

PRESS RELEASE: Australia's Biggest Celebration of Music in Schools

Save the Date 3 November 2016



Music: Count Us In (MCUI), Australia's largest school music participation program, is thrilled to announce performer Jay Laga'aia as the music mentor for 2016. **MCUI is Australia's largest school music advocacy and participation initiative, growing steadily in reach and impact since 2007.**

To kick off the **10th Anniversary year** for MCUI, Jay Laga'aia, one of Australia's most respected performers, will mentor four talented school students as they work together to write the MCUI program song - 'the song that stops the nation'. On Thursday 3rd November at 12.30pm AEDT more than half a million children will perform this same song, on the same day, at the same time. Last year, MCUI saw more than 2,100 schools and over half a million students take part in this FREE program. It provides students and teachers with the opportunity to develop their music skills and simultaneously perform with schools around the country.

Jay Laga'aia is a familiar face to many around Australia. He is particularly loved by some of Australia's youngest people and their parents thanks to his work on *Play School* and as the host of *Jay's Jungle*. Jay is deeply passionate about music for young people and music in schools. He is an award winning writer, producer and singer and has received 4 Australian Aria nominations for his past children's albums. Jay is an experienced performer of stage and screen and understands the power of music - especially as a tool for learning and educating young people.

Passionate about Music Education and on being MCUI's 2016 mentor, Jay says:

"The great thing about music is that you don't have to speak the same language to understand the intention of the piece. Our young are great at expressing their feelings and it is my job as MCUI Mentor to encourage them to paint their word pictures and inspire others to do the same."

MCUI 2016 kicks off with the Songwriting Workshop on Tuesday 5th April taking place in Sydney. Student finalists have been selected from across the country and MCUI is delighted to have Bonnie Staude and Stella Kelly from Western Australia, Brenna Truscott from Queensland and Tom Meadows from Victoria collaborate with our music professionals to create this year's MCUI song. It will be a song for students, written by students. During the Songwriting Workshop, students will receive expert guidance from award-winning producer John Foreman OAM, the program's ambassador and the program's music mentor, Jay Laga'aia.

MCUI gives children of all ages and abilities free access to music education. The program also delivers music professional development to classroom teachers. Research shows that many primary teachers often lack the skills and confidence to tackle music with their students. This year, much of the teacher training offered by MCUI will be delivered via live streaming reaching many more teachers in rural, regional and remote areas.

MCUI is managed by Music Australia, the peak service body for the Australian music industry. MCUI is supported by funding from the Australian Government. It meets a priority recommendation of the National Review of School Music Education (2005) to raise the status of music in Australian schools.

To arrange an interview please contact:

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THE STUDENT SONGWRITERS

Bonnie Staude - Albany Senior High School, Mt Clarence, WA

Bonnie keeps herself very busy with school, dance, part-time work and lots and lots of music. MCUI has been an annual highlight for Bonnie over many years and she can't wait to help bring more music to the lives of kids all over Australia by being part of the songwriting team this year.

"Singing the MCUI song each year has always been a fun and uplifting experience - so to be selected to help create this year's song is a huge honour and thrill. My hope is that our song inspires everybody to keep singing and always have music in their lives."



Breanna Truscott - Helensvale State High School, Helensvale, QLD

Breanna's love of music has flourished in recent years as singing and songwriting have become her tools to deal with difficult experiences. Breanna's entry to the 2016 competition was inspired by journal entries she made at the time when she was diagnosed with a chronic illness. Her song is about accepting life and learning to become stronger.

"My dream is for my music to hold a message that inspires others - and for them to hear and believe in the meaning behind it."



Stella Kelly - St Hilda's Anglican School for Girls, Dalkeith, WA

Stella has had a love for performing and composing since a young age. Stella was a performer at the Nannup Music Festival in 2015 where she also competed as one of their emerging artists. Last year she also received a nomination for West Australian Music's (WAM) 'Song of the Year'. Stella looks forward to pursuing a career in music when she finishes school at the end of this year.

"I aspire to write a song that will make a difference, even if it only momentarily manages to make someone smile."



Tom Meadows - Bellaire Primary School, Highton, VIC

Tom, at just 11 years old, is the youngest member of the songwriting team. He splits his passion between sport and music, using music to help make sense of the world. His song 'Deep in the Blue' is currently being used in a campaign by The Alannah and Madeleine Foundation to help advocate for children who are victims of violence and bullying.

"I have always loved music. I enjoy playing my guitar and writing songs about things that are important to me. I also hope my music makes people smile."



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