

Submission  
No 52

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

**Organisation:** Western Sydney Arts Alliance

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**Submission to the Joint Select Committee on Arts and Music Education in the NSW Parliament by the Western Sydney Arts Alliance (WSAA)**



**Western Sydney Arts Alliance**  
[www.wsaa.org.au](http://www.wsaa.org.au)

*Western Sydney Arts Alliance acknowledges the people of the Dharug, Gundungurra and Dharawal Nations who are the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands and waters on which we tell stories and whose cultures and customs have nurtured, and continue to nurture Country.*

## **WHO WE ARE**

The Western Sydney Arts Alliance represents over 40 arts and cultural organisations and local councils. It has been recognised as a key organisation in Creative Communities - the NSW Arts, Culture and Creative Industries Policy.

Western Sydney Arts Alliance is a network of arts presenters, cultural venues, festival producers, local government, and artistic organisations that have extensive and localised knowledge of Western Sydney complex locations and visitation. Our organisations are embedded within the Western Sydney landscape. We have extensive experience in presenting authentic events and activations that support the visitor economy and job creation in Western Sydney.

## Background

**Western Sydney Arts Alliance** acknowledges and supports the critical contributions of the region's small to medium arts and cultural sector. This sector plays an essential role in empowering, nurturing, and upskilling the next generation of creatives in Western Sydney. With the closure of Western Sydney University's performing and visual arts courses and the reduction in TAFE activities, this sector has stepped in to fill the gap taking on the responsibility of training, education and job ready development of an emerging workforce. Link to: [Space-YZ-Artist-List-web.pdf \(c-a-c.com.au\)](https://www.c-a-c.com.au/Space-YZ-Artist-List-web.pdf)

Western Sydney's arts and creative industries education sector is a vibrant and crucial component of the region's cultural landscape. However, this sector faces significant challenges due to limited resources and funding. Despite these challenges, organisations such as Arts & Cultural Exchange, Blacktown Arts, Penrith Performing & Visual Arts and Campbelltown Arts Centre strive to provide arts education programs to children and young people. These efforts are constrained by the lack of dedicated funding and resources, making it difficult to sustain long-term, impactful programs.

A recent study by Western Sydney University, *The State of the Arts in Western Sydney (2023)* found that lower rates of qualifications and skills in creative arts are due to the limited availability of performing and visual arts tertiary education courses and facilities in the region. Currently, only three institutions in Western Sydney offer tertiary education in creative arts, compared to 17 institutions in Eastern Sydney.

This limited access to training and education in the creative arts, coupled with lower skill levels in these industries, poses a significant challenge for the region as it seeks to position itself as a hub for growth and economic opportunity.

Regions with strong creative industries are better positioned to compete globally, as creativity fuels cultural exports, attracts tourists, and enhances reputations. Furthermore, creative skills are increasingly valuable across various fields such as technology, healthcare, education, and business, where innovative approaches improve processes and outcomes. These skills also enhance critical thinking, communication, and collaboration. A thriving creative sector enriches cultural life, promotes diversity, and fosters social cohesion by reflecting and shaping community values and experiences.

## Priorities

### 1) Invest in the upskilling of Western Sydney's young people

Support and fund arts and cultural institutions already making significant contributions in this space to further their impact. With the right investment and targeted resources, this sector is well positioned to play a substantial role in upskilling young people in culturally safe creative workplaces, especially those from First Nations, socio-economically disadvantaged, and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

## **2) Nurture the upcoming generation of creatives in Western Sydney**

Ensure young people have unimpeded place-based access to the arts by reviving the music and performing arts scene, fostering local talent, and ensuring the viability of venues and nightlife tailored to diverse youth from Western Sydney.

## **3) Support the screen industry**

Address the lack of diversity in the screen industry by the upskilling of crews, creatives, and actors. This requires targeted training programs and opportunities designed to equip underrepresented groups with the necessary skills and experience to thrive in the industry. Additionally, fostering inclusive hiring practices and creating pathways for career advancement will help build a more equitable and representative screen industry.

### **What actions are needed**

WSAA recommends the following actions in order to enhance the quality and effectiveness of arts and creative industries education in Western Sydney:

#### **Develop targeted funding programs:**

**Develop an investment model which recognises the small to medium arts sector as substantial providers of visual and performing arts education in the region.**

#### **Recognise the Importance of Arts Education:**

Understand the critical role arts education and cultural activity play in the region and support its excellence. Undertake an audit of arts education in Western Sydney high schools to better understand arts programs in junior and secondary and access to high school and professional pathways.

#### **Simplify Partnerships:**

Develop a framework that efficiently addresses the policy and regulatory environment in order to facilitate partnerships with school and tertiary institutions, providing schools with incentive to engage in arts programs.

#### **Funded Arts Residency programs in schools:**

Establish partnerships between public schools and arts organisations to fund artists in residence, enriching the educational experience, embedding artists in schools and education settings in collaboration with organisations.

#### **Promote Creative Industries:**

Actively promote careers in the arts and creative industries, highlighting the benefits of arts education and music targeting young people and diverse communities in Western Sydney.

#### **Focused Investment:**

To address the challenges faced by Western Sydney's arts education sector, we advocate for focused investment in arts education and music programs. This investment should prioritise children and young people, ensuring they have access to consistent, place-based high-quality arts education opportunities.

**Brokered Partnerships and Creative Kids Voucher:**

The Department of Education and Arts Organisations should broker partnerships to secure investment in arts education. Additionally, reinstating the Creative Kids Voucher for all would provide much-needed support to families and ensure more children have access to arts programs.

**Research:**

Foster impactful collaborative research in arts education and practice in partnership with Western Sydney University and ensure policy is data-informed and based on empirical evidence.

**Teacher education:**

Support universities to prioritise research, innovation and creativity programs and ensure adequate training of teachers in the arts.

**Conclusion**

Despite significant challenges, Western Sydney excels in arts and creative industries education. However, major barriers identified by WSAA members include a lack of funding and facilities, which hampers course delivery and development. Overcoming these obstacles requires dedicated funding, streamlined partnerships, and recognition of the vital role arts education plays in the community. With focused investment and support, Western Sydney can continue to foster its vibrant arts sector, benefiting young creatives and the wider community.

**References:**

Itaoui, R., Merrillees, D., Gerace, G. (2023). State of the Arts in Western Sydney, Parramatta, Centre for Western Sydney.