

Submission  
No 30

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

**Organisation:** School of Education, Western Sydney University

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## Executive summary

This submission to the Joint Select Committee on Arts and Music Education and Training in New South Wales is written by Dr Rachel White and Dr Rachael Jacobs, on behalf of the School of Education, Western Sydney University. **We would welcome the opportunity to discuss our submission with the Joint Select Committee.**

There is a wealth of Australian and international research that supports the value of robust, meaningful, and engaging creative arts and music education programs in schools at all stages of learning. However, while this research continues to highlight the benefits of creative arts engagement for students, there lies within an implication about the importance of educational arts programs being designed and implemented by passionate, educated, expert teachers. It is not enough to simply supply a school with guitars and call it a music program – the students of New South Wales deserve to attend schools with comprehensive and diverse creative arts education programs, and for those programs to be taught by educators with disciplinary expertise.

Our submission advocates for improved pre-service and in-service teacher development in the creative arts and music education, sustainable and equitable funding for creative arts programs in schools, and for schools to be able to pursue strong and meaningful partnerships with artists and creative professionals in their community. We advocate for the New South Wales government to move beyond the many, many inquiries and reports into music and creative arts education that have occurred over the decades, and instead make decisions that will have real effects on the creative and cultural lives of students, particularly in low SES, regional, and rural areas.

Our submission proposes the following recommendations:

1. **All primary schools in New South Wales must employ a Creative Arts specialist teacher** to ensure that all students are receiving a quality creative arts education.
2. **The New South Wales Education Standards Authority (NESA) must make creative arts knowledge and skill development a mandatory priority area** for teachers' ongoing professional growth.
3. **All undergraduate and postgraduate primary teacher education courses must allocate at least two units of mandatory study in arts education**, allowing pre-service teachers to meaningfully prepare to teach Dance, Drama, Music and Visual Arts.
4. Pre-service primary teachers should be given **the option to specialise as a Music and Creative Arts teacher.**
5. The committee should consider **a trial of an Artist in Residence program in Western Sydney schools.**
6. **A public advocacy campaign around the value of arts education**, to be conducted with the aim of lifting the enrolment in secondary school elective arts subjects and tertiary arts degree programs, as well as promoting the possibilities and benefits of a quality arts education.

## Terms of Reference

This submission addresses the following terms of reference:

1. (a) The quality and effectiveness of arts and creative industries education, including:
  - (ii) the present level and status of formal arts and creative industries education across all levels, including primary, secondary, and tertiary levels
  - (iii) robust and evidence-based arts and creative industries education in initial teacher education courses in the tertiary sector
  - (iv) the role of arts organisations and creative professionals in education and the development of creative skills across the arts
  - (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 New South Wales
  - (viii) the most effective approach for the arts, culture, and creative industries to co-ordinate with the education system to support the development of creative skills
  - (xi) factors influencing student decisions to pursue further arts education, including but not limited to course choice, course location and the method of study
- (b) the quality and effectiveness of music education and training, including:
  - (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
  - (iii) robust and evidence-based music education in initial teacher education courses in the tertiary sector
  - (iv) the role of regional conservatoriums and creative professionals in music education
  - (vi) the availability of support for teachers and principals in delivering quality music education and ensuring that an inclusive approach is taken towards resource allocation for regional schools across New South Wales
  - (x) factors influencing student decisions to pursue further music education, including but not limited to course choice, course location and the method of study

## Section 1. Benefits of the arts in education

There is a growing wealth of research evidence supporting the value and benefits of engagement with the arts at all educational stages. Recent international research has explored and identified the ways in which dance education can improve relationships and adolescent development (May et al., 2021; Schmid & McGreevy-Nichols, 2022; Tao et al., 2022), how drama education can benefit creativity and critical thinking skills (Lee et al., 2020), how music education can impact behavioural outcomes in children (Fasano et al., 2019), and how arts engagement can impact mental health and wellbeing (Fancourt & Finn, 2019). Australian research indicates that creative arts and music education in schools provides direct benefits to student development of discipline-specific skills and knowledge, including musical competence (Barrett & Bond, 2015; Crooke et al., 2016) and cultural understanding and empathy, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures (Carter et al., 2015; Crooke et al., 2016; Mills & Doyle, 2019). Learning in and through the creative arts makes learning visible (Kerby et al., 2021) and provides the most salient opportunities for students to establish the foundations of creativity (Ewing, 2020).

In an effort to help creative arts educators justify their presence and advocate for their subject in a system that privileges English and STEM subjects, there has been a recent push for researchers to explore the other benefits that creative arts educational experiences can provide for students. We now have Australian research that shows that creative arts teaching and learning can positively impact school attendance (Brasche & Thorn, 2018; Vaughan & Caldwell, 2017), language and communication skills (Crooke et al., 2016; Kerby et al., 2021; Mills & Doyle, 2019), and social and emotional skills and wellbeing (Barrett & Bond, 2015; Brasche & Thorn, 2018; Carter et al., 2015; Crooke et al., 2016; O'Flaherty et al., 2022). However, it is important to understand that, even in the cases of the research cited here, context and expertise matters. Technological developments and increasingly ubiquitous access to the internet means that people have a greater exposure to the arts than ever before, but this does not mean that all people will automatically reap the benefits of a robust and quality arts education. Effective musical and artistic learning needs to be carefully managed and guided by creative arts experts (Barrett & Bond, 2015), in a school community that understands the value of the creative arts (Barrett et al., 2018; Crooke & McFerran, 2015). Engagement with trained teachers, or artists in residence, can provide students with positive role models who have the requisite discipline-specific knowledge and skills to ensure a positive and meaningful learning experience (Barrett & Bond, 2015; Gore et al., 2018). We understand that teachers make the greatest impact on student learning outside of the student themselves (Hattie, 2003, 2023) – these impacts in any discipline, including creative arts, come from educated, knowledgeable, and capable teachers.

The inequities extant in our educational system are currently ensuring that there is a distinct and growing divide between children with and without access to a quality arts education. “Private schools are better resourced to employ specialist music teachers who are confident and competent in the delivery of the curriculum than public schools who, research indicates, must rely on generalist teachers who lack such confidence” (Brasche & Thorn, 2018, p. 133). The research by Crooke and McFerran (2015) provides clear indicators of the difficulties that are met by schools in implementing creative arts programs when faced with unsupportive leadership, a lack of resources, issues with program sustainability, and questions about the burden programs can place on staff, particularly if there is a lack of specialisation and discipline-specific knowledge and expertise. Although much of the creative arts education research focuses on the potential benefits for students, there is also evidence of the importance of creative arts programs being delivered by experts, and being supported in a way that is sustainable and meaningful for the school community.

As a society, we inherently understand that the creative arts are valuable, particularly for children, yet there still seems to be difficulty translating that social norm into an equitable educative context. Nine in 10 Australians agree that the arts make an important contribution to our society, and two thirds of Australians agree that the arts have a big impact on child development and our ability to express ourselves and think creatively (Australia Council, 2014). Despite years and years of reports and recommendations, “the actual situation in classrooms across Australian primary schools, and in teacher education programs at universities, is that music [and the creative arts] is under-valued, under-resourced, under-timetabled, and under-regulated” (Brasche & Thorn, 2018, p. 134). Teachers, researchers, and education academics have been imploring Australian governments to invest in equitable access to creative arts and music education for decades (Australia Council for the Arts, 2023; Cunningham & Gibson, 2022; Environment Recreation Communications and the Arts References Committee & Coulter, 1995; Ewing, 2010, 2020; Pascoe et al., 2005). The research is telling us that music and the creative arts matter – we need government leaders and policy implementation that ensures equitable, sustainable, and quality arts education and quality arts teaching for all students.

## Section 2: Initial Teacher Education in Music and the Creative Arts

One key element of the successful integration of arts education as a viable and valuable learning area in the curriculum lies in the quality of education available to those who are hoping to become teachers. Teacher educators in the arts can feel they are fighting a battle to be taken seriously in terms of the value they bring to the curriculum (Ashton et al., 2023; Belfiore, 2015). One of the main issues that hinders teacher readiness in the arts is the lack of understanding of the contemporary nature of arts education on the part of initial teacher education courses and the students themselves. In 1995 The Arts Coalition of Western Australia (Boyd, 1999) reported a lack of recognition of or allowance for the fact that few pre-service primary teachers possess personal skills in the arts; thereby requiring a degree of scaffolding that teacher educators in other disciplines may not need to factor into their units of study. As a result of these gaps, arts education lecturers feel they have to maintain a wide focus within a limited time to enable initial teacher education students to facilitate meaningful arts experiences when they commence their teaching.

A study by Jacobs (2008) found that arts educators have to introduce students to Dance, Drama, Music and Visual Art often in one university unit, when most students had little or no prior experience in those artforms. For example, at Western Sydney University, a number of pre-service teacher education students were schooled overseas, and possibly experienced no mandated arts education when they went to school. Even for students educated in NSW, Music and Visual Arts are the only creative arts subjects mandated for students in Stage 4 (Year 7 and 8), with schools providing varying levels of course instruction and availability. This can mean it may have been years for some pre-service teachers since they last encountered any kind of formal creative arts instruction. Within a short period of time, a lecturer must introduce arts education practice and develop the arts teaching practice of these students. Many lecturers resort to teaching practical experiences only, without being able to go into theoretical depth or unpack the curriculum in meaningful ways. There is a danger in reducing the curriculum in this way, which was highlighted by one university lecturer in Jacobs' (2008) study:

We do what we can, but students will often end up falling back on the way that they learned music themselves, and in some way I would like us to have a much deeper, broader understanding than that... This means they only understand Maths and Science pedagogies. They abandon the arts because they are scared.

Another university lecturer said:

I would love to have much more time to assist the students to understand the role and the context of music in our society, but I recognise they have to know how to teach before that. Finally, I really, really wish we had more time to develop students' skills... We're constrained by reality, unfortunately.

The amount of time spent educating pre-service teachers about the benefits of arts education has been found to be one of the most effective mechanisms to ensure an arts rich classroom. However, many primary teacher education courses require students to engage in only one or two units of study within a four-year Education degree, or even less if the course is a two-year postgraduate program. This can result in pre-service teachers engaging in only 2 – 6 hours of pedagogical development in each of Creative Arts disciplines over the course of their entire degree. The lack of time devoted to the arts was highlighted by a Western Sydney University School of Education postgraduate student who wrote the following on their unit evaluation:

If you think about the kinds of schools that kids want to go to, and the schools that parents and communities want, they are colourful, full of art and visually appealing. Given that we will be required to make art regularly for every year of our career, it is simply appalling that our degree devotes just 2 hours to Visual Arts.

A 2009 study found that the of the provision of music education was allocated an average of 1.51% of teaching time within a teacher education course (Hocking, 2009). Research carried out by Jacobs (2008) found that all primary teacher education courses in NSW and around Australia have limited amounts of time allocated to arts education. The time allocated is inadequate, particularly in that these units prepare teachers to teach *four* arts subjects, which are equally valuable, each with their own distinctive vocabulary, theories, practices and ways of working. Furthermore, almost three decades ago, numerous submissions to the Report on Arts Education by the Senate Environment Recreation Communications and the Arts References Committee (1995) gave evidence of the widespread misunderstandings of the values of arts education on the part of teacher education institutions. The committee also found that the arts are often made to justify their existence in the curriculum in a way that few other subjects are required to do. Their validation is also often made through non-arts outcomes, such as employability (McCormack & Baron, 2023) or even how they help students learn in other subjects (Braund & Reiss, 2019). The arts are often praised for their benefits to other learning areas while their own unique characteristics are dismissed as being not as academically important. In light of this, teacher educators in the arts have what Collins (2016) describes as an “impossible expectation” (p. 1). The design of arts education units within initial teacher education courses varies between universities. Research by Collins (2016, p. 4) found that

Several universities use an integrated design while others offer a suite of units covering each arts discipline discretely and separately. Universities deal with similar issues to school leaders in this regard; the provision of arts education learning is heavily influenced by the availability of appropriate staff and the value arts education holds within the broader construct of a teacher education course.

Within the aforementioned limitations, some change is possible, if the lecturer is able to address the key issue of self-efficacy and confidence in the arts while giving pre-service education students practical arts skills. At Western Sydney University, these limitations have been somewhat mediated by an applied, research-informed assessment designed to encourage students to pursue their creative interests beyond the course material. This is described in the following case study.

*Case study: Practical and community-based assessment tasks*

At Western Sydney University, primary pre-service teachers are required to complete 15 hours of arts learning outside of university as part of their mandatory assessment in their Primary Creative Arts unit. For this task, students can engage in community learning in Dance, Music and Visual Arts, while the rest of their course scaffolds other assessable studies in Drama. This task was set for students for the following reasons:

- To address the skills gap in arts education and build pre-service teachers’ arts knowledge
- To encourage pre-service teachers to learn from professional or community artists and participate in the arts outside of the university
- To help pre-service teachers to value artists’ specialist knowledge and teach them how to access arts learning

In addition to these aims, this assessment task has helped pre-service teachers to become independent learners who are able to access arts learning experiences in the community. Many pre-service teachers have gone on to continue their studies in the arts after their arts education unit of study had concluded. Some even decided to alter their pathway to devote themselves to becoming an arts specialist in Primary Education. A large number of students chose to learn arts from their own cultural background, which they had not previously accessed due to migration journeys, or in the case of First Nations students, disconnection from Country or community. But possibly the most dramatic transformation happens in pre-service teachers who came to their studies with low self-efficacy in the arts. The following comment on a student evaluation is testament to the effectiveness of practical, community-based arts experiences for pre-service teachers.

I thought I was going to hate this unit and I was sure I'd fail because I thought I wasn't creative. I was even angry about being made to do the arts. But it was actually really good, and I learned much more than the arts. I learned to be a better teacher.... For Assignment 2 I was really challenged but it was also a great experience, like walking in my students' shoes. I have even signed up for another term of guitar lessons and I'm keen to take this skill into my classroom.

This task was designed by Professor Deirdre Russell-Bowie of Western Sydney University and has been set for students for over 15 years. Fifteen years of data suggests that practical and community-based arts education may be beneficial to all teachers. Outside of professional learning, having teachers experience the challenge and joy of the arts will assist their confidence and skills, for the benefit of themselves and the community.

### Section 3: A student's perspective

Tahlia is currently studying to become a high school music teacher in the MTeach degree program at WSU. She is coming towards the end of her degree and has deliberately pursued teaching and practicum experiences in disadvantaged Western Sydney government schools, as well as in regional schools. She was asked to consider why she wanted to be a teacher – her responses reflect the experiences of many creative and musical students at WSU and in Western Sydney.

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Choosing to become a teacher was a decision that took many years to fully come to. Starting in high school, I attended my local public school and joined the CAPA music class where I was met with an intensely passionate music teacher. Reflecting on my time in high school I can see the value that quality music education brought to my schooling and personal life. I feel strongly that music education supports students across many areas of academics and personal life. Not only can it assist in literacy and numeracy skills through indirect and practical ways such as reading music, writing music and performance, but it can also be incredibly valuable in mental health and wellbeing. Music classes are a safe place to work through big thoughts and feelings, or even escape the overwhelming pressures of life. I know as a student, I enjoyed music as it was a time to express myself, challenge myself and be creative.

I believe all students should be given the opportunity to receive quality education no matter the location or financial situation of their schools/homes. I think often schools may be more limited in their resources and opportunities for students to explore the creative arts which is unfortunate for students who miss out on the potential of music. This led me to want to work in a regional or disadvantaged school as I am passionate about being able to provide the education students deserve within music.

In a regional school I visited they didn't offer music as they didn't have teachers or resources which in turn led to a lack of interest from students as they were unaware of what a music class could even be like. This was particularly disappointing as I felt the students were missing out on an essential aspect of education. In other regional schools I visited they had been able to embed a musical culture within the school and create a school band. The school happily provided instruments for any students to take home and learn- when I asked if they were ever worried about the instruments being damaged or lost the teacher confidently said that was never and will never be an issue as the students so highly valued the opportunity. This school in particular also made use of local music programs whenever possible to help provide opportunities to join community groups outside of school to continue working on their music skills.

In a disadvantaged public school I recently visited, the school prioritised including music in the daily routine. They played music at bell times and frequently had “quad jams” where music students played at lunch for the school. In addition, music was encouraged through the senior years at school with decently sized classes including students on life skills. These senior elective classes were flexible and catered to all levels of skill and any interest. These classes saw some students learning new instruments or experimenting with styles as their music tastes changed. It also created a high level of respect between teachers and students as they became connected on a greater level as the classroom was so safe and welcoming. I was aware that some students in the class were struggling with mental health and often used music class and the music rooms during breaks as a way of getting through the school day. This school also created scholarships that can be used to support students' musical interests. One student in particular was living in social housing and had received a scholarship that they wanted to put towards an acoustic bass for their home. This student was so overwhelmed with joy at the opportunity to receive the

instrument. This school did the best it could with the resources and it showed that students benefited extensively through their music education.

I think one of the main aspects that can support students is ensuring a music-trained teacher is leading the music class and that there is a range of musical instruments available for students to try and get familiar with. A music-trained teacher will provide the needed perspective on the challenges of learning music and the vulnerability of the process. Learning and performing on an instrument can be very confronting which is why it is important that the teacher can relate and support in this core aspect of music education.

Providing students with opportunities to take their practice further and create a school culture where music is valued is also essential. Schools can always be supported in their music courses through external opportunities like concert bands or choirs. Organising bands and choirs can be a hard task so by pairing with an external group that works with schools more opportunities can be created for students.

I think quality music education should look different in different contexts. I think leading a practice centred around the desired outcomes for the class and each student will help determine the education needed. In a regional or disadvantaged school, I would ensure that the interests of students and the class are the main driving factors for the education they receive. If the class all seem to enjoy rap or R&B music then that is going to make them most curious, and most invested, keep them showing up to class and provide them with the ability to take their music education outside the classroom through learning about things they are interested in. So I think that a quality music education is one where it meets the needs of the student. An education that inspires, excites and fuels learning that goes further than the classroom.

#### Section 4: Advocating for more arts-rich schools

Respect for the arts as an essential component of a child's education has diminished. It was not so long ago that there was a piano wedged into a corner of many primary classrooms. The school day began with singing. Teacher training courses once included mandatory studies in Visual Arts every semester, with teachers creating large portfolios of artworks that they could facilitate for students. High school musicals were not reserved for wealthy schools. Today, the de-prioritisation of the arts by national policy leaders has meant that less time is allocated to arts learning, amidst strong narratives around the importance of other curriculum areas including STEM and literacy and numeracy. However, without creativity and a strong understanding of humanities principles, students will not be able to apply these learnings in ways that will allow them to flourish as individuals and within a society.

The emphasis on STEM subjects, digital skills, tech careers and back-to-basics approaches, coupled with the battering of the arts sector during the COVID-19 pandemic has meant that arts subjects have had declining enrolments in secondary schools over the last 15 years, compared to steady or increasing enrolments in several science and mathematics-related subjects. In 2007, almost one third of the total HSC cohort completed at least one Creative Arts subject; this has since declined to 24% in 2022. Drama in particular has struggled to weather the pandemic years, dropping from 7.8% of all HSC enrolments in 2007 to 4.6% in 2022, a loss of almost half of the cohort. Similar losses can be seen in both of the HSC Music courses (8.4% to 7.1%) and Visual Arts (14.3% to 11.7%). While these numbers may seem small, they translate to the loss of entire classes in many schools. For example, the average size of a Music 1 class is around 7 students (White, 2021), which means that there were up to 76 fewer Music 1 classes in schools for the 2022 HSC than in 2007.

This is particularly concerning in Western Sydney, where creative expression is a vital way to engage with culturally diverse communities so that we might hear their stories and learn from their experiences. Many arts teachers regularly vie for students at elective nights, hoping to make the minimum numbers required to create an elective dance, drama, music or visual arts class. Schools are often filled with myths and misinformation surrounding the poor scaling of arts subjects, leading students to drop some of their most loved subjects in Year 11/12 for fear of being scaled down. This phenomenon in relation to HSC Music was explored in White (2021), with music teachers across NSW describing how they were losing their 'best and brightest' to subjects that were perceived to scale better, primarily in the maths and sciences. One teacher described a particularly memorable experience of the loss of one of her best students:

I remember one time I had Year 11 Music and the best kid was going off to the curriculum co-ordinator because her mum said she had to drop music because she had too many units and she had to become a doctor. She came back and said, yeah, I am dropping, and the comment was, "Oh you should see how badly Music 1 scales, guys." (White, 2021, p. 173)

This is not just alarming for the students concerned. This could possibly lead to a shortage of skills in the future, in an age where our creative industries should be a key national export. Parental pressure also plays a role, with many misunderstanding the intent of elective arts curriculums; choosing art does not mean you want to be an artist when you leave school, any more than choosing maths means you will be a mathematician! Studying creative subjects develops important transferable skills and creates confident, communicative, lateral thinkers. Schools should be concerned about the risk of creating cohorts of students who have not pursued their passion. Additionally, PISA now tests creativity and ranks countries

based on their achievement in the creative thinking skills test<sup>1</sup>. Australia is in danger of slipping in PISA rankings if we do not prioritise arts subjects. It is time that school leaders and school students alike saw the arts being prioritised as an area of learning in schools.

The arts offer exciting and accessible pathways into creative development and cultural understanding, along with practical skills that engage the senses. The following are two examples of critically important arts programs and offerings that need to be comprehensively and sustainably supported in schools.

### *3.1 Extra-curricular arts activities*

The existence of bands, choirs, drama clubs, dance schools, performance troupes, art making spaces, and school plays are transformative for children's physical and mental wellbeing (O'Donnell et al., 2023; O'Flaherty et al., 2022). Arts-based activities help students feel connected to their community, make them feel valued and help them feel part of something meaningful (Martin et al., 2013). They allow spaces for skill development and self-expression outside of the classroom, and teach organisation, responsibility, discipline, perseverance, and possibly most vitally, ways to work with others (O'Flaherty et al., 2022; White, 2021). Extra-curricular activities give students much needed time away from screens and allow socialisation and positive risk-taking behaviour. Studies have found that involvement in extra-curricular arts activities result in improvements in general academic achievement (Guhn et al., 2020; Ishiguro et al., 2023) and positive behaviours inside and outside of the classroom (Darling et al., 2005; Fluharty et al., 2023). Provision of extra-curricular creative arts activities in schools is also an issue of equity, as they are often the only accessible programs for low-income families (Ashbourne & Andres, 2015; Osborne et al., 2016). The provision of robust, quality arts educational programs in schools needs to include support and resources to develop sustainable extra-curricular activities, maintained by creative arts educators and professionals.

### *3.2 Case study: Artists in Residence in School*

One possible way to ensure the ongoing success of extra-curricular arts education is to engage community artists as Artists in Residence. The Fresh AIR (Artists in Residence) program (Hatton & Mooney, 2018) found that artists placed in school communities were able to facilitate programs and develop creative ecologies that benefitted the whole school and the broader community. They found particular benefits for connecting young people to the cultural significance of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures when elders were placed in artistic leadership roles in schools. Other schools, such as Maroubra Bay Public School, have found success with artistic residency programs. Solid Ground, based at Carriageworks, is a residency program that provides education, training and employment pathways for First Nations artists. Luke Patterson is a Gamilaroi poet based in Chifley College's Dunheved campus. Nathan Leslie is a Gamilaroi and Mandandanji man who runs dance and weaving programs at Chifley College's Bidwill campus, inspiring participants to learn and heal through arts engagement. Three NSW schools with consistent high achievement in senior secondary music examined in White (2021) engaged a composer-in-residence to create school-commissioned works and provide expert teaching in composition for their students.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information about the PISA 2022 Creative Thinking assessment, please see this website: <https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/sub-issues/creative-thinking/pisa-2022-creative-thinking.html>

Artists in Residence programs in schools would also address an ongoing issue of employment opportunities for community artists, particularly after the COVID-19 lockdowns. While the school community can be enriched by an artistic expert on site, the creative thinking and leadership that an Artist in Residence can offer can have benefits for staff, students, families and the wider community. In the region of Western Sydney, for example, the artists would be of great benefit if they reflected the cultural demographics of the school and community.

In light of the research, data, and educational experiences presented in this submission, we propose the following recommendations:

1. **All primary schools in New South Wales must employ a Creative Arts specialist teacher** to ensure that all students are receiving a quality creative arts education.
2. **The New South Wales Education Standards Authority (NESA) must make creative arts knowledge and skill development a mandatory priority area** for teachers' ongoing professional growth.
3. **All undergraduate and postgraduate primary teacher education courses must allocate at least two units of mandatory study in arts education**, allowing pre-service teachers to meaningfully prepare to teach Dance, Drama, Music and Visual Arts.
4. Pre-service primary teachers should be given **the option to specialise as a Music and Creative Arts teacher.**
5. The committee should consider **a trial of an Artist in Residence program in Western Sydney schools.**
6. **A public advocacy campaign around the value of arts education**, to be conducted with the aim of lifting the enrolment in secondary school elective arts subjects and tertiary arts degree programs, as well as promoting the possibilities and benefits of a quality arts education.

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