

Submission  
No 80

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

**Organisation:** Learning for Good

**Date Received:** 25 July 2024

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## Parliamentary Inquiry Submission

Learning For Good

20 Chester Hill Road

Chester Hill, NSW

[www.learningforgood.org.au](http://www.learningforgood.org.au)

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this submission.

**Learning For Good (LFG) is a ROCO charity and education technology platform that supports NSW Arts and Cultural Organisations to scale resources into schools.**

The establishment of the Joint Select Committee on Arts and Music Education and Training by the NSW Parliament on June 4 represents a pivotal opportunity to enhance educational outcomes across primary, secondary, and tertiary levels in New South Wales (NSW). Arts and music education play a crucial role not only in fostering creativity and cultural enrichment but also in supporting holistic student development. This submission aims to provide insight around the current state of arts and music education in NSW, addressing key questions regarding its implementation, accessibility, and support within educational frameworks. Further, this submission will support an evaluation of the effectiveness of arts and music education across all levels of schooling, examining its integration into primary, secondary, and tertiary curricula. It will identify barriers that hinder students from pursuing further education in these fields and propose strategies to improve access to quality music education statewide. Finally, we will demonstrate case studies where our company enhances engagement between arts and music organizations and schools, seeking to maximize their collaborative potential in educational settings. By addressing these critical points, this submission will share evidence-based recommendations to the government of NSW, aiming to bolster arts and music education, promote cultural diversity, and enrich the educational experience for students across the state.

This submission will refer to reports and research in general. Most will be covered in more detail with other organisations focused in this space, specifically the Tony Foundation and Music Education: Right from the Start.

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## **Education and Outcomes**

This is not a blame game. But there are significant challenges

We need to ensure that all schools – regional, remote, low SE, disadvantaged families and their educators benefit from having access to expert educational literacy and music training resources to improve overall education outcomes.

In recent years, NAPLAN and PISA testing has found that writing and literacy standards among Australian 15-year-old students (Primarily Year 9 students) have been progressively declining. PISA testing from 2000-2018 has shown that reading literacy for 15-year-olds has declined, whereby Australia is now performing to the equivalent of about 1.5 years of schooling lower than China. Also, there are further 9 countries/economies whose performance is significantly higher than Australia (Singapore, Macao, Hong Kong, Estonia, Canada, Finland, Ireland, Korea, and Poland).

66% of NSW teachers reported that they were not adequately prepared to teach the fundamentals of writing. said they were in adequately prepared to teach grammar, punctuation, spelling and structuring of text

While pockets of excellence exist, the research ultimately concludes that diminishing levels of music education within generalist primary teaching degrees leave most graduate teachers underprepared to meet the realities of the classroom and expectations of the curriculum.

Research highlights a large number of Australian primary school children have little or no access to music education. Moreover, for those who do, there is significant variation in the quality of the learning they receive.

As administrators and teachers reimagine what school needs to look like moving forward, music education will play a critical role, and this Government inquiry allows us to share experiences from the coalface.

We know that playing music improves concentration, teamwork and intellectual stamina.

Having a quality music (and arts or cultural) education has many benefits:

- Improves cognitive connectivity and efficiency
- Improves learning capacity
- Improves social skills and personal wellbeing
- Decreases stress and anxiety
- Supports reading and numeracy skills
- Increases attention stamina and focus
- Provides incentivised opportunities – encourages an outcome.

A quality music education is above all centred on the student.

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### **The Discrepancy of Funding**

Music has the potential to be as beneficial to children as sport. The latter gains preference in schools due to the myth that music is more difficult and less relevant to young people's lives. And the funding discrepancies mean that the arts are heavily funded on a national level (a place without the infrastructure to develop grassroots programs) and less focused at a NSW level (with organizations whose core business is pathway development). The metaphor of Rugby League in NSW explains this. Sports Clubs like Penrith and Souths invest millions into the pathways and development of junior rugby league: talent development, support, identification, scholarships etc. There is little or no supporting investment into the top level teams – all the work has been done. Replace Rugby League with Arts, and we see that the strategy is back to front. We must provide development and support into pathway programs into schools, and these must be funded at a State level.

And what further exacerbates this void is that national organisations receive funding to do work that is fundamentally not in their remit. However, to achieve the outcomes, national organisation need to stop recreating the wheel and developing their own delivery. This fractures the market, and only creates less effective outcomes. National organisations that receive funding to deliver programs in schools – regional or city – should be made to use that funding to engage State based providers who are the best in their field.

### **Industry Challenge**

In short: Not-For-Profit charities need 21st century solutions to help them better share their knowledge, serve their communities, raise funds and generate new revenue streams.

Schools need access to high-quality learning content and resources for programs purpose-built for learning areas that have the largest impact on long-term learner wellbeing and success.

Not-for-profit charities play a vital role in society by addressing various social, environmental, and community needs. However, in today's rapidly evolving digital landscape, these organizations face challenges in effectively sharing knowledge, serving their communities, raising funds, and generating new revenue streams. Adopting 21st-century solutions is crucial to overcoming these challenges and maximizing their impact.

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#### A) Knowledge Sharing

One of the key challenges for not-for-profits is efficiently sharing knowledge and information with stakeholders, including staff, volunteers, donors, and the communities they serve. Modern solutions such as cloud-based collaboration platforms, knowledge management systems, and online learning portals can facilitate seamless sharing of information. These tools enable organizations to document best practices, disseminate resources, and provide training and development opportunities to their teams and volunteers regardless of geographical location.

#### B) Community Engagement

Engaging with communities effectively is essential for not-for-profits to understand local needs, build trust, and mobilize support. Digital technology solutions, platforms, interactive websites, and mobile apps are valuable tools for enhancing community outreach and engagement. These platforms enable organizations to resource schools and groups to share assets, stories, promote events, gather feedback, and connect with supporters in real-time. Virtual events and webinars further expand outreach capabilities, allowing for broader participation and inclusivity in regional areas.

#### C) Diversifying Revenue Streams

To ensure financial sustainability, not-for-profits need to diversify their revenue streams beyond traditional donations and grants. Innovative approaches include social enterprise initiatives, where organizations develop products or services aligned with their mission to generate income. Collaborations with digital partners like Learning For Good also provide additional funding opportunities, licensing intellectual property, and creating sustainable revenue streams while advancing organizational goals.

NFPs are living in the digital dark ages. Their boards are risk averse and reactive in their development strategy. While embracing 21st-century solutions offers numerous benefits, not-for-profits must navigate challenges such as digital literacy gaps among staff and volunteers, data privacy concerns, and resource constraints. Investing into 21st-century solutions is imperative for not-for-profit charities to remain relevant, efficient, and sustainable in today's dynamic environment. By leveraging technology, fostering community engagement, diversifying revenue streams, and enhancing knowledge sharing, these organizations can amplify their impact and better serve their communities while securing their long-term viability.

Learning For Good strives to connect, foster and support partnerships amongst charities and school communities to come together, share expertise and resources to the benefit of learners.

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## **Music education in Regional Areas**

Improving access to arts and music education in regional areas of New South Wales (NSW) requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses logistical, infrastructural, and educational challenges unique to these communities. Here are several strategies that could be considered:

### **1. Infrastructure and Resources**

**Funding Allocation:** Ensure equitable distribution of funding for arts and music programs in regional schools. This could involve earmarking specific funds for instrument purchases, art supplies, and technology upgrades.

**Facility Improvement:** Invest in upgrading facilities such as music rooms, art studios, and performance spaces to meet the needs of diverse arts and music programs.

### **2. Teacher Training and Recruitment:**

**Professional Development:** Offer targeted professional development opportunities for teachers in regional areas to enhance their skills in teaching arts and music.

**Incentives for Teachers:** Provide incentives such as grants, scholarships, or bonuses to attract qualified arts and music educators to regional schools.

### **3. Partnerships and Community Engagement:**

**Collaboration with Arts Organizations:** Foster partnerships with local arts organizations, community groups, and artists to provide mentorship, workshops, and performances.

**Parent and Community Involvement:** Encourage parental and community involvement in supporting arts and music education through volunteerism, fundraising, and advocacy.

### **4. Technology and Distance Learning:**

**Virtual Learning Opportunities:** Utilize technology to offer virtual lessons, masterclasses, and performances by guest artists to schools in remote areas.

**Access to Digital Resources:** Provide access to online resources, digital platforms, and educational apps that support arts and music learning.

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## 5. Curriculum Integration and Support:

**Integrated Approach:** Integrate arts and music into the broader curriculum to emphasize their importance and relevance across different subject areas.

**Specialized Programs:** Offer specialized arts and music programs that cater to the interests and talents of students in regional areas.

## 6. Funding and Advocacy:

**Advocacy Efforts:** Advocate for increased recognition of the value of arts and music education in enhancing creativity, critical thinking, and overall academic achievement.

**Grant Opportunities:** Seek and apply for grants specifically aimed at enhancing arts and music education in regional schools.

## 7. Cultural Inclusivity:

**Diverse Arts Representation:** Ensure diversity and inclusivity in arts and music programs by incorporating a variety of cultural perspectives and traditions.

**Celebrating Local Culture:** Celebrate and showcase local arts and music traditions through performances, exhibitions, and community events.

## 8. Long-Term Planning and Sustainability:

**Long-Term Strategy:** Develop a comprehensive, long-term strategy for improving access to arts and music education in regional areas, taking into account evolving community needs and educational trends.

**Sustainability Measures:** Implement measures to ensure the sustainability of arts and music programs, including regular evaluation, feedback mechanisms, and adjustments based on outcomes.

By implementing these strategies collaboratively with stakeholders including educators, policymakers, community leaders, and parents, access to arts and music education can be significantly improved in regional areas of NSW. This approach not only enriches educational experiences but also fosters cultural enrichment and community engagement.

### **International Best Practice**

The United Kingdom's approach to music education in schools is guided by a strategic framework aimed at promoting the value of music and ensuring equitable access to quality music education for all students. This strategy encompasses several key principles and initiatives that underscore the importance of music as a fundamental part of a well-rounded education.

**Inclusion and Equity:** Central to the UK's music education strategy is the principle of inclusion, ensuring that every child, regardless of background or circumstance, has the opportunity to engage with music. Initiatives such as Music Education Hubs, established in 2012, play a crucial role in delivering music education to young people across England. These hubs work collaboratively with schools, local authorities, and arts organizations to provide diverse musical experiences and opportunities.

**Curriculum Integration:** Music education in the UK is integrated into the National Curriculum, which sets out the knowledge, skills, and understanding that children should acquire as they progress through school. At the primary level, the curriculum emphasizes practical engagement with music through singing, playing instruments, and listening. At the secondary level, students have the option to pursue music as a formal qualification through GCSE and A-level courses, which provide structured pathways for developing musical proficiency.

**Professional Development:** The strategy also focuses on enhancing the skills and expertise of music educators through professional development opportunities. This includes training programs, workshops, and resources designed to support teachers in delivering high-quality music education. The aim is to ensure that educators are equipped to nurture students' musical abilities and foster a lifelong appreciation for music.

**Partnerships and Collaboration:** Collaboration between schools, music education hubs, cultural institutions, and the music industry is fundamental to the UK's strategy. Partnerships enable schools to enrich their music programs with resources, expertise, and experiences that extend beyond the classroom. These collaborations also promote community engagement and provide students with opportunities to perform, participate in workshops, and connect with professional musicians and artists.

The United Kingdom's music in schools strategy embodies a comprehensive approach to music education that emphasizes accessibility, curriculum integration, professional development, collaboration, diversity, and creativity. By nurturing young musicians, fostering a love for music, and promoting cultural enrichment, the strategy aims to empower future generations and uphold the intrinsic value of music within society.

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## Research

Locke, K., Ellis, K., & Wolf, K. (2024). *The Auditory Learner: An Examination of Changing Learning Styles and Expectations in Higher Education*. *M/C Journal*, 27(2). <https://doi.org/10.5204/mcj.3029> (Original work published April 13, 2024)

As well as research conducted by The Tony Foundation, a recent report by Curtin University (*The Auditory Learner An Examination of Changing Learning Styles and Expectations in Higher Education*) concluded that "rather than interpreting changing consumption patterns of learning content as a sign of disengagement, mixing up learning content and delivery modes, and especially a shift to an 'audio-first' model of delivery could result in deeper, more meaningful, and impactful learning experiences".

This report explores the utilization of audio in higher education, examining its integration into both everyday student life and formal educational contexts. It addresses the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on digital learning tools and the subsequent 'audio turn' in education, highlighting opportunities and challenges in enhancing accessibility and engagement.

The study defines the 'audio turn' as a significant shift towards audio formats in education, influenced by trends in digital media consumption. It notes historical precedents and the accelerated adoption during the pandemic, emphasizing the role of audio in personalized learning approaches.

Research findings underscore the increasing use of audio feedback and lecture recordings among students, supported by principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Despite challenges such as staff workload and skill requirements, there is a clear demand for integrating more audio options into educational practices.

While aimed at higher education, and not specifically the curriculum of Arts and Cultural content, it does highlight the impact of auditory learning – a process that originates from a school implementing basic singing or music programs into the classroom. What it highlights is that students are aware of their needs, plus the way they prefer to learn has change to a preference for learning content they can engage with on 'on the go' and while multitasking.

The report concludes by advocating for a paradigm shift towards an 'audio-first' approach in educational delivery. It addresses existing challenges in infrastructure, staff training, and awareness, emphasizing the importance of aligning educational practices with evolving student preferences and technological advancements.

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Learning For Good advocates for enhancing accessibility through captions and audio descriptions are discussed, reflecting students' diverse learning preferences and needs. The study underscores the potential of audio formats to improve inclusivity and engagement in higher education. This is currently implemented in two schools in NSW where we have been trailing “Braille Music” and “Blind Violin” in partnership with Vision Australia and the Sydney Youth Orchestra.

### **Learning For Good (LFG)**

Learning For Good is a charity on the RICO. We are an education technology platform that supports schools with access to high-quality learning resources, whilst empowering Arts and Cultural NFP charities to connect with their communities by sharing what they do best.

LFG is a world first curated learning community that connects schools and Not-For-Profits charities to distribute and share learning resources that drive impact, engagement and efficacy of learning.

Since 2022 we have worked with the Sydney Youth Orchestra to create “SYO Online” – a digital platform that enables the SYO to manage 800 students a week in classes and training. In return they share their training programs to schools around NSW to help start a music class.

We have built the digital solutions for the following organisations:

- Sydney Youth Orchestras
- AYO Music In Me
- Junkyard Beats Junk Percussion
- The Culture College (Indigenous Resources)
- Meet AandI (our fully remediated music resources for Visually Impaired and ASD learning)

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## **Case Studies**

LFG is currently in over 150 schools around NSW and two other states, with more than 10,000 users registered and accessing the platform on a monthly basis.

### **Mia Patoulous, CEO of Sydney Youth Orchestras, provided this comment for this submission:**

*A shared belief that the musical development of young people is worthy of investment, effort, and attention has resulted in a partnership that has contributed immensely to the benefit of hundreds of young musicians and in turn shaped the future of orchestral music now and in ways that have not yet been realised. The partnership between SYO and Learning For Good is one that we value both on a professional and personal level, and we look forward to the creation of more opportunities for young musicians for years to come.*

The following response is submitted on behalf of:

### **Bob Swadling, Headmaster, Gloucester High School**

*For a start, it's not important, but vital. Studies show that music education enhances cognitive abilities and leads to better performance in subjects like math and reading. Student who engage actively in music activities, strengthen memory skills and the ability to concentrate, which benefits other areas of study. One of the big areas lacking now is student resilience. Music education helps students manage emotions and reduce stress, and playing in groups or ensembles fosters teamwork, discipline, and social interaction. So any high Quality resource like LFG helps us as educators get there.*

*The biggest thing I have noticed since taking up a full-time position in a country school is the lack of access to high quality resources & people in the area of music. Although I have a wide range of experience in instrumental music, I have found the LFG platform fantastic as a resource to fill the gaps. I had just started a unit on instruments of the orchestra with stage 4 students and the ability to demonstrate an oboe or a bassoon without a YouTube ad or poor-quality recordings was outstanding.*

The following quote of feedback was provided by

### **Judith Tilley, Teacher, Gol Gol Public School**

*"The impact on our students was huge – so positive.*

*We were actually just talking about it again in our staff development day today, and every staff member agreed it was a fabulous opportunity for our students."*

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The following quote of feedback was provided by:

**Rachel Holmes, Choir Director of Wilcannia Central School Choir**

*"I cannot thank you all enough for making everything happen! A massive highlight for our community, school, and especially our choir. The performance at the Civic Centre really filled my heart with so much joy. It has been a privilege to be part of the experience."*

The following quote of feedback was provided by:

**Parent (name and location withheld) with child at high school, Goulburn, NSW**

*"My child has loved the opportunity to be involved in the SYO this year. It has been wonderful opportunity to meet kids with the same interests and passion for strings. The zoom rehearsals have been an amazing opportunity for her to participate in the development and weekly experience of a group that is so far away. Access to the tutors has been a bonus and given her a sense of how broader group of people play, practice, and rehearse... the opportunities are even more keenly felt and valued!"*

**END OF SUBMISSION**

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