

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



[Music: Count Us In \(MCUI\)](#), Australia's largest school music participation program, is thrilled to announce Justine Clarke as the music mentor for 2018. MCUI is Australia's largest school music advocacy and participation initiative, growing steadily since 2007.

To kick off the year, Justine Clarke will mentor five talented school students as they work together to write the MCUI program song - 'the song that stops the nation'. **On Thursday 1st 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 3,000 schools and over 660,000 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 in a celebration of music and music education.

Justine Clarke is a familiar face to many around Australia. She is particularly loved by some of Australia's youngest people and their parents thanks to her work on [Play School](#) and as the host of [The Justine Clarke Show!](#) She is deeply passionate about music for young people and music in schools, with singing and performing a part of her DNA from childhood. In her 19 years with Big Ted, Jemima and the rest of the iconic Play School cast, Justine has released platinum and gold selling CD/ DVDs of children's songs, with original compositions by pianist Peter Dasant and backed by some of Australia's finest musicians. Justine is an acclaimed performer of stage and screen and understands the power of music - especially as a tool for learning and educating young people. On being the 2018 MCUI Mentor, Justine says:

"I'm thrilled to be part of this program that promotes music education, creativity and community in one loud and joyful song that's heard right across the country! Count me in!"

MCUI 2018 kicks off with the Songwriting Workshop on Thursday 22 March taking place at Golden Retriever recording studios Sydney. Student finalists have been selected from across the country and MCUI is delighted to have Abby Keenan from Victoria, Emma Jones from Wollongong, New South Wales, Sophia Chesworth from New South Wales, and siblings Hazel and Roanna Law from Queensland, 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, Justine Clarke.

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:
Cara Anderson, Director of Engagement - Music Australia
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THE STUDENT SONGWRITERS

Sophia Chesworth - Australian Performing Arts Grammar School, Glebe, NSW

Sophia is a 16 year old country pop singer/songwriter. She loves sharing stories and inspiring others through her songs. She co-wrote her first song at the age of 12 and has been writing and co-writing ever since.

"Music is who I am, so I'm so grateful to have the opportunity to be a part of Music Count Us In, as connecting with others and sharing a positive message is ultimately what I want to do through all my music and writing."



Emma Jones - Wollongong High School Of The Performing Arts, Fairy Meadow, NSW

Emma is 16 and currently in grade 12. She loves that music affects each individual differently. Songwriting helps her compile ideas, ambitions and concerns into something others can relate to.

"I'm honoured to have been given the chance to be a part of the MCUI for 2018. I think it is a great initiative to introduce and develop music in younger generations, whilst encouraging diversity and individuality in the process. I am very excited to be able to create a song which not only brings people together, but also gives each person an opportunity to relate in their own way."



Abby Keenan - Montmorency Secondary College, Greensborough, VIC

Abby started playing music when she was 6, then singing when she was 9. She wants to share the power of music and loves that it can create different emotions in different people

"I am excited to share my passion for music, and unite children with the power of song, as a part of this year's Music: Count Us In program."



Hazel and Roanna Law- Maroochydore State High School, Maroochydore, QLD

This sister duo from the Sunshine Coast have been writing and singing together for the last three years. They busk regularly in their hometown and play gigs at cafes and markets.

"Our songs are written to connect people and give a voice to those who cannot stand up for themselves. I think songwriting is a way of uniting the young and the old, the past and the present, the weak and the strong, the rich and the poor."



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