

**Submission  
No 65**

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

**Name:** Dr Jason Goopy

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25 July 2024

Dear Joint Select Committee

**Re: Inquiry on Arts and Music Education and Training in New South Wales**

My submission recommends reframing music education in NSW to promote healthy living and musical flourishing. It presents Edith Cowan University's music teacher education program as an effective model for NSW universities and argues the need for further systematic support. It also requests the prioritisation of NSW music teachers' professional learning and funding directed to supporting music teacher professional associations.

Research has revealed the extensive value and meaning that music affords individuals and communities, and music education has the power to amplify these life-enhancing benefits (Goopy, 2013; Hallam & Himonides, 2022). My research has reported on how learning music supports students and teachers in their identity formation (Forbes et al., 2024, accepted; Goopy, 2022, 2023, 2024; Young & Goopy, 2024) and health and well-being (Goopy, 2023–2024, accepted, submitted; Goopy & MacArthur, submitted; Meng & Goopy, submitted). UNESCO now advocates that well-being and human flourishing as the central overarching aim of all educational endeavours (Duraiappah et al., 2022), and I have recently proposed that a contemporary purpose of music education is to nurture musical flourishing; that is, promoting joyful, meaningful and ethical ways of living in, through, and with music (Goopy, 2024). Schools, particularly primary schools, present the best opportunity to realise the potential of learning music. However, this vision is hampered by outdated curriculum aims and severe limitations on the provision of school music. Our best estimates are that two-thirds of children in Australian primary schools do not have access to music education (Petrova, 2012).

1. I recommend that music education in NSW be reframed to include musical flourishing (joyful, meaningful, and ethical ways of living in, through, and with music) as a core aim.
2. I recommend that NSW primary schools offer at least 60 minutes per week dedicated to class music so that students have opportunities for musical flourishing.

Qualified, skilled, and healthy school music teachers are critical to servicing and realising this vision. This inquiry presents an opportunity to look towards effective programs in other parts of the country for guidance. The School of Education at Edith Cowan University (ECU) offers one of the country's most extensive initial music teacher education programs in partnership with the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA). This program serves over 100 music specialist pre-service teachers per year across the Bachelor of Education (Secondary), Graduate Diploma of Teaching (Secondary), and Master of Teaching (Secondary). Students major in secondary class music and typically minor in instrumental music education. In undergraduate studies, students can specialise in classical performance, jazz performance, contemporary performance, composition and music technology, or broader music studies. Of significant note, [our enrolments in postgraduate initial music teacher education have doubled](#) this year with the introduction of the one-year

GradDipTeach. Students who complete the bachelor's and master's degrees in secondary teaching can also study electives in primary music education. In addition, ECU has been reported as offering the highest time allocation in Australia to preparing generalist teachers to teach music in primary schools (Collins & Hocking, 2023). Our units are taught by highly qualified, skilled and nationally respected staff. ECU also strongly supports professional teacher associations and regularly hosts events for the Australian Society for Music Education and Kodály Australia as part of our community outreach and engagement. In 2025, ECU will host the International Society for Music Education regional conference, the [Asia-Pacific Symposium for Music Education Research](#).

Despite the effectiveness of ECU's music teacher education program, we are still limited by the system in which we must operate. This inquiry is an opportunity for the NSW government to lead systematic reform. In Australia, teacher education courses operate within national accreditation requirements set by ATSL that are administered by state and territory teacher registration boards. This system currently represents a bias towards a neoliberal agenda and has created a national crisis for music education, to which NSW is not immune. Despite a national curriculum entitlement for all children in Australian schools to receive an arts education, primary teacher education courses are not required to offer units in music and arts education. For those universities that do, only a few hours can be spared, and at times, delivered by neither qualified nor skilled staff. Previous specialisations in music are fading away and replaced by other priorities, such as literacy and numeracy. Furthermore, many teacher education courses segregate primary and secondary teaching; however, this does not reflect the reality of the workforce where secondary music education graduates go on to teach music across the lifespan, including in primary schools and early childhood centres. Despite this reality, students are not allowed to formally complete placements in primary schools, which means they are being denied opportunities to be prepared for the workforce. The knowledge and skills required to teach music and the arts are highly specialised. Due to the limited access to music education in schools, many pre-service teachers have minimal personal experiences of formal music education. Even more than pedagogical knowledge, these teachers would greatly benefit from opportunities to develop their own personal musicianship.

3. I recommend that the NSW government work with NESA and NSW universities to develop primary music specialist and K-12 music specialist offerings in university initial teacher education courses.
4. I recommend that the NSW government work with NESA and NSW universities to ensure that all primary generalist teachers have formal opportunities to develop their personal musicianship.

The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APSTs) require teachers to complete annual professional development. Research reports that music teachers require learning opportunities contextualised in music education, focusing on practical music teaching skills (Meng & Goopy, 2024). Professional teacher associations are the main supporters of the sector nationally. Concerningly, teachers who already face stress and burnout during a global teacher shortage are positioned as the resource to support other teachers. These associations are typically zero-profit, member-based, and often run by the generosity of volunteer teachers and university teacher educators. As a result, these associations are severely limited in their capacity, and their potential has yet to be realised, given the time and energy required to administrate and operate these associations. Research on how teacher professional associations support the sector is severely limited and only emerging (Goopy & Boron, 2024–2026). One example of an effective and longstanding professional learning program for music teachers is the Australian Kodály Certificate (180 contact hours over three years), which is offered in New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, and internationally. Teacher-participants often pay for these courses themselves as funding for professional learning in schools is limited and priority given to other learning areas.

5. I recommend funding be directed to professional teacher associations to support operation and project costs for designing and delivering music teacher professional development.
6. I recommend that NSW prioritises music teachers' professional development and that increased funding be allocated to support music teachers' professional learning.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss this submission further. I would be happy to provide further evidence to the joint selection committee if requested.

Yours sincerely

Dr Jason Goopy  
Lecturer & Coordination of Secondary and Instrumental Music Education  
School of Education

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