

# The State of Music Education in Australia & A Path to Achieving Universal Music Education



Music education delivers many benefits to young Australians - but to enjoy these benefits, students must attend a school and have teachers who can deliver a quality music education. The majority of Australian primary school students do not have this access and opportunity, despite the known benefits of musical learning at a young age. Quality music education should not be a lottery or a privilege for the few. Music education is for every student.

Music is now included in the national curriculum (The Arts) but problems remain with regards to how it is delivered and by whom. The opportunity now is for the education sector and government to deliver on the curriculum and ensure that all Australian students can access music as part of their schooling. Music Australia is seeking an increased commitment by the Australian Federal Government so that all Australian students and the larger Australian community can benefit from universal student access to music in our schools.

**Music Australia, and its delegates, presents a united voice in calling for more comprehensive support of music education in Australian schools.**

**We also reflect the views of parents throughout the country who value the opportunity for their children to access music education at school.**

Working with our friends and colleagues from around the country, Music Australia has identified 3 main problems with the current provision of music education in Australia. We also propose a solution for each of these problems.

## **Problems with current provision of music education**

- Pre-service teacher training, a commonwealth responsibility, does not adequately prepare teachers for teaching music in schools
- There are not enough teachers with skills and confidence to provide all students with the music learning opportunities intended by the COAG\* Education Ministers
- Music, as a subject and as a broader experience, is seen as a “nice to have” and not recognised as a core element in the learning and lives of young Australians

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## **Our delegation has worked together to outline possible methods for improving the state of music education in Australia, according to the problems previously identified:**

### **Improve Pre-Service Teacher Training**

Evidence from both the National Review of School Music Education (2006) and the Victorian Inquiry into the Extent, Benefits and Potential of Music in Schools (2013) indicate that one of the key barriers to effective music education is the quality of teaching. One of the major contributing factors to this is the extent and quality of music training for pre-service primary teachers. A total of 40 hours training in a specialist arts area will allow teachers to meet general capability requirements.

**We suggest focusing on improving pre-service education in the following ways:**

- Institute specialist arts subjects, including music, in tertiary learning - adopting TEMAG\* (Recommendation 18) directing tertiary training institutions to require students to specialise in a STEAM subject during their studies with the full 16 hours currently dedicated to 'arts' training being allocated to one specialist arts subject
- Facilitate best practice recommendations for industry-based training after graduation - endorse music industry bodies or major performing arts organisations to facilitate up to 26 hours of new-graduate teacher training in the first 3-5 years after graduation

### **Invest Directly in School Music Development**

In addition to addressing the improvement of future teaching training, much can be done to assist the skills development of current teachers. In collaboration with state and territory governments, we ask the Federal Government to invest in music in schools directly.

**We suggest investment in the following scalable ways:**

- Fund professional development opportunities and expert visits to build teacher capability
- Fund resource development and the purchase of equipment
- Fund strategic specialist placements to support hubs of teacher learning and collaboration
- Invest in a distinguished educators scheme to acknowledge and support exceptional work by leaders in schools around the country

### **Continue Funding for Music: Count Us In**

Music: Count Us In (MCUI) is Australia's largest schools participation program. More information on MCUI can be found at the conclusion of this information package. With a track record of over 10 years, MCUI has proved a successful and popular program nationwide.

**Increased funding for MCUI can improve music education in the following ways:**

- Expand the program from 10 weeks to 40 weeks (or, at least, to 20 weeks)
- Produce quality resources, known to be useful and accessible for teachers
- Contribute to improved pre-service teacher training (as outlined previously)
- Introduce an instrumental stream to complement the existing voice-focus program
- Target primary and early childhood centres to improve students outcomes
- Improve accessibility for all, including students with additional learning requirements
- Engage students in increasingly relevant and creative ways

\*\*TEMAG - Teachers Education Ministerial Advisory Group, Recommendation 18

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## **Next Steps - Where To From Here?**

Music is enormously and diversely beneficial for individuals and the community, as well as for the social, cultural and financial economies of Australia. In this way, music education deserves policy dedicated to it.

Further investment in teachers and teaching is the key to reversing the deficits in music education in schools. Grants for instruments and equipment mean nothing without teachers. Teacher provision is a key element to solving systemic access to music, especially in primary schools. Whole-class approaches will deliver the greatest results.

For the outcome of universal music education to be achieved, the Federal Government must work with state and territory governments to ensure music is delivered within the new Australian curriculum, The Arts. This must, necessarily, involve stronger relationships between the various state and territory governments and tertiary providers; recognising that music is a vital skill for students to have and develop in primary education programs.

The most immediate approach to improving the status of music education in Australia is through scalable, program-based delivery. MCUI has shown great and continued success in this area since 2007 and would continue to provide significant improvement to the delivery of quality music education nationally through increased financial support from the Federal Government.

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