

Submission
No 72

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

Organisation: Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of New South
Wales

Date Received: 25 July 2024



Inquiry into arts and music education and training in New South Wales

July 2024

1. Executive Summary

The P&C Federation submission is focused on three broad, inter-related recommendations:

- 1. Funding and resourcing:** The government should provide funding and resourcing of music teachers provided to schools for the teaching of arts and music education, rather than outsource this to parent groups.
- 2. Provide systematic and transparent data on teaching of arts and music subjects:** There is lack of systematic data and evidence about the current state of arts and music education in NSW Government schools.
- 3. Embed support for arts and music in other policies.** The NSW Department of Education can support arts and music education in other policies, such as by requiring new school buildings to be fit for multiple purposes, so as to allow for arts and music use.

2. Introduction

The Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of New South Wales (P&C Federation) is thankful to the Joint Standing Committee on Arts and Music Education for this opportunity to contribute feedback to its Inquiry. The P&C Federation supports the position of individual educational and developmental needs met by a range of differential services expressed through appropriate and well-planned curricula, programs and environments conducted by sensitive and well-trained personnel in conjunction with parents¹ and families.

3. Recommendations

1. Provide adequate funding and resourcing for arts and music programs:

The *Education Act 1990* requires courses in both Arts and Music to be included in primary education, as part of the key learning area of Creative and Practical Arts. Despite this, much anecdotal evidence suggests, especially in the case of music, that many students' experiences are in the form of programs and tutorials provided by school P&C Associations and that some P&C Associations feel expected to provide such programs. While some P&C Associations are happy to provide such programs, it is not reasonable for schools or the government to expect this of P&C Associations.

An additional problem with relying on P&C Associations and other groups is that access to these programs depends on parents' capacity to pay for it. It cannot be assumed that all families will have this capacity.

It is more reasonable for the government to provide funding to schools to fulfill this requirement of the *Education Act 1990*. This could be done in part via government grants specifically for music or arts, akin to grants provided for music in schools in South Australia by the Music Development Office. The NSW Government did provide grants to support arts in 2021 in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, however there is no reason why this could not be done on a longer term basis.

2. Provide systematic and transparent data on teaching of arts and music subjects

Anecdotal evidence suggests the provision of art and music education is patchy. A key issue is what portion of teachers of arts and music are generalists or specialists. Specialist teachers are generally preferable as they are more likely to have the confidence and skillset to teach the subjects, however the NSW Department of Education currently appears not to systematically track the number of specialist or generalist arts and music teachers in schools. Understanding this information is important to understanding the state of music and arts education in schools.

¹ "Parent" refers to anyone with legal care of a child, such as a parent, carer or legal guardian

3. Embed support for arts and music in other policies

Music and arts could be supported in simple but meaningful ways by other policies. To give but one example, it would be entirely feasible to have a policy stating that when new buildings are constructed at a school, they be fit for multiple purposes. This could enable them flexibility in using the buildings for programs or even storage of instruments and other equipment.