

**AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S  
MUSIC FOUNDATION  
SUBMISSION  
REVIEW TO INFORM A BETTER  
AND FAIRER EDUCATION SYSTEM**

1<sup>st</sup> August 2023

*"Research has proven the importance of music and arts education. And yet so many children don't have access to music lessons. This is alarming. Every private school in the world teaches music. When I was young, every school had a music teacher and a piano. Where and why did this change?"*  
Don Spencer OAM

**About Australian Children's Music Foundation**

The Australian Children's Music Foundation (ACMF) delivers long term, multi-year music education and instruments to Australia's most disadvantaged and vulnerable kids and youth. ACMF's music programs are predominately delivered in the following settings:

- Low ICSEA primary schools
- Specialist Support Classes and Schools for Specific Purposes
- Youth Justice Centres

These settings ensure we're prioritising delivering music programs to those most in need and least likely to have access to any school music education. These settings include significant numbers of 'particular cohorts of students who are more likely to encounter systemic barriers within the education system that make them less likely to achieve strong educational outcomes. These are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students living in regional, rural and remote locations, students with disability, students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds, and students in the youth justice systems.<sup>1</sup>

Over the past 20 years, ACMF has developed an extensive network of musicians, educators, specialist music teachers, researchers and community partners across Australia who have the experience, knowledge and belief that access to music education delivers meaningful benefits to:

- Students' educational outcomes,
- Students' mental health and wellbeing, and
- Social inclusion and engagement

The Australian Children's Music Foundation recently conducted a comprehensive Impact Report. This study was completed in three phases and included interviewing and observing key stakeholders, ACMF staff, teachers, management, schools and students. The results confirmed the essential need for music tuition in schools. The report concluded that ACMF's work in the area of disadvantaged children's needs was unique, effective and vitally important.

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<sup>1</sup> Productivity Commission 2022

## Response to Review Terms of Reference

ACMF welcomes the opportunity to submit our views and recommendations to the Expert Panel to inform a better and fairer education system for Australian children and youth. As part of this review ACMF urges the Federal and State and Territory Governments to:

- a) commit to fully embedding 'STEAM not STEM within the Australian National Curriculum<sup>2</sup>
- b) prioritise eliminating the inequity of access to specialist music teaching so all children and young people, no matter their background, ability, or circumstance are enriched by the benefits of music education.

By making this commitment and in response to the Review's Terms of Reference this will:

1. **Drive real improvements in student outcomes:** In recent years, music education has gained special relevance as part of the curriculum of compulsory education in most developed countries<sup>3</sup>, both for its learning benefits and for its ability to promote the learning of other disciplines<sup>4</sup>.
2. **Improve student mental health and wellbeing:** Music has the capacity to express, transmit, and evoke various emotions and affections in human beings<sup>5</sup> regardless of their backgrounds. Music education has a strong impact on children and young people's intellectual, social, and personal development and therefore on their psychological well-being<sup>6</sup>.
3. **Support schools to attract and retain teachers:** Address the skill, confidence and resourcing gap generalist teachers have in teaching music by funding, partnering and engaging with specialist music teachers and organisations such as ACMF to ensure high quality music teaching along with a well-designed and well-delivered curriculum.
4. **Review and improve data collection on access to specialist music teaching in schools:** To ensure the data captured is consistent nationwide and can more accurately identify inequity of access to inform prioritisation of support for Australia's most vulnerable and disadvantaged kids and youth.

## Background: Benefits of a Music Education and Inequity of Access

*'Music is a moral law. It gives soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and charm and gaiety to life and to everything' Plato.*

### Impact of music in schools

'In recent years, music education has gained special relevance as part of the curriculum of compulsory education in most developed countries, both for its learning benefits and for its ability to promote the learning of other disciplines<sup>7</sup>.' 'Music also has the capacity to express, transmit, and evoke various emotions and affections in human beings regardless of their backgrounds<sup>8</sup>'

The link between music and emotions has also 'contributed to the value of music as a discipline that can be implemented in formal education to develop students' emotional

<sup>2</sup> National Cultural Policy Advisory Group – Independent advice to the Minister for the Arts. 2023

<sup>3</sup> Carrillo C., Viladot L., Pérez-Moreno J. Impact of music education: A review of the scientific literatura. Rev. Electrónica Complut. Investig. Educ. Music. 2017

<sup>4</sup> Rickard N.S., Vasquez J.T., Murphy F., Gill A., Toukhsati S.R. Benefits of a classroom based instrumental music program on verbal memory of primary school children: A longitudinal study. Aust. J. Music Educ. 2010

<sup>5</sup> Thompson W.F., Quinto L. Music and Emotion: Psychological Considerations. In: Schellekens E., Goldie P., editors. The Aesthetic Mind: Philosophy and Psychology. Oxford University Press; Oxford, UK: 2011.

<sup>6</sup> Blasco-Magraner JS, Bernabe-Valero G, Marín-Liébana P, Moret-Tatay C. Effects of the Educational Use of Music on 3- to 12-Year-Old Children's Emotional Development: A Systematic Review. Int J Environ Res Public Health. 2021 Apr

<sup>7</sup> Carillo (n 2)

<sup>8</sup> Thompson (n 4)

competence.<sup>9</sup> One of the other advantages of musical activities is that they can require collective participation, which 'requires cooperation and coordination on the part of the members of a group, making them useful tools for the advancement of socio-emotional development.'<sup>10</sup> In addition, the social interactions required for music-making offer many opportunities for students to develop their abilities to evaluate their own feelings and at the same time try to relate to the feelings of others.

Music education thus 'has a strong impact on children and young people's intellectual, social, and personal development and therefore on their psychological well-being'<sup>11</sup>.

### **Impact of Music in Youth Justice Settings**

'Music occupies a special place in adolescence, with musical subcultures representing a powerful resource for the development of identity and values.' Music interventions in youth justice settings with young people seek to improve health and behavioural outcomes by providing positive social experiences as well as addressing problematic attitudes and perceptions.<sup>12</sup> They seek to promote identity development by providing positive opportunities and resources at the same time as distracting from negative influences in their environment.<sup>13</sup> Music 'even helps to prevent youth crime'<sup>14</sup>.

### **Inequity of Access**

'Two thirds of Australian Primary Schools and one-third of secondary students do not have access to any school music education'<sup>15</sup>.

Despite the myriad of development benefits music offers the current system is compounding the erosion of classroom music and deepening inequity. With a greater emphasis on STEM not STEAM the Australian Curriculum (inadvertently) devalues music and the arts. 'Current music education offerings reflect a broken system of failed curricular mandates'<sup>16</sup>.

This is compounded by a reliance on generalist primary educators who are not adequately trained, equipped or supported to confidently and effectively deliver quality music teaching. 'Compulsory music in general primary teacher education has declined by 53% since 2009, meaning student teachers only have 8 hours to develop essential skills and creative confidence'<sup>17</sup>.

The outcome of the de-emphasis of Music and the Arts in the Australian Curriculum and the reliance on generalist primary educators who are not adequately trained or supported to teach music are that many of our kids and youth are receiving no music education at all or only short-term music experiences. 'To achieve cognitive, musical and cultural development outcomes, a music education needs to be ongoing, active, structured and sequential. One-off or short-term music experiences do not constitute a quality music education as they do not result in these outcomes on their own. However, they are an excellent complement to quality, ongoing music programs'<sup>18</sup>.

Music Education in Australia has accelerated over the past decade towards becoming a privilege for the wealthy and the talented few. This not only disadvantages Australian kids and youth academically and musically, but it compounds inequity and impedes wellbeing and inclusion more broadly.

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<sup>9</sup> Campayo-Muñoz E.Á., Cabedo-Mas A. The role of emotional skills in music education. Br. J. Music Educ. 2017

<sup>10</sup> Blasco (n 5)

<sup>11</sup> ibid

<sup>12</sup> Wilson D, Caulfield L and Atherton S. Good Vibrations: the long-term impact of a prison-based music project. Prison Service Journal, 2008

<sup>13</sup> Daykin N, De Viggiani N, Pilkington P. Music making for health, well-being and behaviour change in youth justice settings: a systematic review. Health Promotion International. 2021;22

<sup>14</sup> Kallio, A.A. The transformative potentials and politics of music in juvenile justice settings. Music Education Research. 2022

<sup>15</sup> Brasche, I & Thorn, B. Addressing dimensions of 'The great Moral Wrong': How inequity in music education is polarizing the academic potential of Australian students, Arts Education Policy Review. 2018

<sup>16</sup> ACARA 2023. Australian Curriculum: Music. AITSL 2023. Music Connects language and social skills.

<sup>17</sup> Collins, A. & Hocking, R. Fading Notes: The State of Music Education for the next generation of Primary Teachers. 2023

<sup>18</sup> Collins, A. Dwyer, R. Date, A. Music Education A Sound Investment

## Recommendations to the Review

### **Recommendation 1 – Value the importance of Music Education for all.**

That the Review of the National School Reform Agreement include the explicit recognition of the broad ranging benefits and importance of quality, sequential and ongoing music education for all Australian children through:

- 1 hour of music lessons per week for all primary school students (preferably delivered by music specialists) supported by additional opportunities such as band, choir or music experiences that reflect community cultures and languages.
- Increasing primary school teachers' knowledge and understanding of the broad ranging benefits of music education by making at least one compulsory music education unit in every primary education degree.
- Increasing the availability and access to music education professional development for all early career teachers.

### **Recommendation 2 – Build Partnerships and Allied Support.**

Build partnerships and allied support with music organisations such as ACMF to address the skills, capability, time pressures and confidence gap of generalist primary school teachers through:

- Expanding teacher mentoring and development programs to increase confidence and ensure a quality music curriculum.
- Building a sustainable workforce through specialist music teacher training in tertiary music degrees.
- Increasing the availability and access to classroom teaching based professional development for specialist musicians who have not undertaken pedagogical education.

### **Recommendation 3 – Build social inclusion.**

Commit to building social inclusion and reducing the inequity of access for the most disadvantaged by:

- Investing and embedding quality ongoing music education (via organisational partnerships) within all Youth Detention Centres
- Embedding strong multi-year music education through funding specialist music teachers (could be via organisational partnerships) for at least 3 years for schools with low ICSEA scores.
- Providing support for school engagement with First Nations music, cultures and knowledge as well as supporting schools in areas of high cultural diversity with engagement with music and culture reflecting the local community.