

Submission
No 103

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

Organisation: Vocal Muster Academy

Date Received: 24 July 2024

Partially
Confidential



VOCAL MUSTER ACADEMY

ABN 81 607 244 164

The Vocal Muster is registered as a charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC). Eligible tax-deductible donations have Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status with the Australian Tax Office.

The Vocal Muster has supported and encouraged over 280 emerging vocal talent of VARYING ABILITIES from Secondary Schools for the past six years.

Music,
particularly, singing is helping the Muster young people, individually and as a cohort.

Music triggers pleasure – Music can help keep their stress levels in check. Research shows that cortisol production decreases when you listen to music, this can help young people relax and manage the fight or flight response. Music also helps boost their feel-good chemicals in the brain. When making or listening to music, the reward centre of the brain releases dopamine a neurotransmitter associated with reward and motivation. This pleasure response is the brains way of saying “ Do it again!”. We have noted significant improvement in our young people through the benefit of singing and music. The core of the Vocal Muster is helping young people build confidence and encouraging a love of performing. We provide a safe and supportive environment that encourages self-expression and embraces the benefits of mentorship, building bonds and friendships with others.

Founder, Richard Lane, manages the day-to-day activities of The Vocal Muster on a part-time basis and teaches performance and singing lessons to the students. A Board of Independent Directors ensures governance and oversight.

With the valued assistance of many entertainment professionals, volunteers and the utilisation of grants and tax-deductible donations, The Vocal Muster can offer the region’s youth a number of unique and rewarding programs.

The Vocal Muster students gain vital knowledge and experience. Our work provides the groundwork and encourages participants toward fulfilling their dreams of simply singing in public, to studying at a tertiary level and possibly a career in music.

THE VOCAL MUSTER ROLE

To provide quality music and performance lessons to secondary school students of VARYING ABILITIES in the seat of Wollondilly and Goulburn free of charge to Parent's/Caregiver's who do not have funds or resources for private tuition. Over the last six years the Vocal Muster have provided over 2850 singing and performance lessons to secondary school students during school hours, after school hours and some home-schooled students.

Whilst some participants may well become competent performers and continue to tertiary studies in music, that is not our main objective. Our mission is to provide opportunities for young people of varying abilities to:

Experience the joy of singing, gain confidence, camaraderie and a sense of belonging in a safe and supportive environment and if they further pursue music courses at University or TAFE, that is a bonus.

OUR ACTIVITIES

- A minimum of twenty free weekly performance lessons to secondary school students linked to monthly Sunday Performance Afternoons.
- The monthly Sunday Performance Afternoons are held in real venues. They alternate between the junior (beginners) and the more experienced Vocal Muster participants. Twice a year professional musicians will be in attendance, to enable experience to be gained in performing with a band.
- The Muster occasionally supports community activities. This enables our participants to experience the joy and values of supporting those in need and contributing to the community.
- Long term Muster Participants who show commitment to progress, personal development and additional learning in their chosen performance genre, are often requested to perform at non-Muster shows and activities. (For these performances the Vocal Muster participants receive a fee.)
- School holiday workshops and masterclasses. These will include participants from an area ranging from Goulburn to Picton.

Some successes of the Vocal Muster include:

Thirteen young people going on to tertiary studies in music at university. Some the first of their family to attend university.

Two young people completing TAFE DIPLOMA 3 AND 4 in varying music-based courses. The first of their family to receive TAFE based certificates.

I would like to address some of the terms of reference for the inquiry into Arts and music Education and training in New South Wales.

(vii) the availability of support for teachers and principals in delivering quality arts education, and ensuring that an inclusive approach is taken towards resource allocation for regional schools across New South Wales

The Vocal Muster works with CAPA Music Departments in our local State schools - Moss Vale High School and Bowral High School. We are also available to some private schools if families qualify for free lessons for their child. These schools are Wollondilly Anglican College, Oxley College and Chevalier College.

We work with the school's music teachers who identify students from disadvantaged families that do not have means to pay for lessons and the Vocal Muster teaches them voice studies. They vary from students preparing for the HSC or students that have chosen music as an elective where they can use singing as their instrument for their assessment and marks. Many of these students have challenges and issues however, they are mentored in voice, performance and through constant vocal work it assists by instilling confidence in their vocal technique, which improves self-esteem and their mental health.

The Vocal Muster has found a marked difference in funding for young people that participate in sport, both within and outside of school compared to young people who have no interest in sport but are drawn to the creative arts, in particular, music and singing. High school students whose parent's/caregivers cannot afford to pay for singing/music lessons are often left behind. It is difficult for their music classroom teacher to give them the additional support they require and need. For our part, it is encouraging to see disadvantaged students flourish and learn with the assistance of the Vocal Muster working in tandem with their classroom teacher.

The disparity of funds provided to sports students to reach potential at school is not equal to what creative students receive, it should be the same. There must be funding available to help disadvantaged students who are unable to pay for specialist Peripatetic teachers to assist classroom teachers in guiding students to reach goals/potential. This mentoring has significant improvement in all class studies, self-esteem and personal confidence.

The past 6 years of the Vocal Muster has shown the benefits of teaching disadvantaged students through their improved grades, more resilient mental

health, improved confidence and self-esteem. This has been achieved through pragmatic and consistent teaching partnering with the school's music teachers to assist young people reach their potential as musicians, artists and productive citizens. When the Vocal Muster participants sometimes receive a fee for performing. This is:

1: That they value their skills and talents.

2: They have invested time and studies to learn pieces and to give away their talent and skills for free.

3: They understand the music Industry business by invoicing for their performance and work. *More information below in second question.

(ix) ways that students can learn entrepreneurial skills and gain industry experience

Vocal Muster participants are taught the business of the music industry by Industry professionals. They are encouraged to organise an ABN, learn how to construct an invoice for payment, advised to have a second bank account for the music performance monies.

They are taught the importance of a network and to keep in touch with their network to source more paid performance opportunities.

The Vocal Muster is a qualified trainer in VET Entertainment. We can give hours for work for their HSC at performances/workshops running the PA/Lighting rigs. The VET Entertainment music students are mentored by industry professionals and sometimes leads to a pathway to a professional career.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our thoughts on Music Education and I would like to be considered to present to the Select Committee.

Richard Lane

Founder/Creative Director/Board Member.

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The Vocal Muster acknowledges and recognises the First Peoples of Australia and in particular, the land on which we create and perform, that of the Gundungurra and Tharawal people