

**Submission  
No 105**

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

**Organisation:** Sydney Catholic Schools

**Date Received:** 25 July 2024

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| <b>Progress towards a long-term goal of quality music education, including actions to address identified barriers</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <p>Every school should be surveyed by NESAs, to see how they are implementing the syllabi. You will find a wide range of interpretations on what Principals sign off as compliant in terms of how the curriculum is delivered, by whom, and the structure. For example, in primary schools where Music is run by a 'specialist' Music teacher, it is run in the PPE model, where the classroom teacher drops the students off and has grade planning time. There is no engagement or interaction with staff, and in terms of discipline or disruption to learning, there is little support. Often, music classrooms are under-resourced, with little or no funding towards basic class sets of even percussion instruments, as it is 'low priority'.</p> <p>As principals hire their own Music specialist teachers, they may use the allocation to give to a teacher who is reducing hours to one or two days a week, and who may not actually be Music trained.</p> |
| <b>The present level and status of formal music education across all levels, including primary, secondary, and tertiary levels</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <p>Currently (for example), Primary Education students at ACU receive 9 hours per subject of Creative Arts training in second year. Sydney Uni students receive 9 hours in one year and 6 hours in another year. This is not enough to equip Primary teachers to confidently teach the Creative Arts K-6 syllabus. This then means that students across the state have varying experience in Creative Arts education (Music, Art, Dance and Drama).</p> <p>At tertiary level, practicums have been reduced for secondary teacher training. At UNSW for example, many years ago, students were given 3 weeks of prac in each of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd year, and then a 10 week block in 4th year (a whole term), where students really experienced becoming part of a school.</p> <p>It is the on-the-job training of a practicum that is vital. All of this has been reduced due to funding cuts.</p>                                                                 |
| <b>Robust and evidence-based music education in initial teacher education courses in the tertiary sector</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <p>Entry to teaching courses for Music needs to be looked at. Increasingly, secondary teachers are graduating without the ability to confidently teach Music 2 and Extension, because the entry level standard into the course has dropped. This is because most schools now only offer Music 1 for stage 6, meaning the graduates do not even have the experience of the higher level course</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

themselves, and then cannot teach it themselves when they are employed in a school. This has a flow on effect in that the schools cannot offer the subjects because of lack of confidence in the teachers to deliver it.

### **The role of regional conservatoriums and creative professionals in music education**

Regional conservatoriums are important because they give regional students access to professional musicians, and increase student opportunities to play alongside them in orchestras. This needs to be funded and supported so that we have access and equity for students across the state, as there are more opportunities in the Sydney Metropolitan area that need some parity with regional offerings.

### **The efficacy of the current primary and secondary school curriculum in delivering learning outcomes in music related subjects**

The current secondary syllabi are rigorous and adequately prepare students to be musically literate, creative and confident in all aspects of the subject. The Primary syllabus is less so, however was written with the view that a generalist teacher could teach it. However, due to lack of teacher confidence, there are varying degrees by which it is delivered. The new 7 - 10 Music syllabus has attempted to streamline the subject, however it has a level of ambiguity in parts, especially with relation to composition.

### **the availability of support for teachers and principals in delivering quality music education and ensuring that an inclusive approach is taken towards resource allocation for regional schools across New South Wales**

Depending on the principal, there are varied levels of support and resourcing for teachers. This is in Sydney Metropolitan as well as regional areas. The current suggested time for Creative Arts in Primary is 6 - 10% of the week, however many would barely meet the 6% mark in favour of more literacy and numeracy time. There needs to be a mandate of hours that make it fair across all schools in NSW.

### **The most effective approach for the music and the creative industries to co-ordinate with the education system to support the development of creative skills**

We welcome industry partnerships. It would be great to collaborate with industry to ensure their offerings correlate with what we need to deliver in our classrooms. For example, we have cross-sector meetings once a term (Catholic Schools, Department of Education, and the AIS) - we would love the opportunity for industry to meet with us to seek the needs of our schools and how they can best support them. Cost of courses is often a barrier to students, especially in lower socioeconomic areas - so many students or schools may not be able to participate in some offerings. Perhaps there could be some Government funded opportunities for

some chosen offerings. For example, NIDA used to offer a day to focus on the Individual Project for HSC Drama each year. If this were funded, so many more students could access this opportunity.

### **Ways that students can learn entrepreneurial skills and gain industry experience to ensure they are job ready**

Perhaps more internships or 'come and play' days with industry should be encouraged. For example, students audition for the opportunity to play alongside SSO. Or backstage at Opera Australia, or a day at rehearsals at the Opera Centre at Surry Hills.

### **Measures of success in music education**

Measures of success in Music education would be stronger tertiary training for all primary teachers, all students coming to secondary school with more musical knowledge and experiences, and every child having access to and tuition on a musical instrument for at least 2 years before they reach secondary school.

### **Factors influencing student decisions to pursue further music education, including but not limited to course choice, course location and the method of study**

Some factors include socioeconomic background - if parents cannot afford the tuition and investment in an instrument, the student is not exposed to it. Therefore music education on an instrument is limited to those who can afford it. As a flow on from this, anyone who goes on to study Music at tertiary level, are usually from more affluent areas, or in rare cases where a parent in a less affluent area has had the experience themselves and realised the importance of music, and prioritised it for their child. Music as a career is seen as a luxury, and is definitely hard to sustain. Many musicians have to have another job to supplement their income. If they are full time - they now have to contend with living contract to contract. This is not conducive to having a mortgage. So anyone who studies Music at tertiary level (not as a music teacher but as a performance major) has to be at the elite level, and even out of those only a small percentage will become full time musicians. There are not enough professional employment opportunities in NSW to sustain a large workforce. In the USA, there are multiple Opera Companies in each State, let alone the country. Opera Australia, although based in Sydney, is a national company, and other states have their own - however for those singers who train all their lives, they often have to move overseas as there are limited places available here. It is a shame that we cannot keep our own talented artists in work.

### **Notable approaches to music education in other jurisdictions, and**

At Sydney Catholic Schools, we have seen the issues and addressed the inconsistencies in Performing Arts Education by employing a Music specialist in every Primary school, and providing schools with classroom music instruments. In summary, the Amadeus Music Education Program has three components:

1. A qualified specialist classroom music teachers in every primary school

2. Students from Years 3 - 8 learn an orchestral instrument with an industry tutor in small group tuition once a week
3. Students play in an ensemble weekly

Each student in the program has an instrument to take home and practice. There is a very minimal/nominal hire fee.

This program began with the pilot schools in 2021, and the last of the 147 schools have finished the rollout this year. It was important to Sydney Catholic Schools to have access and equity to quality music education, no matter what the socioeconomic background is. Sydney Catholic Schools is a system of 147 primary, secondary, and K-12 schools, that cover as far south west as Austral, across the Sutherland Shire, over to Bondi, and across the lower north shore, Ryde and Auburn and Lakemba. It is a low fee paying system.

### **Any other related matters**

COVID lockdowns severely damaged not only the arts industry, but the flow-on effect in our schools. Students began to see the arts as a luxury and parents tend to push them to choose subjects such as Business Studies or Commerce, to ensure they are 'job-ready', for fear of something like COVID happening again. Fewer students choosing Arts subjects, means that elective and Stage 6 classes are small, and many principals then choose to not run the small classes at all. Once the subject disappears for one year, it is very hard to build back up again, and teachers have to work doubly hard to instil confidence in students and their abilities. Often this means they spend more and more time providing lunch time and after school activities to stay connected with the Arts students, with the hope the classes will return. However this takes many more years, and the effort is often unseen. If students do not see an elective class running each year, they lose confidence in the fact it will run again.

There should be an understanding with educational administrators that requires schools to run small classes in arts subjects to ensure they remain at the heart of the school community.

More confidence needs to be instilled in parents, with seeing more arts opportunities out in the industry, and it needs to be valued as a life-giving, creative, and fulfilling pathway for people. Without art, there is no life!