

Submission
No 47

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

Organisation: Association of NSW Regional Conservatoriums

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Association of NSW Regional Conservatoriums

Submission to the Joint Select Committee on Arts and Music Education and Training in New South Wales

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Prepared by The Association of NSW Regional Conservatoriums in consultation with the membership.

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Section 1: Opening Statement

“We have the most extraordinary power to change lives with music” - Richard Gill AO,
TedEX Talk The Value of Music Education 2011

The Association of NSW Regional Conservatoriums welcomes this inquiry. We anticipate that it will result in a NSW Government Strategy which will reignite Arts and Music Education and Training across the State in order to ensure life-long learning and engagement in arts and music for all.

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

The Association of NSW Regional Conservatoriums is the peak body for 17 NSW Regional Conservatoriums. We are committed to excellence and life-long engagement in music education, enriching the lives of people in regional communities.

Regional Conservatoriums are shaped by the communities and regions in which they operate and are responsive to local needs and interests. They are key providers of high-quality music education and performance programs for their regions.

In its **Creative Communities Policy** (December 2023) the NSW Government recognises that the right to participate in arts, cultural and creative activities is a fundamental human right.

The lack of a strategy from the NSW Government to support the delivery of Arts and Music Education, particularly within the public-school curriculum, has arguably led to the decline and marginalisation of Arts Education in the public school system over many years.

The decline in our view is now systemic, from primary to tertiary education.

There is currently no policy framework for an embedded statewide strategy in which life-long music education can thrive.

The Association of NSW Regional Conservatoriums urges the NSW Government to accept the science proving the benefits of Music Education. Please don't prevaricate by commissioning more studies, but rather take advantage of the information and significant studies readily available to inform the outcomes of this inquiry. **Music Education: A Sound Investment** the report commissioned by Alberts The Tony Foundation 2020 would be a valuable resource to the Joint Select Committee.

We believe immediate action should be taken to place Arts and Music Education at the heart of the NSW curriculum for all students. Research proves that Arts and Music Education is a



critical element of a well-rounded education that ultimately leads to economic, social and educational benefits for all.

In other important industry sectors, the Government wouldn't assume that skills will somehow be developed and therefore the sector will be able to reach its potential. But that is mostly the approach in the cultural and creative arts sector.

There is an inconsistent approach to skill development across the cultural and creative industries which varies greatly depending on where you live, and the education system you are able, or choose to access. By largely relying on private funding from families/individuals for cultural learning and development, a lack of opportunity is perpetuated among the less well-off. As a result the cultural domain is being predominantly populated by those educated outside the state education system.

The emphasis on STEM in the public education system provides only limited opportunity and support for any form of artistic creativity - be it in the performing arts or anywhere else. This must be addressed. The creative capacity of our younger generations will impact significantly upon the economic, cultural and social stability of our State's future.

Arts and Music Education is thriving in the non-government school system. NSW Regional Conservatoriums deliver music education to people willing/able to pay. An education in Arts and Music is arguably now accessible only to those with the ability to pay for it. This level of inequity goes against the principle that the right to participate in arts, cultural and creative activities is a fundamental human right for all those who live in NSW.

Cultural and creative arts are a huge industry within our economy, worth billions of dollars every year. Education and careers in the Arts and Music should not be viewed as a "hobby" or extra-curricular. Rather, careers in the Arts and Music should be viewed as viable, essential occupations driving important economic and cultural functions. The language used around the industry and practitioners within it needs to change. Government needs to ensure that those working in the sector are regarded and respected as professionals.

The Association of NSW Regional Conservatoriums urges the NSW Government to ensure any new policy framework relating to Arts and Music Education is supported by appropriate resources and training that will enable Arts and Music Education to thrive.



Section 2: About Regional Conservatoriums

Terms of Reference: (iv) the role of regional conservatoriums and creative professionals in music education

(vii) 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

NSW Regional Conservatoriums are independent, not-for-profit charitable organisations providing access to life-long learning and engagement in music and music education.

Regional Conservatoriums work within and beyond the formal education system in regional locations across NSW.

The Association of NSW Regional Conservatoriums is the peak body for NSW Regional Conservatoriums.

We refer the Joint Select Committee to the significant Supplementary Material we have provided which details the impact of Regional Conservatoriums including:

- Who we are
- Why the Network of Regional Conservatoriums is unique
- Key take-aways
- What are high level problems we are working to address?
- Leadership in our sector
- Considerations going forward
- Our Ask

In brief, NSW Regional Conservatoriums are:

1. The only collective of its kind whose primary purpose is the development of music education opportunities which provide life-long access to music and music education across all of non-metropolitan NSW.
2. The largest employer of music educators and music teachers in NSW outside the formal education sector.
3. A representation of a highly successful social enterprise model for education whose communities invest in and value music education
 - a. Our communities from across NSW,
 - i. invest at least \$15million per year through Regional Conservatoriums alone.
 1. give thousands of hours of their discretionary time per week to engage in music and enhance the lives of our community.



2. support Music Education in Schools through donations via P&C groups which we have not quantified.
- b. In receipt of Treasury Funding via the Department of Education through a programmed called the Regional Conservatorium Grants Program (RCGP).
 - i. The core funding associated with the RCGP has not been reviewed in over 10 years.
 - ii. The RCGP funding awarded to Regional Conservatoriums is less than 50% of the sum invested by our communities in music education across NSW.
 1. Further investment in Regional Conservatoriums would represent a 'match' for the communities commitment to music education.
- c. NSW Regional Conservatoriums are a unique model in Australia and arguably internationally. It is a visionary model for providing life-long access to music and music education and should be celebrated and developed by NSW as a truly impactful model which changes lives and delivers economic and social benefits.

Geographic Spread of Regional Conservatoriums:

Central Coast Conservatorium centralcoastconservatorium.com.au	Lismore
Clarence Valley Conservatorium cvcon.com.au	Grafton
Coffs Harbour Regional Conservatorium coffscon.org.au	Inverell
Hume Regional Conservatorium humecon.nsw.edu.au	Armidale
Gunnedah Conservatorium gunnedahconservatorium.com.au	Coffs Harbour
Macquarie Conservatorium of Music macqcon.org.au	Tamworth
Mitchell Conservatorium mitchellconservatorium.edu.au	Muswellbrook
Murray Conservatorium murraycon.com.au	Dubbo
New England Conservatorium of Music necom.org.au	Bathurst
Northern Rivers Conservatorium Arts Centre nrcac.edu.au	Gosford
Orange Regional Conservatorium orangecon.org.au	Forbes
Riverina Conservatorium of Music rivconmusic.nsw.edu.au	Orange
South West Music Regional Conservatorium swmusic.org.au	Lithgow
Tamworth Regional Conservatorium of Music thecon.com.au	Young
Upper Hunter Conservatorium of Music uhcm.com.au	Wollongong
Wollongong Conservatorium of Music wollcon.com.au	Wagga Wagga
Young Regional School of Music yrsm.org.au	Goulburn
	Deniliquin
	Albury

regionalconsnsw.org.au

For the purposes of this submission, our focus is on Music Education and Training.



Section 3: The Association of NSW Regional Conservatorium's 3 key points in relation to Music Education and Training.

Terms of Reference: (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

(v) the efficacy of the current primary and secondary school curriculum in delivering learning outcomes in music related subjects

(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

1. Music Education in NSW is in systemic decline from the public school system to tertiary level.

- a. The benefits of Music Education are understood, but not championed or advocated for within the curriculum. Music Education is at best relegated to extra-curricular activity and/or is a subset of creative arts
 - i. Creative Arts has very little time allocated to it in schools because of the bias of the curriculum to the STEM subjects.
- b. Tertiary institutions including Conservatoriums and University Music Depts are, in general, not equipping graduates for the industry into which they are entering because of a lack of connection to the industry.
 - i. To succeed highly skilled musicians entering the workforce need:
 1. to have developed skills in entrepreneurship and leadership, as educators and community leaders.
 2. to be encouraged to have a mindset which embraces a portfolio career (which reflects the reality for most musicians).
 3. To have some pedagogical training if they are to be effective teachers.
 - a. Post-graduate pedagogy programs are few and far between and often taught by tertiary teachers who have little experience, knowledge or capacity to teach non-tertiary and community music education.
 4. Despite the above, many musicians, as part of a portfolio career, will become studio music teachers, a role for which



they may not be prepared, in a sector where there is no quality control for the customer. (see Section 3 below).

- c. It is well documented that training for classroom teachers at tertiary level does not equip them to deliver music education in the classroom.
 - i. To compound the problem
 - 1. In general, specialist music teachers (or recent Music Education Graduates) are not being employed by public schools because of the bias in the curriculum away from music.
 - ii. It is true to say that most schools do not have a specialist music teacher to deliver music education activities either in, or beyond the classroom. This is more prevalent in regional and rural areas.

2. There is a lack of qualified music educators across NSW.

- a. Regional Conservatoriums find recruitment of skilled music educators is an ongoing challenge
 - i. particularly when we require music educators with the mindset and willingness to be effective leaders in regional and rural NSW.
 - 1. Musicians who sustain a successful career in regional/rural areas of NSW often
 - a. undertake a variety of roles such as a musician/educator/school-teacher/community leader/local business owner.
 - b. have a mindset which embraces this variety and their role as a community leader.
 - ii. because of unattractive remuneration
 - 1. particularly when coupled with the challenges of living regionally.
 - a. Music Education is not the only sector that has this challenge.
 - b. The NSW Govt must address how music educators are supported/incentivised to live and work in regional areas.
 - 2. In comparison to other, even unskilled occupations
 - a. This reflects the lack of value placed on music education by policy makers, which is not reflected by the significant investment in music education by the wider community.



3. The Australian Studio Music Industry (*) is largely unregulated

- a. With the exception of NSW Regional Conservatoriums, music education beyond the formal education sector is unregulated and unpoliced.
 - i. Individuals can engage in professional music education practice with:
 - 1. No qualifications or formal training
 - 2. No oversight of child protection policies, practices or adherence to government legislation
- b. There are no undergraduate/tertiary training programs supporting training and accreditation for studio music teaching in partnership with the industry (unlike practice in other sectors such as education generally, accounting, medicine, nursing, law).
 - i. The exception to this may be in music production/technical/IT based music practice.

(*) studio music teaching is 1-2-1 or small group lessons taught by an individual in a private studio setting.



Section 4: Challenges faced by Regional Conservatoriums

1. Recruitment/skilled music leaders
 - a. This is a primary concern for Regional Conservatoriums (as illustrated in at 2 above).
 - i. Where are the next generation of music leaders coming from?
2. Funding to sustain current levels of activities
 - a. Funding for Regional Conservatoriums has not been reviewed for over 10 years despite Regional Conservatoriums achieving considerable growth and in many cases being the primary music educator in their region.
 - b. The increase in salaries for NSW Teachers has raised expectations among freelance music educators which Regional Conservatoriums cannot match.
 - c. We are now experiencing a skills-drain as well as being unable to recruit specialist music educators.
 - d. Current cuts within the Education Sector mean less funds available for schools to buy-in the services of Regional Conservatoriums, further limiting access to music education, particularly in the classroom.
 - e. The current economic climate will put pressure on individual's ability to pay for music education.
 - i. There is a real risk that only those with considerable levels of disposable income will be able to access music education.
3. Infrastructure
 - a. Many Regional Conservatoriums
 - i. lack security of tenure
 - ii. occupy spaces which are not fit for purpose particularly in relation to accessibility/protection of children/vulnerable adults.
 - iii. Operate in and service areas where digital solutions are not the answer because of poor connectivity/infrastructure



Section 5: Conclusion

1. The benefits of music education are proven. We don't need more studies. Action is required to embed music education into the lives of all young people in schools, from early years to high school. This requires a change in policy and the curriculum to add STEAM to STEM.
2. That change will achieve long-term benefits. In the short term, immediate training and incentivisation of music educators is required to reignite music education and life-long engagement in music for all communities across NSW. Regional Conservatoriums can play their part in training, educating, and animating their communities across NSW through music. However, Regional Conservatoriums also need resources and investment which at least match the commitment of their communities to enable them to be part of the solution.
3. The Regional Conservatorium model is unique to NSW. It is a notable approach to music education and the envy of other communities. Despite this, the network of Regional Conservatoriums is not able to reach its full potential. As a network it is unable to extend beyond current operations without a significant increase in funding. There is currently no ability to grow the network in areas of NSW not served because the resources are not available to expand the program.
4. The Association of Regional Conservatoriums represents some of the most skilled music educators working 'in the field' in Australia. Our members are willing and ready to contribute additionally to this inquiry, please don't hesitate to approach us.

Supplementary Files (uploaded) - NSW Regional Conservatorium Presentation