

Submission
No 74

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

Organisation: Northern Rivers Conservatorium

Date Received: 25 July 2024

23 July 2024

The Director
Joint Select Committee on Arts and Music
Education and Training in New South Wales Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000.

Dear Committee Members

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Arts and Music Education and Training in New South Wales.

I write today in my capacity of Executive Director of the Northern Rivers Conservatorium in Lismore NSW. NRC is one of 17 Regional Conservatoriums who receive partial funding through the NSW government's Regional Conservatorium Grants Program. As the single largest provider of quality music education in the Northern Rivers, NRC is well regarded as a key cultural and educational organisation. In operation since 1991, NRC currently reaches over 1,200 students through music education and participation activities and in excess of 15,000 audience members through performance programs on an annual basis.

This network of Regional Conservatoriums is the only one of its kind in the southern hemisphere and there are only 4 such networks worldwide. The NSW Department of Education can be very proud of providing a program structure that allows for such a network to not only exist, but one that makes such a positive contribution to music education and performance in regional NSW.

While I write as the Executive Director of NRC, my views to follow are also informed by my own experiences as both a student and teacher of music.

- *The tertiary music education of pre-service K-6 teachers does not adequately prepare them to deliver the curriculum once in the classroom. This is a structural issue at the Federal level.*
 - NRC partners with many public and primary schools on a weekly and annual basis across the Northern Rivers. In our partnerships with schools, I see a very wide variety of approaches to the delivery of music education within a public school. There are schools who fully embrace a meaningful partnership with NRC to provide a deep and quality experience for their students and school community. We also work with schools whose vision for music stops at the delivery of a program that doesn't cause any disruptions to the calendar or bother to the principal.
 - In addition to my role of Executive Director, I also maintain a small vocal studio at NRC. Through teaching these students, particularly those in high school, I am afforded insight into their experiences in the music classroom. Teachers and schools are under pressure. Students could be receiving a far better experience.

- *Our young people deserve a specialist trained music teacher on the staff of every primary school and in each high school music class in NSW.*
 - In recent years, I was fortunate to deliver a shared weekly vocal lesson for two public school teachers. These wonderfully dedicated teachers had agreed to take on the co-delivery of the music program at their school. Their principal had agreed to fund professional development in singing for these teachers. At the beginning of our time working together, neither of these women were able to sing in tune or keep time. They worked really diligently to improve their skills and I worked diligently to improve their capacity and confidence. I so admired their commitment and determination and I so despaired at the situation.
 - It was the case that a teacher employed on a long term basis as a specialist music teacher in a local high school could not read music. This was a known fact among the local community.
 - I am grateful every day for the incredible music education I received as a primary school student in 1970s north western Sydney. The school's specialist music teacher was a big hearted, brilliant musician and educator and a force of nature who had 100% backing of the school and the school community. We were proud of her and proud of ourselves. Every child deserves access to a formative music education experience.

- *Access to post-secondary training in arts, music and creative industries is limited in regional NSW.*
 - This year, Southern Cross University announced the closure of the Bachelor of Contemporary Music at their Lismore Campus. This course was the first contemporary music program in Australia. While I am proud to be an alumna of this course and the Grad DipEd through Southern Cross University, I am saddened by the decline of this program and deeply concerned for the impact this could have in our region.
-
- *The arts, music and education sectors are simultaneously under immense pressure and under-valued in Australia.*

Of course, there is more that can be said. I trust that the full depth and breadth of the state of arts and music education and training in NSW will be borne out across all submissions and survey responses.

Access to arts and music education is a fundamental human right and I congratulate the Committee on undertaking the important work of this inquiry.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

Yours truly

Anita Bellman
Executive Director