

Submission
No 57

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

Organisation: Art Education Australia

Date Received: 25 July 2024

Art Education Australia (AEA) Submission to the Joint Select Committee on Arts and Music Education and Training in NSW - Inquiry into arts and music education and training in New South Wales

Prepared by A/Professor Kathryn Coleman

Art Education Australia (AEA), President

Art Education Australia begins this submission noting that in Australia we have five distinct arts subjects – Dance, Drama, Media Arts, Music, and Visual Arts. It is not a Multi-Arts and Music Education in Australia curriculum or in NSW. The Australian curriculum assumes that all students study the five arts subjects. Art Education Australia would like to draw attention to the important point that in NSW Visual arts is a mandatory course for Stage 4 and elective in Stage 5 where students develop their critical understanding of the artist and different points of view of the visual arts. There should be parity between Visual Arts and Music in this inquiry rather than separating Music Education from the Arts. AEA recognises that both Music and Visual Arts Education have parity in the 200 hours of 'Mandatory curriculum requirements for the Record of School Achievement' to be completed consisting of the Board Developed 100-hour mandatory courses in **each** of Visual Arts and Music in NSW.

Who is Art Education Australia (AEA)?

Established in 1976, the Australian Institute of Art Education, now known as Art Education Australia (AEA) is the peak national professional association dedicated to Visual Arts educators in Australia. AEA champions the scholarly exploration, promotion, and enhancement of art education through rigorous theory, practice, and research. Our vision is to assert the value and role of visual art education in diverse sectors such as educational, cultural, social, health, industrial, and communication realms. We aim to provide national direction, set endorsed priorities, and foster a unified vision for visual art education across the country. AEA promotes intellectual freedom, critical thinking, and best practices in teaching, learning, and research in art education. We represent our members in national and international forums and strive to build robust partnerships with key decision-makers, including governments. AEA encourages addressing contemporary social and cultural issues through art education, such as environmental sustainability, global migration, and intercultural understanding. We advance innovative research and advocate for national reforms and policies that enhance art education at all levels. Our commitment is to promote inclusive, respectful, and culturally sensitive approaches in art education, engaging educators to focus on mindful and accessible teaching and learning practices. Any school, association or organisation pursuing similar goals and purposes may apply to become part of the AEA community through Associate Membership.

AEA has strong partnerships with its State and Territory Visual Arts Education Associations in NSW 'VADEA: Visual Arts and Design Educators Association'; in the Northern Territory 'Art Educators of the Northern Territory'; in Queensland 'QATA: Queensland Art Teacher's Association'; in South Australia 'VAESA: Visual Art Educators South Australia'; in Victoria 'AEV: Art Education Victoria'; in Western Australia 'Art Education Association of Western Australia' and in Tasmania 'TATA: Tasmanian Art Teachers Association'. At the National Level, AEA works closely with The National Advocates for Arts Education. NAAE was established in 1989 with the support of the Joint Council of Cultural and Education Ministers. It comprises of representatives from the following associations: Art Education Australia, Australian Dance Council, Australian Society for Music Education, Australian Teachers of Media, Drama Australia, Music Council of Australia, and the National Association of the Visual Arts. Internationally Art Education Australia is partner of the UNESCO affiliated 'INSEA: International Society for Education through Art'.

Visual Arts education in Australian schools

Learning in Visual Arts across Australia involves students making and responding to artworks, drawing on the world as a source of ideas, concepts and knowledges from a range of cultures, times and locations. Visual Arts education in Australian schools involves the study and practice of creating visual work, which include art, craft, and design. It is a vital component of the curriculum, fostering students' creative, intellectual, and emotional development. In the Australian Curriculum, Visual Arts students engage with the local, national and global knowledge of Visual Arts through the development of skills, techniques and processes, and use materials to explore a range of forms, styles and contexts. In Visual Arts education teachers and students explore the art of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and of the Asia Pacific region and the world. Visual Arts education is a contextually dependent discipline and influenced by Place and Country and these shift and change the curriculum needs in each State, region and space. Teachers in Queensland, Tasmania, South Australia, the Northern Territory and the ACT, use the Australian Curriculum as written by the National Curriculum Authority. In V.9 Visual Arts, students learn in and through Visual Arts practices and processes and available analog/physical and/or digital materials in purposeful and creative ways developing their connection with and contribution to the world **as artists and as audiences**. They work individually and in collaboration with peers and teachers.

In Victoria (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority), Visual Arts education involves students making and responding to artworks, developing skills, techniques, and processes, and using materials to explore various forms and styles as artists and audiences. They reflect creatively and critically on their experiences and develop visual arts knowledges, expressing curiosity and communicating through individual and collaborative practices. Visual Arts education encompasses both art and craft, encouraging students to engage critically and creatively to communicate and make meaning. By exploring creative processes and practices, students gain insights into the cultural impacts on ways of knowing, doing, and being in Australia and beyond. This exploration helps students discern the unique and interrelated aspects of visual arts and cultural learning. In Victoria, Visual arts practices and processes are integral to learning with and about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, through connections to Country and Place. Learning about techniques, technologies, skills, and media from local and global artists supports students in creating artworks with integrity. Visual arts students expand their perceptual, conceptual, and cultural understanding, critical reasoning, and practical skills, fostering confident and distinctive visual aesthetics.

In Western Australia (School Curriculum and Standards Authority, Government of Western Australia), students use visual art language and conventions, creating artwork, understanding cultural contexts, and analysing art works and objects using visual art terminologies. In WA Visual Arts encompasses art, craft, and design, allowing students to create visual representations that communicate and challenge ideas. They develop perceptual and conceptual understanding, critical reasoning, and practical skills by exploring their world and others'. Through discovery, experimentation, and problem-solving, students engage with visual techniques, technologies, practices, and processes. This creative learning journey helps them recognise and develop cultural appreciation for visual arts in both historical and contemporary contexts by exploring and responding to artists and their works.

In NSW the Visual Arts education students explore artmaking conventions while creating, developing and analysing artworks. They develop knowledge and skills making artworks informed through their understanding of the conceptual framework. They create meaning and perspectives through their use of the frames within their works. It is a rigorous and conceptually rich curriculum that enables a curiosity about the world to emerge. AEA recognises that VADEA has made a submission to the Joint Select Committee on Arts and Music Education and would hope that this submission informs curriculum specifics. We support this submission.

Visual Arts Teacher Education & Teacher Professional Learning in Australia

Opportunities for artists and creative individuals seeking to pursue teacher education programs have a range of pathways, however, these have diminished in number and quality over time through closures of courses and programs in some tertiary institutions. The downsizing of Visual Arts Education undergraduate programs in favour of Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) followed by a Master of Teaching (as per University of Melbourne model) has contributed to this lack of offering. Artists who are entrepreneurial and agile bring a preparedness to Visual Arts education on this pathway as well as a readiness to shift into new ways for driving innovations in studio-based pedagogies in Visual Arts education, but not if there are not enough Art Schools and then not enough specialist programs for their pre-service learning does this pathway work? The ATWD National Trends: Initial Teacher Education Pipeline (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2024) data tells us that in 2021, 29,674 students commenced an ITE program in Australia, a 13% increase from 2019. In line with the national population, more than half (56%) lived in New South Wales and Victoria.

- Most (74%) were women.
- Most (95%) were domestic and 5% were international students.
- One-in-five (20%) domestic students were from a low socio-economic area.

The data suggests that rates of out-of-field teaching remained high among classroom teachers of secondary learners in 2022, with at least one-in-five Australian classroom teachers who taught subjects in Key Learning Areas (KLA) out-of-field. Out-of-field teaching entails teachers teaching outside their field of qualification, this field might be a specific subject or year level. Quality Visual Arts education is influenced by the availability of various resources to support effective critical and creative pedagogies.

ATWD National Trends show that nationally in 2022:

- One-in-five (19%) classroom teachers of science were teaching a core science subject out-of-field. Teachers of technology were most likely to be out-of-field (40%).
- One-in-four classroom teachers of English (24%) and performing arts (26%) were teaching out-of-field.
- **One-in-three classroom teachers of visual arts (34%),** mathematics (32%), and health/PE (34%) were teaching out-of-field in 2022.

The report also indicates that although there has been a recent increase in the numbers of students commencing ITE in Australia, the 2021 numbers have only reached levels comparable to those observed in 2014 (N=29,485) and remain below the numbers seen from 2015 through 2017. If the number of commencements reached in 2017 **had** been sustained from 2018 through to 2021, there would have been 20,493 more commencements over the 4-year period than observed.

As the VADEA submission indicates very few universities in NSW offer undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in Education with a specialisation in Visual Arts Education. In NSW few examples of universities offering these rich and rigorous programs now exist with the exceptions of the University of New South Wales (UNSW), Sydney where candidates can complete a Bachelor of Fine Arts / Education (Secondary) and the Australian Catholic University (ACU), where candidates can complete a Bachelor of Education (Secondary)/Bachelor of Arts (Visual Arts).

In NSW you can follow a pathway into Education at the graduate level through Fine Arts, Visual Arts or Creative Arts at UNSW, Sydney; University of Newcastle, USYD, ACU, University of Wollongong and the National Art School. The National Art School is one of the oldest ongoing art institutions in Australia dating back to the establishment of the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts in 1833. But we have sadly lost many art schools such as University of Western Sydney that taught and nurtured some of Australia's exhibiting artists, academics and excellent educators. The now decade ago savage TAFE cuts around Australia dramatically lessened both

opportunities for arts professionals and public engagement with the arts. In NSW in 2012, the cuts to TAFE were noted at \$80 million. (See Arts Hub (Hull, 2012) <https://www.artshub.com.au/news/opinions-analysis/tafe-cuts-damaging-arts-careers-191822-2300310/>). Prior to this, the 1988 range of reforms introduced in higher education saw the amalgamation of independent Fine Arts, Visual Arts and Creative Arts courses offered by colleges of advanced education merge with universities. In these 3 decades that have followed we have seen Art schools continue to shrink, offer less and have fewer academic teaching and research staff. Art schools play variety of educational functions, but they also have a broad cultural reach, influencing the communities, societies and subcultures that surround them. See Arts Hub (Bolan, 2020) <https://www.artshub.com.au/news/features/art-schools-legacy-in-crisis-261614-2369435/> for further information.

Programs to extend and advance artists careers through retraining or career change such a Master of Teaching and Teacher Professional Learning such as the Master of Education courses have also suffered with many now only offered as cross or multi arts (Visual Arts, Drama, Music, Media) inquiry programs rather than offering a specialisation in Visual Arts. UNSW, Sydney had a wonderful name in Visual Arts education in Australia as the leading curriculum reform, research and ‘training’ quality Visual Arts teachers site for decades. It still does but with far fewer numbers of students and staff and a massive loss of specialisation subjects and pathways. Few remain across Australia. The University of Melbourne, Faculty of Education continues to have a large and strong specialist Visual Art teaching team, cohorts of Master of Teaching (Visual Arts and Design) Coursework and Internship programmes as well as D. Ed and PhD in Visual Arts Education program.

Art Education Australia recommends the Joint Committee support the current and remaining programs that have Visual Arts teacher education undergraduate and postgraduate offers to maintain the rigour and sophistication of the field in NSW. The ramifications of this dwindling number of tertiary institutions offering Visual Arts education at the undergraduate and postgraduate level is significant. There is a significant teacher shortage crisis in Visual Arts. As the ATWD National Trends: Initial Teacher Education Pipeline (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2024) data shows us, intentions to stay in the teaching profession have declined from 2020 to 2022, with more teachers intending to leave prior to retirement, fewer intending to stay until retirement and those who are leaving intending to remain for shorter periods of time before leaving. This is alarming.

We know that Visual Arts teachers are feeling the impacts of the changing nature of the job. As one teacher told us recently, primary school teachers are being asked to teach across multiple arts areas, including performing and visual arts without adequate training in either. Most Primary ITE programs include Visual Arts education taught within a multi-arts subject and few if any have a specialisation in Visual Arts Primary education. Another described the challenges of entering the teaching profession as a Visual Arts teacher, feeling their values compromised as they were unable to teach as desired due to lack of funds to buy materials and paint consumables. Another discussed the marginalisation of Visual Arts as a subject in schools, causing frustration amongst new graduate teachers who entered the field after a career change, coming energised for creative practice with young people only to see their subject undervalued and disrespected by a range of people in the community. The challenges of teaching in low-funded schools, including limited resources and high expectations of Visual Arts teachers has been discussed with AEA on numerous occasions. One teacher presented how they have had to continuously compromise across their creative career. This teacher talked of their chaotic art school experience as their Art School merged with a university while they were enrolled, followed by a career in the art world that was halted during Covid as the Gallery sector closed with no supports and now retraining as a Visual Arts teacher but feeling a further need to compromise their practice due to limited resources in their school for teaching Visual Arts.

Obviously Visual Arts teachers need networks, supports and continuing professional learning to stay in the profession. The ATWD National Trends: Initial Teacher Education Pipeline (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2024) states that in 2020: 23% of classroom teachers undertook 40 hours or more of professional learning. In 2022, 42% of classroom teachers achieved over 40 hours of professional learning. Is this enough?

Historically, there was an oversupply of Visual Arts teachers making it difficult for them to obtain continuing and secure positions in schools. Now several factors have contributed to a significant shortage of Visual Arts teachers in primary and secondary schools. These factors include population growth, a decline in the number of young people entering the teaching profession, the number of artist and creative practitioners who see working as a teacher **as a** long-term career, a reduction in tertiary institutions offering Visual Arts courses that amplified during 2020-21, and the overall devaluation and disrespect of the teaching profession. This shortage has led to several challenges, such as teachers being required to teach subjects outside their areas of expertise (See above for data), the collapse of Visual Arts classes, particularly in regional and remote areas with some being taught in conjunction such as a combined 9/10 Visual Arts. With a Visual Arts teacher shortage, Principals are now able to employ early career teachers prior to graduation through permission to teach programs. Early career Visual Arts teachers need support, mentoring and continuing professional learning if they are to do this. This situation underscores the urgent need for measures to attract and retain Visual Arts teachers, ensure adequate training and continuing professional learning and development, and emphasising the importance of Visual Arts in the school curriculum.

Art Education Australia recommends the Joint Committee support VADEA and regional galleries in NSW who already take on many of the former roles of art schools, offering short courses in studio-based art and material practice education, curriculum design, art history lectures and artist talks to have accredited professional development teacher education programs that meet specific standards for preparing Visual Arts teachers in NSW. As VADEA has shared with AEA, due to the recent NSW government removal of the requirement of a specific number of NESA accredited training hours this has resulted in there being little impetus from schools to encourage, recommend or accommodate teachers in gaining specialist professional development in subject specific areas. Without the subject-specific professional development provided by VADEA as part of their core commitment to Visual Arts and Design educators, there would be very little provision for Visual Arts educators to improve their practice in schools and maintain the high standard already evident in NSW schools in HSC results and ARTEXPRESS exhibitions.

Sadly, with limited opportunity in Visual Arts (pre- and in-service) education, there are fewer expert Visual Arts academics doing research in Australia. It was noted during the current NSW curriculum reform, the limited opportunities for undertaking contemporary research in Visual Arts education research has become increasingly challenging. Art Education Australia encourages the Joint Committee to look at ways to support the few Visual Arts education academics in NSW and to support the ongoing and much needed research into Visual Arts education.

PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment)

In 2022, eighty-one education systems participated in PISA, including 37 member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and 44 other countries and subnational education systems. The PISA 2022 Creative Thinking assessment is composed of two parts: a cognitive test and a background questionnaire. PISA students who receive the creative thinking test will complete tasks that require them to generate, evaluate and improve ideas in different contexts. Australian 15-year-olds performed strongly in creative thinking, with only 3 participating countries and economies scoring higher. As Professor Dan Harris

(RMIT) noted earlier in July “Fourth in the whole world! Yet the government doesn’t care”. (See AARE EduMatters Blog <https://blog.aare.edu.au/creativethinking-fourth-in-the-whole-world-yet-the-government-doesnt-care/>). Why does this matter to this Inquiry into arts and music education and training in New South Wales? Thinking creatively was defined by PISA 2022 as ‘the competence to engage in the generation, evaluation and improvement of original and diverse ideas’ and one of the aims of the assessment was to provide insights into ‘how well education systems are preparing students to think outside the box in different task contexts,’ (OECD, 2024).

Art is mentioned 55 times in CREATIVE MINDS, CREATIVE SCHOOLS in relation to PSA performance. Creative thinking through inquiry is what Visual Arts education teaches. However, NAPLAN results in school performance rankings and league tables continue to influence perceptions of subjects within the school community. Subjects not included in NAPLAN testing may be perceived as less important or less valued, potentially affecting student enrolment and support for Visual arts offerings. However, all disciplines and teachers are responsible for the literacy and numeracy of our students – not select subjects that are deemed more rigorously academic. The baseline level of creative thinking proficiency in the PISA 2022 Creative Thinking assessment was defined as Level 3. Here, students can think of appropriate ideas for several tasks and begin to suggest original ideas for familiar problems. More than **88% of students** in Singapore, Latvia, Korea, Denmark, Estonia, Canada and **Australia demonstrated** this proficiency.

What the CREATIVE MINDS, CREATIVE SCHOOLS (2024) data tell us:

- “Several attitudes towards creative thinking relate positively to student performance. These include students’ imagination and adventurousness, openness to intellect, **openness to art and experience**, and creative self-efficacy. Several social-emotional characteristics, such as curiosity, perspective taking, and persistence were also identified as distinctive of creative thinkers” (p.157).

The PISA 2022 Results (Volume III) CREATIVE MINDS, CREATIVE SCHOOLS (2024) report continues: “**Openness to art** and experience describes an individual’s receptivity to engage with **novel ideas, imagination and fantasy** (Berzonsky and Sullivan, 1992[12]). Its predictive value for creative achievement across domains is likely due to its inclusion of cognitive (e.g. imagination), affective (e.g. curiosity) and behavioural aspects (e.g. adventurousness) (Chávez-Eakle, 2009[13]; Feist, 1998[11]; Guastello, 2009[14]; Kashdan and Fincham, 2002[15]).” (p.163). This should matter and the inquiry should note this achievement.

Conclusion

Art Education Australia believes that Visual Arts education is essential. It goes beyond being a subset of the Arts; it is a unique field that helps us understand ourselves, world, families, histories, cultures, migrations, and others' experiences in ways other subjects cannot. Education in the Visual Arts enhances our perception by teaching ways to engage our bodies in relation to the world around us. It allows us to develop and harness our creative potential, appreciate, value and respect our own and other’s ways of knowing, being and doing. Numerous studies and scholarly works show that art shapes our cultural narrative, fosters social cohesion, and challenges societal norms (See Creating Value Results of the National Arts Participation Survey, 2023). Our National Cultural Policy: REVIVE (2023) states as one of the 5 pillars the need for the ‘Centrality of the Artist’ locating the need to support the artist as worker and celebrate artists as creators. The REVIVE Cultural Policy can serve as a guide for the Joint Select Committee on Arts and Music Education and Training in NSW . A key recommendation of the policy is to “support creative practice in the classroom through the delivery of five arts subjects (dance, drama, media arts, music and visual arts)” (p.59).

Visual Arts education enables powerful speculative, creative and critical thinking. Our visual literacies, languages and conventions enable students to learn to see and notice, and inquire across diverse communities, promoting empathy, ethics, uncertainty, agility and understanding (Coleman & MacDonald,

2020). By investing in Visual Arts education, we affirm our commitment to preserving cultural heritage, nurturing creativity, and advancing towards a more cohesive and innovative future. In a climate of diminishing investment in Visual Arts education, this inquiry highlights emerging issues within the curriculum and societal paradigms that both devalue and sadly undervalue Visual arts education. Addressing these issues is crucial to ensuring equitable access to the transformative potential of Visual Arts education, which is essential for building a vibrant, just and progressive society for future generations.

References

AITSL. (2024). *ATWD National Trends: Initial Teacher Education Pipeline (Feb 2024 ed., 2005-2021)*.

<https://www.aitsl.edu.au/research/australian-teacher-workforce-data/atwdreports/national-trends-ite-pipeline-feb2024/>

Coleman, K. & MacDonald, A. (2020). What Are Artists and Art Educators Teaching Us About How We Can Conceive and Deliver Teacher Professional Learning into the Future? R. Ferdig, E. Baumgartner, R. Hartshorne, R. Kaplan-Rakowski and C. Mouza (Eds). *Teaching, Technology, and Teacher Education During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Stories from the Field*. (1), pp.13-16. AACE.

OECD (2024), *PISA 2022 Results (Volume III): Creative Minds, Creative Schools*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris,

<https://doi.org/10.1787/765ee8c2-en>.