most effective approach for the music and the creative industries to co-ordinate with the education system to support the development of creative skills

1. The role of arts organisations and creative professionals in education and the development of creative skills across the arts

Increasingly, creative activity is happening within a framework of both non-profit, for-profit or hybrid. This is the creative entrepreneurship of our time whereby different models exist to make and support art and creativity. Our existing operating model requires us to work under two strands; a not for profit organisation (Sacred Currents Inc.) and a commercial entity (Cultural Arts Collective). It requires us to have inter-relationships across both the arts and culture and the creative industries sector based on both programs and projects.

The bottom line is that all our work produces immense cultural value across a number of dimensions including:

- creative practice development,
- wellbeing and social cohesion,
- experimental and groundbreaking work,
- education, creating new pathways for **culturally diverse artists**,
- establishing a national alliance and network,
- producing new and unique music acts,
- running a performance venue, starting new recording labels and touring opportunities,
- delivering our prominent 'Culture X' festival annually.

Given this operating framework, organisations like our own (Sacred Currents Inc. & Cultural Arts Collective) have struggled to establish supportable business models in recent times. Volatile revenue sources including government funding, inadequate capacity and capabilities have prevented us from operating sustainably, growing financially, up-skilling or giving us the environment to invest in, to reach our potential. We often fall between the funding gaps at both state and national levels. Existing value chains are also disrupted under this model.

A new investment environment is essential to a viable and relevant. New funding and investment must support and allow for a variety of new business models and structures that cross this public and commercial divide. Investment in professional creative education, training and practice enables experimentation and development of careers, risk-taking and innovation, networked creative ecologies and unexpected pathways to remerge.

2. Ways that students can learn entrepreneurial skills and gain industry experience to ensure they are job-ready

Our Big Idea !

Our 'big idea' adopts this 'no one size fits all' approach to the development of the cultural and creative industries and importantly music education in NSW. It is individual, unique, yet a model targeted to the future, and to be embedded into one of the fastest growing areas of Australia (Western Sydney). It has far reaching social, cultural, educational and economic outcomes for the sector.

Our 'big idea' reaches across all of the Federal Government's National Cultural Policy, 'Revive' and points to the key target areas of Arts, Culture and Creative Industries Policy for NSW. It is grounded in new approaches to people, infrastructure and audiences.

It is built from the priorities of changing the trajectory on arts, innovation, pathways and skills whilst expanding economic opportunities and being a driver growth and preparedness for the future. It also references other government priority areas in the support and development for live music and the night-time economy and supporting culturally diverse artists.

Importantly, our 'big idea' is grounded in our work, practical experience and track record working with culturally diverse arts and communities across Western Sydney and NSW for the past 20 + years, including a leading national research project with the Australia Council in 2022. Our inclusive curatorial processes enhance the diversity of cultural expressions. Artists and creatives have all told us that their imagination, belonging and inspiration all grow out of engagement with arts and culture, and there is a desire/appetite to make a career of it, to a creative future.

Our 'big idea' is for the Government to help us deliver our one stop shop '**music factory**' that gives Greater Western Sydney's rich and vibrant communities a creative place to deliver what has been described by the Sydney Morning Herald as 'a wholly original and unique sound'. A 'Western Sydney Sound' - a place-based sound that embraces the cultural diversity of Western Sydney to create a dynamic music genre that melds the region's vibrancy into an internationally recognised movement for contemporary Australian music'.

'MULTI-CULTURAL MOWTOWN' – THE HIT FACTORY

Just like the famous 'Motown Sound' out of the US, which was an irresistible force of social and cultural change and made its mark on not just the music industry, but society at large, there is an opportunity for our own multicultural 'Hit factory' to be just as ubiquitous and influential that is rooted in industry and community.

At a time when the shape of the future of music in NSW is newsworthy for both industry, audiences and education there needs to be transformational thinking and approaches to developing the next generation of artists/musicians.

It is about breaking new ground; exploring new styles of music, blending genres to experiment with extending the capabilities of distinctive instruments and manipulating sounds from a range of cultures that now represent Western Sydney. It is about finding 'What is the sound of Western Sydney?' and asking the question 'How do you encapsulate in music the dynamism and vibrancy of one of the most diverse regions in the country?'

It deals with the here and now (contemporary Western Sydney), and deals with where people are at.

The approach is for artists/musicians to participate in a transformative practice, one that shares – of stories, of skills and of collaboration, one that builds a deep understanding of each other.

It's the journey and the experience to the outcome that makes it special, meaningful and authentic. Creative collaboration provides a means of crossing boundaries between disciplines, communities and imaginative thought. When the term 'Hit factory' comes to mind it is not about creating an underlying track with repetitive hooks, or being 'music machine' or manufactured sound, it's about creating a pipeline of talent to become a fertile breeding ground for contemporary Australian music. A brand that tips into the new psyche of Sydney's and Australia's musical identity.

The genesis of the concept has essentially come through the creation of THE HIT FACTORY project – originally conceived as the 'Pathways Festival' to highlight emerging culturally diverse musicians. The project plays a key role in incubating and exposing emerging culturally diverse artists and offers a testing ground for their music and building audiences.

The concept is built on education, mentoring and professional development for emerging artists. The objective is to create a pipeline of new culturally diverse artists through developing their skills, confidence and networks. The Hit Factory (2024) in partnership with Outloud, produced a new dimension of cross-cultural music, weaving together Moroccan, Persian, Colombian, Greek, Lebanese, Vietnamese and Western Classical lineages across the two ensemble groups. It offered us a glimpse into the pure creative potential that exists within our communities.

What required is:

- 1. Belief and support – seed 4 year funding to invest in the concept and outcomes.**
- 2. A flexible space – one that caters for music development and making (creation) accompanied by an intimate performance venue in a location that is easily accessible. (We want it to be a fertile environment for creative work and education) for our organisation to work at scale.**

Our 'place/factory' will be firmly artist centred – 'celebrating their role as the creators of culture', one that continues to promote our vision of developing and supporting 'a culturally diverse music industry, world renowned for its innovative music and inclusive practice'. Imagine this as a 'Multicultural Motown' - a place that builds the arts/music ecology of the region – a space that supports the development of new cross cultural music, one that nurtures and fosters the next pipeline of artists - a home for artists/musicians that cuts across diversity of culture, ability, gender, geography and age - a location artists/producers can collaborate and export this unique brand 'the Western Sydney Sound' across the world.

We imagine our place to be a place of self-generative opportunities and creative enterprise, one that requires policy and regulatory change also collaboration/strategic partnership and investment to drive new creative and distinctive work, new markets and platforms, pathways and job creation (economic value).

A home that supports creative development, but also can be a collective place of music education and training and industry engagement. A creative enterprise that can position NSW and Australia as leader in contemporary cross cultural music.

3. The most effective approach for the music and the creative industries to co-ordinate with the education system to support the development of creative skills

Improved artistic skills and professional development pathways

There are currently huge gaps in music education, particularly with young people and diverse communities in Western Sydney. Western Sydney embodies cultural diversity.

What is required is developing practical career pathway programs that take musicians to careers in the arts and cultural industries. This requires investment in arts & cultural organisations to make practical music based learning an essential part of a pathway to sustainable creative industries into the future. It's about investing in the nurturing of local talent. Opportunities for growth, training, and mentorship - elevating artists, enriching the creative economy, and boosting artistic quality.

The importance of place-based access cannot be overstated, nor a focused investment in music skills and education. Both funding and facilities currently hampers skills delivery and development. This solution lies in being holistic – building linkages between formal education and the creative industries. Importantly this approach must be practical as possible.

The process must prepare musicians/creatives for careers in the music industry and support a strong talent pipeline. The pivotal role of practical music training in fostering and refining the musical creativity of emerging musicians has been substantiated through diverse research frameworks and educational models. It is this practical training that can be strategically utilised to cultivate musical creativity.

Our 'hit factory' model exists whereby the whole contemporary music ecosystem is treated equally with multiple pathways for artists/musicians to expand their experience and knowledge targeting culturally diverse communities. Essentially it is a mix of professional, audience & industry, and educational outcomes.

These are some of the successful projects undertaken:

Culture X Festival 2024	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3O3Bz9Y82nU
In Search of the Western Sydney Sound	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D3IN_uE5MD0
Worlds Collide - Freedom	https://youtu.be/XHGmp78y35s
Sydney World Music Chamber Orchestra	https://youtu.be/rwhp1vUevgU
Karifi and the African Union Dancers	https://youtu.be/Rmh7KKzkm3E
Hit Factory 2024 – OneSix Morocco Blue	https://youtu.be/L2O3ijR5YE0

The table below offers an integrated approach and developmental model to music education and creative industries developed by Sacred Currents Inc. & Cultural Arts Collective:

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT STREAM	AUDIENCE AND INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT STREAM	EDUCATION STREAM
TARGET MARKETS		
Semi/pro artists	Community amateur artists and local audiences	Students, Community
PROGRAMS		
RESIDENCIES (PRODUCER IN RESIDENCE PROGRAM)	RECORDING AND REHEARSAL STUDIO (COMMUNITY ACCESS)	EDUCATION
AIM: Change the face of Australian contemporary music via innovative and inclusive cross cultural music	AIM: -Build local live music scene via providing access to resources and expertise -provide point of entry for CALD communities	AIM: -Provide sustainable employment opportunities for CALD musicians/educators -provide point of entry for CALD communities
HOW: -with our Producers in Residence: -Create innovative new music and export ready products (Ensembles/Bands/artists) - marketing materials e.g. Music videos - connect to/network with other festival and organisation across Australia - Booking of initial tour to Melbourne and/or Brisbane via the regions	HOW: Activate and support local Live Music Scene via providing low cost rehearsal space and access to recording studio and producer - connect with CaLD communities running studios, recording and teaching out of their homes in the suburbs.	HOW: Weekly lessons and monthly short courses: -Instruments: primarily non Western instruments - Production: engineering, songwriting, video - Business – entrepreneurial and arts business - marketing – video creating and social media
Other OPPORTUNITIES: -Build a national touring network (building on SOS circuit etc)	Other OPPORTUNITIES: Be the central support system for the local live music scene to support marketing and industry awareness E.g. Create the Western Sydney Touring Circuit	Other OPPORTUNITIES: -Provide Cert 3 and 4 qualifications for educators and students provide paid opportunities for teachers in the Hub recording studio and live venue
LIVE MUSIC VENUE		
Monthly - Residency presentation/gig - creating new ensembles -new audiences	Monthly – gigs and recording opportunities (demos) - A chance for CaLD communities to use/invest in a venue that is not fuelled by alcohol	½ yearly presentation/gigs Cross cultural Ensembles featuring students and teachers with event production, marketing and documentation by students
PATHWAYS		
-Festivals – Culture X Festival -Touring - Expand Culture X Festival to include Hubs in Ashfield, (Bankstown and Penrith)	Local, regional music scene	Professional Dev and/ or industry Dev Stream/s - Western Sydney University

Attached is an overview of what we do and an outline for 'Our Big Idea'.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you.

Thanking you

Regards

Richard Petkovic (Artistic Director/Producer)

Cultural Arts Collective

Andrew Overton (Chair)

Sacred Currents Inc.

References:

Sounds NSW (Ethos Urban)

State of the Scene 2024 Report - Review of the NSW live music industry

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/noindex/2024-06/State-of-the-Scene-2024.pdf>

'90.9% of respondents who work in the live music industry agree that live music can be a powerful form of cultural expression, particularly for marginalised groups.

The report found that ***'a lack of outreach to NSW's culturally diverse groups engaging in live music is impeding positive industry representation outcomes'***

The report also recognised that industry's blue-sky vision for NSW's live music industry in 10 years should include:

'An emphasis on innovative cross-cultural music'

And to:

'A venue ecosystem that supports all genres and levels of artists'

'Create a strategy and work with industry to support the opening of new medium-size venues and new venues in areas identified as lacking in live music venues'

'Improve career development pathways by investigating opportunities to develop mentorship programs'

Other key quotes:

'Until recently Australian R&B/Soul musicians mostly mimicked U.S artists, but a rapid shift to eclectic new sounds in recent years has created a musical scene that reflects the diversity of modern Australia better than any other music genre.'

Musical diversity kindles unique Australian R&B culture - Emerging artists reflect social changes better than any other music genre - 6 January 2024 Cat Woods, Contributing writer

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Life-Arts/Arts/Musical-diversity-kindles-unique-Australian-R-B-culture>

Results from the fifth National Arts Participation survey of 9,396 Australians aged 15 and above, found that 87% of Indigenous Australians and 81% of Cald Australians attended arts events and festivals, compared with 68% of all Australians. Meanwhile, 73% of Indigenous Australians and 60% of Cald Australians creatively participated in the arts, compared with 44% of all Australians. The survey showed that for First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse people, arts and culture "is not just about entertainment; it's about connection, identity and wellbeing".

Indigenous and culturally diverse Australians more likely to attend arts events, study finds Steve Dow - 20 Sep 2023 – Guardian Australia

<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2023/sep/20/indigenous-and-culturally-diverse-australians-more-likely-to-attend-arts-events-study-finds>