

REPORT ON PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON ARTS AND MUSIC
EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

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

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At Jubilee Room, Parliament House, Sydney on Wednesday 30 October 2024

The Committee met at 4:30 pm

PRESENT

Ms Julia Finn (Chair)

Legislative Assembly

Mr Kevin Anderson

Legislative Council

The Hon. Anthony D'Adam

PRESENT VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Ms Liza Butler

Mrs Judy Hannan

Dr Joe McGirr (Deputy Chair)

Ms Abigail Boyd

The Hon. Jacqui Munro

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The CHAIR: Welcome, everyone, to the third hearing of the Joint Select Committee on Arts and Music Education and Training inquiry into arts and music education and training in New South Wales. I acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, the traditional custodians of the lands on which we are meeting today. I pay my respects to Elders past and present, and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of New South Wales. I also acknowledge and pay my respects to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people joining us today. My name is Julia Finn, and I am the Chair of the Committee.

I ask everyone in the room to please turn their mobile phones to silent. Parliamentary privilege applies to witnesses in relation to the evidence they give today. However, it does not apply to what witnesses say outside of their evidence at the hearing. I urge witnesses to be careful about making comments to the media or to others after completing their evidence. In addition, the Legislative Council has adopted rules to provide procedural fairness for all inquiry participants. I encourage Committee members and witnesses to be mindful of these procedures.

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Dr CANDACE KRUGER, Lecturer, Griffith University, Yugambah Elder and Songwoman, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

Professor DEBORAH CHEETHAM FRAILLON, AO, FAHA, Elizabeth Todd Chair of Vocal Studies, Sydney Conservatorium of Music, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: Welcome and thank you for taking the time to give evidence. Ms Kruger, would you like to make a short statement?

CANDACE KRUGER: I have prepared a statement that I will read to you. Nyannya ngari Candace, Kombumerri nga Ngugi Jubanbanei: My name is Candace, and I am a Kombumerri Ngugi woman of the Gold Coast and Moreton Island. I am giving evidence to you today from Yugambah country. I acknowledge that I am speaking to you as you meet on Gadigal lands, and I pay my respects to other Indigenous persons in the room. I have volunteered to speak today as a Yugambah Elder and songwoman, and a music educator of 27 years in the classroom. I have always firmly believed in the right of every child to access the arts, in particular classroom music.

In relation to New South Wales, I was the director of music at a preparatory school, at a leading boys' school, in Sydney over a period of five years—from 2002 to 2006. As a family we were transferred to New South Wales by the Australian Defence Force. As a Queensland trained primary music educator, I had to make a decision to seek work within the private education sector because I knew that there were few to no jobs as a primary music educator in the New South Wales State education system and I needed to have employment. As a songwoman, I can speak about singing country alive. This is where we feel and are present in the places that we live and the communities that we live amongst.

As a classroom music education, I can speak to my 27 years of experience and knowledge that every child has their strengths. However, these are not easily recognised. It is important to value and celebrate our differences, and that means inclusivity of culture, inclusivity of the arts and, in particular, music—where we enjoy, experience and participate in the practice of the music and the arts. Music allows everyone to enrich their lives. It makes me feel better and our young people feel better. We gain and maintain skills and pride in who we are through music participation.

I know the inclusion of cultural practice—for me this means within the arts or, more specific, the music classroom—is significant. It helps community and it helps students. It places value and understanding within the wider community for our future. Cultural practice also helps us with wellbeing, and this is inclusive of a song. We feel better when we know and understand and are able to voice our culture. To me, this means singing my culture alive. I hope through my answers to your questions with this hearing that I am able to help you to have some understanding of cultural music and the presence of music within our classrooms.

The CHAIR: Professor Cheetham Fraillon, do you have a statement?

DEBORAH CHEETHAM FRAILLON: I want to firstly thank and acknowledge Candace for that beautiful acknowledgement of her country and the Gadigal people, on whose land where meeting today, people who poured their knowledge and their wisdom into this land for millennia through song and dance and painting and the narrative. I accepted the invitation to present evidence today before this Committee because I feel that there's a great opportunity that we alone in the world as a country, as a nation, can grasp, and that is to celebrate the longest continuing music practice in the world—in fact, the longest continuing everything in the world.

But I zero in on music today, because this is traditionally our way of knowing and understanding and giving meaning to everything in the world. As a Yorta Yorta woman and the descendant of a Yuin grandfather, my ancestors have sung their knowledge into the lands that they were born on and they have sung their knowledge into me. Like Candace, I was a music teacher in the classroom for more than 20 years. In my case, it was high school music. I was a graduate of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music with a Bachelor of Music (Music Education). From 1986 until very recently, I've spent a significant amount of time in the classroom and seen many changes.

I've come here today to impress upon all those here the importance of music education to every child, but in particular to First Nations children. It's only 230-odd years of change that we've witnessed since a time when art and music was practised on a daily basis as a way of transferring and holding onto knowledge. As we say in the Dhungala Children's Choir, one of the groups I lead, "A song is not just a song. It's way our way home. It's how we know we belong." I want to open up a conversation and answer your questions as thoroughly as I can and help us to grasp hold of this opportunity in our lifetime to celebrate in a way that we have yet to do in this country: The power of music and the arts and the essential nature of those to all children.

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The CHAIR: Thank you both so much for those really thoughtful opening statements. What capacity do you think currently exists in the curriculum to ensure that appreciation of the connection between First Nations peoples here in New South Wales and music, and songs in particular?

DEBORAH CHEETHAM FRAILLON: I've been studying, as all music teachers in New South Wales have, the new curriculum for senior students that was handed down I think on Monday, or very recently. I've been drilling into that as much as I possibly can in the time that I had before this hearing. I feel that the changes are difficult to justify in many ways. Having taught high school music for something like 20 years in New South Wales and then for another year in Victoria back in 2006, as I mentioned before, I saw a lot of change. But the current change in the curriculum for senior students is something that we'll have to look at very carefully. I think it's in a process of feedback that will be given to the New South Wales Education Standards Authority—up until 20 December, I think that feedback is open—and I'm sure it will be flooding in.

I've had this wonderful privilege of not only working in the classroom with high school music students, teaching course 2 and course 1, but I've also had more recently quite a lot of experience at the primary school age. I don't consider myself an expert in primary school education, but I do consider myself an expert in music education. What I've found is that the journey that a primary school student will take through their six years into high school does not afford enough opportunity to engage with music education. We could extend that to a conversation about all the arts, but I feel that in my time as a teacher since first starting out in 1986, the amount of time has diminished and diminished. This is quite a serious problem.

I feel as though there are a couple of insights that I can also bring as a member of the faculty of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. I'm seeing specialist music teachers coming through our doors and being provided with the best training we possibly can give, but the support for those teachers in the education system, outside of the doors once they've graduated, is not there. I'm a product of public school education. I went to an all-girls high school. It was the public school just in my area. At that time in the '70s and the '80s, the amount of music that you would experience, and formal music training that you would experience at a high school level, was something quadruple to what it is today. I really do believe that without that music education, I would not have been able to piece together the parts of my own identity which were missing for a very long time as a member of the Stolen Generations.

I can confirm with you that it was music that led me home to those parts of my identity that had been missing for so long. That's a much longer story than I can tell in the answer to this question, but I guess the very short answer to your question is: Is there enough? No. There most definitely needs to be more because we know—the science has been in for so long—that music alone can wire a child's brain for a more effective development. Once it is hardwired as a child, it remains for the rest of your life. It develops children's ability to communicate not only through music but verbally. Their literacy levels are higher. These are all things that we all desire. I don't question that for a moment in this room or for those on the screen, but I think what we haven't grasped is the fact that, even though the science of the benefits of music education from an early age and through to young adulthood is 20-30 years old, look to the longest continuing music practice in the world, the longest continuing culture. How is it that First Nations people in Australia enjoy that position? Through the strength of knowledge gained through artistic practice.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Dr Kruger, do you have anything you would like to add?

CANDACE KRUGER: I do. Thank you, Deborah. That was an incredible answer. I wanted to begin this with: You know, I was flooded with music in the '80s and the '90s as a child in Queensland in schools. It filled my soul. My own children were in New South Wales public schools and they were not. It was missing in their identity and it was something that I had to give them. In terms of the curriculum, I believe that we need to address a larger problem before we address Indigenous music or Aboriginal music and how it is addressed in the curriculum. At this point in time, we fail to realise that the larger problem is ensuring that we are able to educate more Aboriginal people to become teachers, and to become music teachers in particular. If we're not having music in the classroom every day as part of our everyday lives and part of the fabric of who we are, and if we're not actually able to make that happen, then how are we actually able to have Aboriginal people bring Aboriginal knowledges into this space?

My doctoral thesis that I did a handful of years ago was on embedding Indigenous knowledges ready for teachers to take into the classroom, because there is such a lack. I know in Queensland that Deborah's choral book, her Dhungala choral book, was so highly regarded and so highly sought after. I myself, as Deborah takes her choir, have volunteered my time for well over 10 years and have run the Yugambah Youth Choir, where Indigenous children from around the Gold Coast, Logan's Scenic Rim and northern New South Wales come flocking to me on Friday afternoons just so that they can learn some cultural practice through the arts—through

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music, through music making, through stick tapping, through singing, through their breath, through engagement, and through the didgeridoo for the young males. It is completely missing and lacking. I could be critical of Queensland as well in this State of Aboriginal music. For those young people that come from northern New South Wales, it's missing within their classroom.

Part of this bigger problem and how we address it—is it enough in the curriculum? I'm not sure that I've answered your question correctly but I need to let you know that before we can address the question of whether there is enough Aboriginal music in the curriculum, we haven't addressed the point that enough Indigenous young people, Aboriginal people, are not getting access to music to become music teachers and to become proud of the music that is within their community and to be able to share those resources and knowledge. Therefore I find that there is a need.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: Firstly, Professor Cheetham Fraillon, thank you for your opening remarks and I note your connection to Yorta Yorta. Of course one of the great First Nations singer-songwriters was Jimmy Little. We pay our respects to Jimmy. I had the pleasure of playing and performing with Jimmy on a number of occasions.

The CHAIR: Really?

DEBORAH CHEETHAM FRAILLON: How wonderful.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: Yes, it was a great thrill. That was super special. Thank you for recognising that. Dr Kruger, you talked about some of the challenges there. Do you have suggestions to address those problems that you highlight, particularly in relation to the pathway for Indigenous or Aboriginal students to make their way in to becoming an educator in music?

CANDACE KRUGER: Do you know, in Queensland we have the Aboriginal Centre for Performing Arts—ACPA. I know that there are many young people who have gone through secondary education, and through primary and secondary what they've done is connected to their community. They've been able to be a part of a dance troupe or a singing group, or they're just a family that has been able to share and articulate and continue the oral practice of storytelling. I strongly recommend that every State pull together a centre for Aboriginal studies in music.

When we think about what ACPA and the CASM in Adelaide do, they take young people on the journey through certificates—like a cert III or a cert IV—things that can be done during school as well. It allows growth in the field of Aboriginal-embodied performativity. A part of the curriculum is to learn about styles stylistically to be able to sing and to be able to sing in language, the language of who you are. I have had young people who have gone through ACPA while they have been in choir or after they have left choir. They've been able to be successful because there has been a community of practice within our Aboriginal community lines, where they've have been able to take knowledge and show and grow.

So firstly, I think, in education, we need to fix that. We need to have the space where Aboriginal young people can actually grow in music and the arts that is connected through TAFE or through university. We need to actually be able to have this attached to schools or attached to music programs in every space. In Queensland, in some of the schools, I have now placed, with some community members, young men's didgeridoo groups. Who would have thought that the didgeridoo would have become a musical instrument as part of the instrumental program? The reason that that is successful and it works is because now we see those young men coming to school on those days. It's the same with cultural performativity groups where we're able to sing and dance in language. When I place those in schools and find community members that are able to come in and work collectively when we are singing Indigenous languages alive, all of a sudden our young people come to school. It is more than just gaining a music education; it is identity through music.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: I understand. Thank you for explaining that. As an educator in that space for a long period of time, as you've highlighted—obviously the Department of Education does not provide that, hence you are talking about the options and pathways. Is it about setting up a separate space? I will come back to Professor Cheetham Fraillon in a moment because she talked about raising some concerns within the curriculum but, Dr Kruger, is the pathway to getting more Aboriginals and more Indigenous people involved a separate part of the curriculum, or is the curriculum not doing enough?

CANDACE KRUGER: It's both. The curriculum isn't doing enough. It should both be community-led and community-run on their terms as well as being within schools. The more the better. We have an issue right across Australia of our young Indigenous people—I guess you could read the Closing the Gap report yourself—not enough young indigenous people are completing year 12 as a pathway to education for life. What we see is, when we have these programs in schools, whether it's language, song, art, practice or anything—but music mainly

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is one of the most—we see young people turn up to school. What we have also noticed and what I've been able to actually pull from data and have done the research on—and Deborah will be able to speak to this as well because she will have anecdotal evidence—is that when our young people in their communities build a community of practice outside of school, they take that back into schools. They become more successful at English and science because they speak with other young people about how school is going.

I now have 2½ medical doctors—the half is actually three-quarters now—coming out of my choir. I have a teacher. We have people in health practice. We have so many young people in really successful jobs because our community of practice has assisted what's been going on in schools. So I would say to you—in this space, you need to support communities of practice that might rehearse in school spaces during school time or after school time, and also that you put music in place that actually invites Aboriginal musical instruments, and that includes voice, into the music curriculum.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: A didgeridoo is an incredible instrument. It should already be there, in my view, but it is a very difficult instrument to play, like many instruments. I come back to you, Professor, briefly, and thank you, Chair, for your indulgence. You were talking about the curriculum raising concerns for you. What are some of those concerns?

DEBORAH CHEETHAM FRAILLON: I'm speaking particularly about music course 1 and music course 2. Music course 1 is a more generalist music course which traditionally has attracted students who really want to focus on performance, and not always but quite often that performance will be in a contemporary vein. Music course 1 is subject to feedback right now. This is a draft document which people are probably only just getting their head around and drilling into. Music course 1 now, in its assessment, will be far less performance-based and more theory-based. So almost—I think, if I'm reading this correctly—something like 50 per cent of the assessment for that course will now be written exam rather than the weight being on performance. There are also some other restrictions. I'll table this—well, I don't need to; it's online. You can take a look in time so that you can make your assessment.

The change here will disadvantage students and music departments who rely on students taking the Music 1 course to keep their music department alive. The Music 2 course is more specialist. These are students who you would expect to go on to university. They may study music at university or they may go on to some other avenue of study, but course 1 was a really grassroots course. I fear the changes will have a lasting effect for music departments as well as the students who would have taken that course. Curriculum isn't developed in a void. We know this. There has been a lot of expertise that has flowed into it but I think, at this time, the feedback will be essential to look at. That's my concern in that regard.

I think there's just not enough time. There's not enough time for children in early education to engage in music, and we need specialists. I think what Candace is saying is exactly to the point that, if we have organisations like—I'd add Abmusic from Western Australia to your list as well, Candace, and CASM and ACPA in Queensland. If we can have a specialist music program for First Nations children, they are learning in a culturally empowered space. They can then take that back, in their careers, into a broader education system. I think we are benefiting all of the community there. I feel very strongly that what benefits First Nations children benefits all children in this country. I bring it back to the point that music is essential for our identity so, where that is absent, we are further disadvantaged in terms of developing our full identity and our full potential.

Ms LIZA BUTLER: I have a question about whether there is any mapping being done for non-Indigenous children, as well as Indigenous children who have had access to First Nations music from a young age—if there are any documented benefits for them?

DEBORAH CHEETHAM FRAILLON: I would say music is music, so the benefits of music—whatever genre it happens to be and whatever community comes from—yes, there's a wealth of information about that. First Nations music fits into that as rap, pop, opera—whatever you like. It fits into that. I would also say that Dr Anita Collins is somebody that I would point you in the direction of for the science around it.

Ms LIZA BUTLER: We've heard from her.

The CHAIR: She has appeared as a witness.

DEBORAH CHEETHAM FRAILLON: Music is music. The benefit of music, whether it's coming from Indigenous people or non-Indigenous people, the science is the same. But what I would say for Australia, for us to reach a point of emotional maturity where we grasp hold of the opportunity that I began my remarks with—the opportunity to know and celebrate that we have the longest continuing music practice in the world—what confidence that would give us as a nation. I think that First Nations music being amongst the repertoire and

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embedded in the curriculum—allowing access to that for every child and every student will only serve to strengthen our sense of our own belonging in this nation.

Ms LIZA BUTLER: Thank you.

DEBORAH CHEETHAM FRAILLON: Could I add an anecdote? I'm sorry to interrupt you, Candace, because you did say that I would have anecdotal evidence. I choose to do two very quick things. First, I run a program Short Black Opera for Kids. Kids have no bias against opera, not like sometimes adults think, "Opera, not for me." Kids they just love it. Their whole lives are operas. They just sing their whole reality. Have you ever been on a long trip with a kid in the back of the car? They make up their whole life in song; it's fantastic. That course that I run is for First Nations children when they come out of school. Their schools support them to come out and work with me for five mornings and we put on a show at the end of it. The number of non-Indigenous kids that I have sneaking into that program—maybe I shouldn't use that word. It's for Indigenous kids, but the non-Indigenous kids who want to come and be part of that program every single year. I don't reject them. If they want to be there, I want to help connect them with music and with First Nations culture and language, which is what we do.

The second anecdote is something a little more on the serious side. Dhungala Children's Choir began 16 years ago. In fact, we just had our sweet 16 celebration on Yorta Yorta country. When we began that choir 16 years ago, there were no members of the choir—and there were 30 children—who had parents or siblings who had finished high school. That has turned around in the northern Victorian city of Shepparton, which is part of Yorta Yorta country—it straddles both New South Wales and Victoria. That has turned around in those 16 years. We have seen those children in the choir not only completing school themselves; their siblings are completing school and their parents have gone back to school. They've remained connected to this choir and music has fed them in a way that every person in Australia needs. But, as First Nations people, they identified that need, they identified that hunger, they connected to the choir and it has had a remarkable effect on that community.

The CHAIR: Does it help the non-Aboriginal people in that community to better understand the connection to land when they are part of the choir and constantly going over the stories about that connection?

DEBORAH CHEETHAM FRAILLON: Absolutely. A lot of music that I've written as a composer and presented just a couple of weeks ago here at the Sydney Opera House—Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Sydney Philharmonia Choirs, Dhungala Children's Choir and soloists, including myself—the majority of people on that stage were non-Indigenous people, I would say was 90 per cent, but performing a work 80 minutes long in Gunditjmarra dialect—a First Nations language of south-western Victoria. Without fail, whenever we performed this work or many others that I've written in First Nations languages, people will come to me and say, "This is helping me connect in a way that I was afraid to do. I didn't want to get it wrong, but through music I'm learning, I'm connecting, and I feel more courageous about establishing relationships with First Nations people." That happens time and again.

The CHAIR: Dr Kruger, do you want to add anything at this point?

CANDACE KRUGER: I do. Deborah and I can speak from two same-same experiences. When a seven-year-old Aboriginal child can say to me after a performance at a large event for dignitaries, for a Governor-General, "It just taught people something that they didn't know about my culture," it concerns me, but I'm proud. It concerns me because we're not doing this in schools, but I'm so proud of young people that can recognise their own agency, their own voice, the fact that they have a voice. In fact, the question that came earlier about when non-Indigenous children learn Indigenous music, Aboriginal music, it speaks to culture nourishing schooling. It's exactly what it is. It's the pedagogy of practice. It is that we're enriching everyone's lives, but beyond enriching everyone's lives, when we teach non-Indigenous children through music all about culture, we actually bring acceptance. We actually remove racism. We actually are building a better community and society for the future.

It shocks me all the time when I speak to communities right around my region when I do performativity, welcome to countries—an embodied cultural performance.

I will talk about suburb names, about the fact that 60 per cent of the suburbs, creek names or river names around the region where I live are all Aboriginal words and people didn't realise that they have been speaking Aboriginal language. We're not kids in schools, and I must say we are doing better in this space, but we have a long way to go. When the young people can talk to each other about this and share information, pride, a sense of who I am and a sense that I'm allowed to be who I am comes through. To answer the question before, it is beneficial for non-Indigenous children to learn these knowledges as well. But I, like Deborah, ensure that my choir is for

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Aboriginal—and because I'm in Queensland—and Torres Strait Islander First Nations young people, and there is a reason for that: They haven't had this opportunity and they must have the opportunity to learn.

That's why I say that perhaps a musical instrument that isn't western should be placed into your instrumental programs. That's why I call for—and I've been thinking about it while you've been sitting here—throwing money at the Sydney Conservatorium to invest in a large research project to work with Aboriginal people to develop music education resources, because that is what we need to do. We need to work with our communities and say, "What songs would you like taught to both your young people and the broader community?" This ensures that we maintain connection to country. This ensures that, when we maintain connection to country, we understand and maintain our own identity as well. I hope that assists with answering that question.

Dr JOE McGIRR: Dr Kruger and Professor Cheetham Fraillon, thank you very much for coming in and providing evidence. I'm dialling in from Wagga Wagga, so I'll just acknowledge that I'm on Wiradjuri land. I have two questions for both of you. The first relates to an institution called Clontarf. I have three Clontarf academies in my electorate—one in Tumut and two in high schools in Wagga. It's my impression that they are very effective in improving attendance rates and course completion at school, and they have traditionally used sport as a way of attracting or providing an incentive to students. But I have recently become aware that music is also a possible attractor for First Nations people who participate in Clontarf academies. I wonder if either of you have any knowledge or experience of the use of that—either in Clontarf or beyond Clontarf—as a way of helping people complete schooling. That's one, and I have a second one, but that one first.

CANDACE KRUGER: I am aware of Clontarf and I have experience with Clontarf, and both the ARTIE program and the Beyond Broncos program, which mirror and are similar to Clontarf but not to the extent of Clontarf. Some of the other programs have now moved. While they are based in sport—and that is how they came about—the educators, tutors and advocates that come out and work with our young people, yes, we are seeing they are excellent programs. We are seeing an increased year 12 attainment for our students. But we are also beginning to see, through art practice, music practice and culture therapy—you could call it—we are seeing a greater uptake. Let's say, for example, the ARTIE program, and I've seen it in Clontarf as well, instead of bringing out some famous sportspeople or Indigenous people to speak to young people, they are also bringing out arts practitioners. The kids are learning. They are learning with dance and they are learning with song.

In Queensland they might bring someone from Bangarra. I have gone out to some schools and done some work with song myself. Students are highly receptive to it. It is greatly successful. When I spoke earlier about being able to then place some didgeridoo groups, singing groups or dance groups into schools with local community Indigenous people, who have been able to then take that up and work with students in those schools, that has all been a part of and out of what we've been able to see and model on the success of Clontarf, ARTIE or the Broncos as well. Yes, it is very successful.

The CHAIR: Professor Cheetham Fraillon, would you like to add anything to that?

DEBORAH CHEETHAM FRAILLON: I'd just add also, although it probably doesn't need to be said here, that music and sport are not mutually exclusive. I think that when you look at those great NRL and AFL players and the sports men and women that we've celebrated as First Nations for decades and centuries now, they were singers, they were dancers and they were painters. It may not be what they did to earn their living, but it was part of who they were and their cultural identity. I think in institutes like Clontarf, the idea that music is also a stream that's offered is so very important—or the arts in general, I would say. This is the thing. The arts, in First Nations culture, were not siloed. I don't know about you but, when I went through high school, I had to choose music or visual arts. They were in competing streams. I would have taken both had I had the choice. In traditional culture, the singer is the dancer, the dancer is the painter, the painter is the storyteller. These things are indivisible.

I just make that point because there has been and there is, in Australia, a great love of our sporting heroes, but the arts and media industry is a much bigger earner if we were just to come down to dollars and cents and the economy. It's much larger than sport. It's really important to also acknowledge that these are career opportunities we're talking about here. Yes, certainly, there is all of the development of identity and all the things that Candace and I have spoken about, but also these are career paths, and these are ones that can give you a solid path to earning a living for the rest of your life. Where First Nations people quite naturally excel at the arts because it's been part of our culture and our DNA for millennia, then we need to see that advantaged through education.

Dr JOE McGIRR: That is a nice segue to my second question. I am fortunate enough to attend a number of events where we have a welcome to country. Often it's a smoking ceremony, but often it will be a dance. It's a great event because it brings together music, rhythm, dance, song and, of course, to extend the artistic analogy a bit further, for want of a better word, make-up or markings—the painting and the costumes. A whole event happens there. I think that brings together, Professor Cheetham Fraillon, what you were saying about siloed

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activity and bringing it together. That sort of performance and dancing isn't something that was associated with my schooling or western culture, so it's good to have.

It's usually schoolchildren who do it, but they don't usually do it in connection with the school. It's usually done by a group outside the school. I sometimes wonder about the level of education associated with that. It's a lot of fun, it looks great and I think it would be of enormous educational value. The kids and young people seem to identify with it. All of that's good. But I don't get a sense it's part of a formal school curriculum. I wonder if you've got any reflection on the potential for that or whether there are, in fact, courses available to teachers to develop that as a skill, and so on.

CANDACE KRUGER: If I could answer to that—sorry, I've lost my train of thought, because there are so many little nuanced points there. I'll perhaps give you an anecdotal story. It might be easier to explain. I have seen children who have not been incredible at English. For example, in year 10 and year 11 they have never cracked a 20 out of 25 in a final written piece. But the moment that they've been able to, in their formal writing, bring something of their culture in—and I've got four or five examples that I'm happy to speak to anyone offline about—and the moment they were able to bring their identity, which is the language and aural storytelling that comes through singing, song and knowledges, those students have got 24s and 25s in senior English, something that they hadn't been able to do before. It relates to the uniqueness of our aural traditions of our storytelling. Music in particular, even though we've had to practise it outside of schools, has been able to come directly into arts, into music and into other areas like sciences and humanities, because they have this knowledge and they are able to speak about it. So that's why when we're seeing it from outside, it's important to come in.

I have another little anecdotal story that I wanted to share, just quickly, based on part one of your question. I'm not bragging but it was pretty cool. When I got to teach the Wallabies how to sing the national anthem in Yugambeh language, that was the moment where sport and music really collided for me. The Wallabies learned to sing and these men had powerful voices, because many of them have rich cultural backgrounds. They were so proud to be able to do something for their first Aboriginal Wallabies player, whose language was Yugambeh, and to honour him, but also for the wider community. Our kids came in, saw their heroes, sang along beside them and recognised that their sporting heroes had incredible voices and wanted to do something amazing with culture.

When we took that to the stadium, more than 1,500 or 2,000 people of the, say, 35,000 people who were there stood up and sang the Yugambeh anthem in language with us, not just standing quietly. Since 2011 the Queensland Parliament has formally accepted the national anthem in Yugambeh language, which means I've been out there teaching music teachers who have then been teaching schools and the kids. More than 20,000 kids in our region sing the national anthem in Yugambeh because it's accepted by Parliament, it's accepted by teachers and it helps us with identity and language. It also means that when you have knowledge through music, singing and learning, we can then take all of that knowledge into other subjects. That is being done in schools, not outside of schools.

The CHAIR: Very briefly, Professor Cheetham Fraillon, do you have anything to add before we wrap up?

DEBORAH CHEETHAM FRAILLON: It's a privilege to witness the knowledge of millennia that is performed in ceremony when we see welcome to country. Of course, acknowledgement of country is something quite different. Where you're seeing that ceremony performed by children, this is knowledge that is being handed on from grandparent to parent to child, and it's a beautiful thing to watch. Any chance you have to encourage and invite those groups to give their welcome to country to events that you're holding strengthens not only First Nations identity but the identity of all Australians because, once again, I say we can lay claim to the longest continuing cultures in the world.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much for your time this afternoon and your evidence. The secretariat will contact you in relation to any questions on notice. Thank you, again. It has been very helpful.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

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Mr RICHARD PETKOVIC, Artistic Director, Cultural Arts Collective, affirmed and examined

Mr ANDREW OVERTON, Chairperson, Sacred Currents Inc, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: Welcome. Thank you for agreeing to appear this afternoon and give evidence to the inquiry. Would each of you like to start by making a short statement?

RICHARD PETKOVIC: Yes, thank you. We're going to do it as a tandem. I grew up in Western Sydney. I am a Western Sydney artist. I created something called the Cultural Arts Collective, which is about creating art and music and cultural projects in Western Sydney to showcase the innovation and amazing multicultural talent we have in Western Sydney. I started as a Western Sydney person with basically no education. I joined a rock band and wondered what I was going to do with my life. I was lucky enough to get a traineeship in community arts and cultural development, which enabled me to learn about these two amazing things, which is working with community and also my interest in creativity. That was in the 1990s. That enabled me to work in Western Sydney with many culturally diverse communities to facilitate not only community building opportunities but really interesting music with those communities.

In 2011 I started the Sydney Sacred Music Festival, which was an opportunity to showcase the amazing talent we have in our culturally diverse communities. But I also realised that, post September 11, religion had become the new cultural war. I wanted to provide a space where artists from different religions and cultural backgrounds could create new music and new art and projects together. That has now morphed into the Culture X festival, which happens every year to showcase culturally diverse and innovative music.

In 2014 I created Sacred Currents Inc, a not-for-profit organisation, to run the festival using community cultural development principles. I am not on the board, but I volunteer and am a part-time worker in that organisation to create these projects that we are doing now. One of them is the Culture X festival and the other one is Hit Factory, and music residencies to bring culturally diverse artists together to create new music and create the next generation of culturally diverse artists. We are doing the South of Sydney Touring Circuit, which is about supporting culturally diverse artists in the regions and in Western Sydney to tour and to support the independent organisations running live music venues in the regions. We are doing many other projects like that. I will now hand over to our chair of Sacred Currents, Andrew.

ANDREW OVERTON: I would just like to support some of Richard's discussion there. It's all about building that pathway between formal education and being job ready for musicians. We've worked strongly on a path for that to happen. In 1987 I was an 18-year-old growing up in Parramatta. I had to travel to places like Paddington and Balmain for my formal arts education. If we fast-forward 37 years later, I think little has changed. That post-school education to improve skills and professional development still remains very limited.

The current offerings that are basically offered by the regions' arts centres and independent organisations are there, but there isn't any meaningful sort of pathway for these artists or musicians. I was fortunate enough in 2005 to initiate the Parramatta Artist Studios. That project has gone on for the last 20 years now and has produced a good body of artists that will have that professional capacity to be able to enter the world stage. We'd like that opportunity for musicians, particularly from culturally diverse backgrounds, to have that same sort of model, that bridge between formal education and being able to be a part of industry with skills and experience.

The model we proposed in our submission does look at the "Hit factory" idea. It's a name, but it could be anything. It is a facility that basically drives that support for emerging musicians, particularly from culturally diverse backgrounds within Western Sydney, to be able to take that next point of delivery for them. Often they come out of art school or doing a music course still not being able to have that capacity to be able to hit the mark, and I was very fortunate to see a number of artists from the Parramatta Artist Studios, for instance, given the first show at the new Sydney Modern at Art Gallery of New South Wales. It does show that with a bit of support and a bit of encouragement and a bit of mentorship, these artists could be on a stage.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: If you're a young person from a culturally diverse background with some musical ability, what are the options for you currently? What does that look like in terms of moving from perhaps doing music at school to trying to find your way to being a professional musician? What does the pathway look like at the moment?

RICHARD PETKOVIC: At the moment it's pretty random, I think. There are a lot of culturally diverse instrument lessons happening in suburban houses and in different areas. A friend of ours Maharshi Raval has a place in Harris Park that he runs tabla lessons out of. There's the same with every culture; there are the singers, the instrument players et cetera. I think it's all pretty random. It's kind of the word and it's based on the level of mastery of the person running those lessons. The other thing is about the lack of awareness of what we have in

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our suburbs in regards to these cultures and these pathways. Besides the work we're doing—and it's not only us—there's no-one sort of pushing the boundaries of what contemporary Australia might include.

Our vision is really about a culturally diverse music industry, world-renowned for its innovative music and inclusive practice. The inclusive thing is the thing that I think we're missing. Now it's like me; I randomly played in a band and found this thing over there and nipped out a pathway for myself just out of luck, besides the training that I talked about earlier. But if you're a young person and you're not in the mainstream, there are limited opportunities to, one, practise your cultural heritage, which is really important for identity and social cohesion; or, two, to take the next step in creating and being an innovative musician, if that answers your question.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: There are a lot of assets in terms of Western Sydney, in terms of our cultural diversity and the kind of artistic capability that's sort of latent in the community. How do we bring those assets together to create something new?

RICHARD PETKOVIC: I think that's the opportunity that we've been working on for the last 15 years really, but not having a funding source to work with that opportunity. It's our vision that it's a latent industry. It's undocumented, basically. It's unknown in every suburban background. I know Afghani recording studios that work with Afghani musicians. They've got the singers coming. They're producing new music, and they're producing product. That's an economic indicator that there's something happening in their community. If you think about the Chinese, it's the same thing. Every cultural background has got their own little garage industry going on.

I know artists that are not only teaching their own kids and whatnot in Indian music, but they're working as producers in Bollywood. Who knows about that? We ran a project that was Australia council funded in 2022 about trying to map some of these. It was a small project, but we did what we can about mapping these cultural assets. It's like any organisation: You map your assets so you can work out how best to utilise that. The music industry hasn't mapped it. It's unmapped. It's an opportunity that I think, with a bit of facilitation and producing, could not only help build and include culturally diverse communities into all these mainstream facilities, but also create new music products that could create a Western Sydney sound.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: How do we create the next Chinese AC/DC in Western Sydney—is that what you're talking about?

RICHARD PETKOVIC: Exactly, and it's really about—

The CHAIR: We've had K-pop bands come out of Western Sydney. Actually, no—they might have come out of Melbourne.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: What's that?

The CHAIR: We've had K-pop bands come out of Australia.

RICHARD PETKOVIC: That's right. That's 1300, and they're a great example of young Korean people who are on Triple J, but how did they get there? Who knows; it's a one-off. This idea that we're talking about is basically a community music hub. We're calling it the Hit Factory because as soon as you use the words "community" or "multicultural", everybody goes, "Oh, that's lesser." What we're saying is that that's where the innovation is at. That's the thing that not only can fire up music education—because, as you probably have already heard before, music education is on the decrease and less and less people are taking up music degrees. The way I see it is it's because of a lack of innovation, a lack of inclusion and a lack of excitement. I think that having a facility, like the Hit Factory or a community music hub, that has professional development outcomes, capacity building outcomes and education outcomes not only becomes a pillar for the local community, but can also radiate into the larger music industry.

The CHAIR: How do you think that works at the school level? Say if there are high school kids who want to learn tabla or some other non-Western instrument as a thing for their HSC music—I could be wrong, but I don't think the barriers are as bad in dance—how do you think that they would navigate doing that? Do you think they could?

RICHARD PETKOVIC: I think that most young people from culturally diverse backgrounds, if they're in a private school, go into the Western classical canon because it's well resourced in private schools and there are pathways. In public school, my son is going for year 9 electives and they're saying to him that they're not sure there's going to be a music class because of the numbers. That's him just playing the standard piano. I know there are other young kids who play Indian instruments in his—there's not a pathway for it, and there are not the resources for it, if that answers your question.

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ANDREW OVERTON: I suppose with the outcome we're chasing with a community hub, these artists can actually come together. A part of their response will be the professional opportunity for these artists to actually go into schools. It will be a ready resource of artists who know the practice and understand the educational outcomes. They could, for instance, go into schools and offer those opportunities.

RICHARD PETKOVIC: And provide that resource that's not there currently. It's an ecosystem that needs to be built. The resources are there, but nobody has gone, "Let's put some resourcing around it." There is no vision for it, really.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: When you talk about no vision for it, there is no appetite for it either within the education department. Is that a challenge, do you think?

RICHARD PETKOVIC: Teachers are smart people. They see the opportunities. In the public system—I can only talk about the public system, and you would know all this because you've heard it before—they're under-resourced and haven't got the necessary skills out of their training. How can they train an Indian tabla player? They can train a horn player. My son's in a big band playing horns, but he's not in a band that's working with his Indian and Chinese mates to create something new, if you know what I mean, because they don't have that capacity.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: How do you fix that?

RICHARD PETKOVIC: Community music hubs.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: What about through the school curriculum?

RICHARD PETKOVIC: One hundred per cent.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: What about coming to high school—year 7 through to year 11—and getting them exposed? But to get them exposed you need the teachers to have the time, the capability and the capacity to do that. Do they not have that now? How do you give them that time?

RICHARD PETKOVIC: I can't speak for the education system; I'm not in that. I'm in the community world and the music industry. I know of models in England where they've made all piano players work off a certain curriculum where they teach you a Kurdish song, a Chinese song, a this or that song in the high school system. So that is part of the process that you're talking about, having the right resources—and via the piano that's possible. The wider thing about—again, it's about the vision. Do we all believe that a multicultural nation can create something that's innovative and specifically Australian. I think that's at the core of what's possible in our society, if you have the vision.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: Agreed.

Dr JOE MCGIRR: Mr Petkovic and Mr Overton, thanks very much for appearing here and for the information you've provided to us. Andrew Overton, you mentioned 37 years ago you went from Parramatta to Paddington for your training.

ANDREW OVERTON: Yes.

Dr JOE MCGIRR: I think you intimated that really it wasn't much different. I'm interested in what does happen to people who wish to pursue further education in music or performance of some sort in Western Sydney. What facilities are there? I suppose what's linked to that is if there are some resources there, you seem to suggest that they're pretty locked into the western canon. There might not be many resources locked into the western canon and not really reflective, perhaps, of the reality of the cultural environment. I don't want to put words into your mouth. Can either of you comment on that? What post-graduate educational or career development or formal opportunities are there? How do they relate to this issue of multicultural or culturally diverse music?

ANDREW OVERTON: There are some independent organisations within Western Sydney that I have knowledge of. The major art centres through Campbelltown, Penrith and Blacktown do support it. A lot of it is all based on project-based funding, so there isn't that core opportunity to continue and have that continual sort of response to these opportunities around music education, and visual arts education for that matter. It's all reliant on this project-based funding. If there were opportunities to look in over a three-year program or a five-year program to see those outcomes, I think that would be stronger. Again, it's about the practical training as well.

I'd liken it to my daughter. Recently she wanted to do horse/equine training. There's one face-to-face course in New South Wales at the moment and that's at Tocal College; the rest is all online. How do you learn about horse behaviour, how do you learn about the rider and the horse connection through an online program? Again, with contemporary musicians, there has to be that elevation of opportunity and of practise that they become

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familiar with and form this relationship with people about the mentoring, and the skills and opportunity moving forward. It takes it from that formal education part, where that leaves off, to a new area that's job ready. They want to be that musician. They want to be that person who appears on the festival stage. From the research we did recently, we know that over 80 per cent of festival acts in Australia are all-white acts. They don't see that cultural inclusivity. Particularly culturally diverse artists, they don't see that on stage or anywhere. They're saying, "Well, where is my opportunity? I want to do this and I want to be a part of it," but they don't see themselves as a part of it or the bridge is not there for them.

The CHAIR: Are there any further questions online?

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: This Committee did a site visit to the Hume Conservatorium. It was evident that that organisation was able to cluster the musical community within the Goulburn area. By bringing the musical community together, there were obviously some synergies that were generated out of that process. One of the functions of the conservatorium was to provide music tutors that would go into schools. Do you think there are opportunities to have a similar kind of program running around culturally diverse music tutors going into schools and maybe offering sitar at Pendle Hill High School? Is that something that you think there would be an appetite for and opportunities for?

RICHARD PETKOVIC: I think so. Having young kids that go to school, they're learning African songs, for instance, because it's culturally diverse, but they're learning from a non-African person and they're learning an African song that was created in America. Imagine if that was a First Nations model. That would never happen. We've got to go down, in regards to education and inclusion, that same model. Getting the amazing Indian tabla player to visit those schools not only adds an economic benefit for him, it adds cultural value and then it inspires that audience as well.

Talking about the conservatorium model, we're not too far away talking about what we're calling the hit factory. If we had one in Western Sydney with that education model, as you talked about, there could be outreach. Not only is it an entry point for culturally diverse communities into the mainstream or into a system—into the industry—but it also provides further education for those facilitators or tutors as well. I know Maharshi Raval, the amazing tabla player I mentioned earlier, hasn't got a cert IV or whatever. He needs to have a master's in music from his practice that crosses over. So there are those professional development opportunities for the artist as well as cultural product and cultural learnings for the schools and whatnot.

What Goulburn does has been a great thing. I remember that conservatoriums used to play Western classical music. As part of our South of Sydney Touring Circuit we played the Goulburn Club on Friday night. The support band was a local bluegrass band from the con. It's culturally appropriate to that space, and Western Sydney needs one as well that's culturally appropriate to that space. Then you hang those innovation outcomes, economic development outcomes, capacity-building outcomes, community development outcomes and education outcomes out of that one space with that vision. I think we can not only educate young people in that same space. It has a live music venue; it has a recording space; it has a producer in residence. That's the thing. There are lots of these recording studios in Western Sydney but there's nobody there running it 12 months of the year with the vision, with the connections, being a real hub for not only the music industry but the community. There are many levels of outcomes I can think of.

We had that pilot project at the Bankstown Arts Centre with Outloud, a local youth organisation, this year in June which Behzad was a part of. He's also studying his PhD in music, in Wollongong. We sent out an EOI—we got lots of applications—"Come and work for me for four sessions." We picked three artists. One was a Lebanese-Greek woman who has just finished at the con. She plays the harp and sings soprano. One was Behzad playing his amazing Persian music. One was a Moroccan musician who had a camel skin bass amp. For four sessions we worked together to create new music. Out of that, in five hours we wrote five songs and then we went on to pare it down to a single. We found some stuff. We created a music video in four sessions. In 16 hours—we called the ensemble "One Six"—we created truly a world-class song and ensemble.

I am saying to people if we had a space like this, if we had that ensemble for four weeks we could create a whole album, run workshops with the community, run video music courses, have artists involved in the marketing and the video creation, have the community involved in all that—the many layers of that—and send them around the world to tour. Imagine: We would do that in one month. We could do 10 in one year. We could change the face of contemporary Australian music in one year via this model. You add the education outcomes, the community development outcomes. Because, as part of this pilot as well, we found these amazing musicians, but there were these three or four young people that weren't as amazing, but they had potential. I worked with them free of charge in my garage for four weeks to develop, to allow them—because they were born here—to

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investigate their culture, to create new music using that. So there's a gap. If I'm doing it in my garage, imagine if we had a space. We'd have community development outcomes, world-class outcomes, education outcomes.

The CHAIR: Thank you. We will need to wrap up there. Thank you, Richard and Andrew, for your evidence this afternoon. The secretariat will contact you in relation to any questions on notice.

RICHARD PETKOVIC: Thanks for the opportunity.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

The Committee adjourned at 17.50.