



Inquiry into Australia's creative and cultural industries and institutions

Standing Committee on the Communications and The Arts  
House of Representatives

ALBERTS | THE TONY FOUNDATION

SUBMISSION

30 October

## INTRODUCTION

Alberts applauds the Committee for initiating this Inquiry into Australia's Creative and Cultural Industries. We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Committee's deliberations through this submission.

Our submission highlights the power of quality music education to transform young lives and its critical contribution to the music industry. The benefits of music education are highly relevant to the Committee's considerations of the economic and social benefits of the music industry. Music education, for example, simultaneously develops the future music industry workforce while also providing employment opportunities within the education systems to support professional musicians and teachers with music training and/or experience.

More than this, given its positive impact on overall educational benefits, music education has a definite, additional though unquantified, economic and social benefit. It is well documented that 'soft skills' (such as creativity, teamwork, problem-solving, communications skills) and lifting educational attainment are critically important to economy productivity and growth. This has been a central plank in the policies of successive governments. However, governments generally have failed to fully appreciate the potential contribution of music education to lifting educational performance overall.

Alberts is a 135-year-old family business that has played a vital role in the evolution of Australia's media and popular culture since the early days of sheet music and music publishing through to the birth of commercial radio and television and the founding of the Australian pop and rock music industry. Founded in 1885 by Jacques Albert, the company is now run by members of the fifth generation under the guidance of fourth generation member Robert Albert. Alberts was a co-founder of the Australasian Performing Right Association (APRA) in 1926, introduced to protect the rights of writers, composers and publishers. The company is known for its long association with local musicians including AC/DC, The Easybeats, Stevie Wright, Harry Vanda and George Young; and more recent support of Megan Washington, Wally DeBacker and Josh Pyke.

In 2012 members of the fifth generation established The Tony Foundation, which strives to improve the lives of young Australians through music.

Over recent years, the Tony Foundation has increased its focus on supporting music education programs in schools - through Musica Viva, the Song Room, the Australian Children's Music Foundation, and also funded the impact campaign for the ABC's three-part tele-series *Don't Stop the Music* which created a national conversation and call to action on music education.

Our submission focuses on the place and purpose of music education, its diverse benefits and the need to ensure that all Australian primary school children have access to quality, sequential and ongoing music education.

It most directly addresses the Committee's first two designated areas of interest:

- The direct and indirect economic benefits and employment opportunities of creative and cultural industries and how to recognise, measure and grow them
- The non-economic benefits that enhance community, social wellbeing and promoting Australia's national identity, and how to recognise, measure and grow them

Though music education is relevant to other elements in the Committee's Terms of Reference, including the impact of COVID-19, the submission does not address these matters in detail.

### **THE PLACE AND PURPOSE OF MUSIC EDUCATION**

We are confident that the Committee recognises - and others will no doubt expand on - the inherent value of music: it is a source of personal well-being and a public good. This value cannot be overstated.

While the inherent value of music may not be dependent on its status as an industry, the music industry does depend on the power of music and the personal and social benefits it delivers. In its crudest terms there would be no economic benefits (direct or indirect) if music and the experience of music were not valued by individuals and communities as listeners, audiences, musicians, choristers and performers.

Music education is a critical element in the ecology of the music industry.

It provides the foundations for life-long engagement with music and with the music industry. A small (but significant) number of students may go on to be part of the industry's workforce as professional musicians, composers, performers or in other roles from stagehands to administration, marketing, instrument making, retail sales, publishing and production.

For the majority of students, however, music education not only nurtures this life-long engagement with music but offers significant personal and educational benefits. We elaborate on these below.

We have chosen to focus on music education in the primary school years for several reasons:

- the evidence tells us that music education has the greatest developmental impact for children in these age groups;
- the benefits of a quality music education in these years are enduring;
- success in delivering quality, sequential music education in these years will establish the case for an appropriate introduction to music in early childhood and drive demand for access to ongoing quality music education in the secondary years;
- in policy terms this is where the biggest gains are to be made over the shortest period with the greatest confidence.

### **THE CHALLENGE WE FACE**

The importance of music education to the music industry is matched by the unique contribution it should be making to a holistic education. Yet, for too long music education has been quarantined in government thinking leading to a policy wall between Arts and education policy-making, program and investment that diminishes the potential value to the music industry and to our young people's development and learnings.

There are wonderful music programs and activities driven by dedicated teachers and musicians in many schools across Australia. There are schools for whom music is core to their educational offering. There are signs of renewed interest and curriculum activity including South Australia's recently launched music education strategy with a ten-year commitment and increased investment.

However, we know that a large proportion of Australian primary school children have little or no access to music education and for those that do the quality of that education varies considerably. This is the case between jurisdictions, between education systems and within those systems.

The provision of quality music education is characterised by: systemic inequality; insufficient numbers of adequately trained teachers; a gap between curriculum intent and delivery; pressures on school leaders hampering their capacity to utilise the latest research; a narrow understanding of educational priorities; barriers to collaboration including between the music industry and schools; and a lack of a shared understanding of the place music education should have in delivering a higher standard of education for every Australian school student.

### **THE EMERGING RESEARCH**

These matters, and much more, are canvassed in the report [Music Education: A Sound Investment](#) (Attachment 1). The research, commissioned by The Tony Foundation, was authored by Dr Anita Collins with Dr Rachael Dwyer and Aden Date. The report notes:

*The biggest shift in the place and purpose of music education has come from the explosion of neuroscientific research into how music learning impacts positively on brain development. As outlined in the previous research section of this report, causal and strong correlation research findings indicate that music learning improves language, literacy, reading, comprehension, aural memory, spatial and self-regulation skills, psychological wellbeing and health. In addition, students who engage in music learning perform better academically, contribute to their communities, form positive relationships and continue their education into university. They also earn more through their lives and age better, physically and cognitively.*

*Countries such as Finland and Canada that continue to perform well or improve their PISA scores have recognised the benefits of music education for their students. This is specifically in the areas of aural perception, which leads to improved language and literacy outcomes and social development that improve broad educational outcomes. Countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States of America have reduced their music education provision dramatically over the last 20 years and this may be one of the factors connected with their declining PISA results.*

*Australia continues to focus on improving literacy through more time and training on 'pure' literacy programs, which may not be yielding the desired results. Similarly, human development programs such as positive psychology can have limited impact if they are not embedded effectively into every part of the school culture. However, individual Australian schools, with well informed and supportive principals, who have made the decision to implement equitable, quality and ongoing music education programs, have seen improvements across numerous educational measures.*

### **THE BENEFITS OF MUSIC EDUCATION**

There is now a substantial body of research that attests to the significant and diverse benefits of music generally and music education more specifically.

Extensive research in the fields of neuroscience and psychology, for example, have found that music learning:

- Improves learning capacity
- Boosts academic performance in English, Maths and Science
- Supports reading and numeracy skills
- Improves cognitive connectivity and efficiency
- Increases attention stamina and focus
- Decreases stress and anxiety
- Improves self-regulation
- Hones neural synchronisation to enhance learning

- Improves social skills and personal wellbeing
- Heightens empathy and valuing of diversity

Music learning has been found to have a positive impact on immune health and in protecting against Dementia and Alzheimers.

These emerging areas of neuroscientific research are adding to the extensive work that has been done over many years in the social sciences.

While the degree of positive effect varies from the marginally positive to the very strong in different domains, the case grows stronger as the body of research continues to expand.

In short, quality music education not only has direct benefit for a student's personal well-being and social development but enhances the overall educational performance.

These outcomes are highly relevant to the Committee's considerations of the economic and social benefits of the music industry. Music education, for example, simultaneously develops the future music industry workforce while also providing employment opportunities within the education systems to support professional musicians and teachers with music training and/or experience.

More than this, given its positive impact on overall educational benefits, music education has a definite, additional though unquantified, economic and social benefit. It is well documented that 'soft skills' (such as creativity, teamwork, problem-solving, communications skills) and lifting educational attainment are critically important to economy productivity and growth. This has been a central plank in the policies of successive governments. However, governments generally have failed to fully appreciate the potential contribution of music education to lifting educational performance overall.

### **MUSIC EDUCATION: RIGHT FROM THE START**

Alberts has always believed in the power of music to change lives.

Prior to the public release of the report *Music Education: A Sound Investment* Alberts convened seven advance briefings for key stakeholders including the music industry, education, teacher training, music organisations, research and philanthropy. The objective was to test the report's findings and the intent to pursue a more determined effort to ensure that every Australian primary school student has access to quality, sequential and ongoing music education.

Heartened by the response from stakeholders a more substantial, cooperative project, *Music Education: Right from the Start*, is now in development.

While there is more detailed work to be done, the research base is solid and certain steps are necessary – several identified in the 2005 National Review of Music Education remain unrealised. The South Australian Government has reviewed the provision of music education in that State and committed to a comprehensive [ten-year music education strategy](#), however, the national picture is patchy at best.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

We are conscious that this Committee's predecessor in the 45<sup>th</sup> Parliament inquired into the Australian music industry. In its final report (March 2019) that Committee reflected several of the matters raised in this submission. That Committee concluded, for example, that:

*5.11 Music education is essential to the development and cultivation of Australia's next generation of artists. However, it is clear that the understanding and appreciation of music that results from music education is beneficial to all Australians, not only those who go on to pursue careers in the music industry.*

*5.12 The committee is disappointed by reports that so many Australian students do not have access to music education. All Australian students should have access to music education, whether within the independent or public school system. The committee commends those principals and teachers that are championing music in their schools; however, a child's access to music education should not be dependent on this.*

*5.13 This dearth of music education is particularly concerning during a time when other countries are seeking to increase the importance and priority of music within schools and the school system. If Australia wishes to remain competitive as a music export nation, we must not neglect to invest in the crucial first stage of the talent pipeline.*

*5.14 All Australian students at public primary and secondary schools should have access to music education. The committee commends Queensland for its dedication to music education. The Australian Government should strongly encourage states and territories to follow Queensland's example and ensure that all students have access to music education. To this end, the Australian Government should ensure that music education in primary and secondary schools is a key agenda item for the next meeting of the Council of Australian Governments.*

That Committee's associated recommendation 11 was that:

*The committee recommends that the Australian Government ensure that music education in primary and secondary schools is a key agenda item for the next meeting of the Council of Australian Governments.*

Alberts urges the Committee to re-affirm these conclusions providing a strong and clear affirmation of the place and purpose of music education in the ecology of the music industry and its contribution to a vibrant and successful future for the industry with the broader economic and social benefits that flow from it.

It is important to go further if these matters are to be progressed.

Alberts has made a longer-term commitment to do what we can, working with others, to ensure that all primary school children have access to quality, sequential and ongoing music education. That work is in its early stages.

At this time, we would ask the Committee in its own recommendations to:

1. Support as a matter of priority that every primary school student in Australia has access to quality, sequential and ongoing music education;
2. Call for the Commonwealth to either undertake itself or to support, including funding, baseline research to:
  - a. map the current provision of music education in primary schools nationally;
  - b. assess the provision of music training for teachers in their teaching qualifications and professional development.

**IN CONCLUSION**

Alberts thanks the Committee for the opportunity to contribute to this Inquiry. We would welcome meeting with the Committee to elaborate on matters raised in our submission should that be helpful.