

Administration
MBE 148/45 Glenferrie Road
Malvern, Vic 3144
Phone: 03 9507 2315
Fax: 03 9507 2316
Email: admin@mca.org.au
Website: www.mca.org.au
ABN 85 070 619 608

Executive Director
Tel: +61 (0)2 9251 3816
Fax: +61 (0)2 9251 3817
Email: mca@mca.org.au

Music. Play for Life campaign
Tel: (02) 4454 3887 or 0439 022 257

Website: www.musicplayforlife.org

Australia's representative to the International Music Council



Music Council of Australia

Productivity Commission
LB2 Collins Street East
Melbourne Vic 8003
September 7, 2011
By email: ecdworkforce@pc.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

Productivity Commission Draft Research Report Early Childhood Development Workforce

The Music Council of Australia appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Productivity Commission's Draft Research Report, *Early Childhood Development Workforce*.

The Music Council welcomes and supports the Productivity Commission's discussion (page 110 and Appendix C) of the role non-cognitive skills play in the formation of cognitive skills, the impact non-cognitive skills have in life outcomes and that non-cognitive skills are crucial to early childhood development. As the Music Council argued in its earlier submission and, as noted in the Draft Report, non-cognitive skills are enhanced by a diverse range of activities, including music, that enhance child development (page 110).

Important as non-cognitive skills are, the role of music in early childhood development and care extends well beyond its efficacy in supporting the development of non-cognitive skills. Learning music exercises cognitive skills and there are cognitive skills in music learning that are shared with other subjects – for example, many mathematical concepts are involved in understanding pitch and rhythm. As articulated in the Music Council's earlier submission to the Productivity Commission, there is a body of research that demonstrates continuing participation in music making accelerates learning in literacy and numeracy and various academic subjects. In addition to the role music making can play in the development of cognitive and non-cognitive skills, the intrinsic importance of structured sequential music learning and music making in early childhood development is recognized by and valued by government.

The Music Council shares the concerns expressed in the Draft Report about the numbers in the Early Childhood Development Workforce without appropriate qualifications and supports the recommendations contained in the Draft Report to address this situation.

The Music Council notes that in the Draft Report the Productivity Commission, at Draft Finding 10.1, states:

Study participants indicate that the content of vocational education and training (VET) qualifications for ECEC is largely satisfactory, and the methods currently employed to determine course content are appropriate.

Draft Finding 10.5 states:

Higher education providers appear to be equipping early childhood teaching graduates with the skills and knowledge they require ...

In the Music Council's earlier submission, whilst not directly addressing the content of VET courses, it was argued strongly that on the basis of Music Council research the music content in tertiary early childhood and primary school education is completely inadequate to equip students with the necessary skills to deliver a music curriculum. To recap from the Music Council's earlier submission (page 12), the Music Council undertook research that explored how much music instruction is delivered at tertiary level in relevant early childhood courses:

The study surveyed 31 relevant institutions. Three of the 31 had no mandatory training in arts education. Four offered mandatory arts training but could provide no data to quantify the amount of instruction in music. The remainder offered education in music teaching, usually as an element in a subject covering two or more art forms. The following table summarises the findings.

Number of years for degree	Number of institutions	Total average hours of music instruction
4	17	20.0
3	6	18.9
2	2	10.6
1	2	9.8

The average estimated number of hours assigned to music instruction varies with the number of years required for the degree. Since the music instruction is concentrated into one or two semesters, the instructional time can be similar for the 4 and 3 years courses, and the one and two year courses.

Assuming an approximate average total of instructional time for a four-year degree of 1250 hours, instructional time for music ranges from zero hours in three universities to an estimated 78 hours (6.25% of the degree) at Monash University. In approximately one-half (14 out of 31) of the early childhood degree programs, music as a discrete discipline counted for less than 1% in value.

Baldly put, on the basis of an average of as little as 10 hours of music training, graduates are released into the world to deliver a sequential, developmental curriculum in music covering between 4 and 12 years. This cannot be a serious proposition.

The preservice training in music produces a workforce that, except by accident of personal circumstance or interest, is not competent to deliver a credible curriculum.

In 2005, the Australian Government National Review of School Music Education, chaired by Professor Margaret Seares, released its report *Augmenting the diminished*¹. It found that (see page vi):

- Hours for pre-service teacher education for music have contracted radically in the last ten years and do not adequately prepare generalist primary teachers for teaching music in schools. Urgent action is needed to address this problem.
- Pre-service teacher education for specialist primary, secondary, instrumental and vocal teachers needs to be reviewed and improved.

Five years ago it was understood that the state of music education in Australia was in parlous shape. In 2006, Senator Fifield² argued:

Only 23 per cent of kids in Australian government primary schools have access to any form of music education ... it is possible for some Australian students to complete 13 years of schooling without participating in any form of music education [and] teachers in training receive on average only 23 hours of music training.

As indicated above, that 23 hours of music training for teachers has continued to decline, at some institutions to zero. Of great concern is that many of those educated during the period covered by the Review referred to above are those on whom Australia will increasingly rely to deliver music education to current and coming generations of children. For those who attended public schools that did not deliver any form of music education and who received on average 20 hours of music training as undergraduate teachers at tertiary institutions, it is impossible to conceive how they will now deliver to children aged five and above the new compulsory National Curriculum currently being developed and soon to be implemented across Australia. As the tertiary institution survey undertaken by the Music Council covered early childhood degrees as well as school teaching degrees, the situation is likely to be replicated in the early childhood sector.

The Music Council would be surprised if the VET sector delivers superior music content in early childhood courses than that delivered at the tertiary level.

The Shape Paper for the arts curriculum – *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts* – was released at the end of August³. At page 14, the Shape Paper sets out expectations for Years F–2 in music:

Students will learn about and participate in the different roles of composer, performer and audience member. They will explore and experiment with voice,

¹ See online at http://www.dest.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/C9AFAE54-6D72-44CC-A346-3CAF235CB268/8944/music_review_reportfinal.pdf.

² Senator Mitch Fifield, 13 September 2006, see online at <http://www.mitchfifield.com/Media/Speeches/tabid/71/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/279/Adjournment--Music-Education.aspx>

³ *Shape of the Australian Curriculum*, Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, August 2011, accessed 2 September 2011 http://www.acara.edu.au/verve/_resources/Shape_of_the_Australian_Curriculum_The_Arts_-_Compressed.pdf.

instruments and sound to create their own music. They will sing, play instruments and found sound sources, and move to a range of music. They will develop a repertoire of chants, songs, rhythms, rhymes and melodies. They will invent and explore ways of recording musical thinking through symbols. Students will begin to use music terminology. They will listen and respond to a range of musical works and develop their aural skills. They will learn to respond and comment on their own music making and that of others.

In the introduction to the music curriculum in the Shape Paper (page 14), it is stated that 'Learning in music is most effective when composing, performing, and listening are interconnected'.

It is likely that many generalist teachers will feel at best ill-equipped and probably most will not even understand the terminology. At worst, some are likely to feel incapable of teaching even the most rudimentary principles of composing, especially those with no music literacy. Many will not be able to deliver what the Government now expects.

The Music Council regrets that this issue has not been taken up in the Commission's recommendations.

On September 1 at 11.30am the Music Council's program *Music: Count Us In*⁴, now in its fifth year, culminated in more than half a million children from 1,900 primary and high schools across Australia singing the student composed and written song *We've Got The Music*. The program is designed to promote music in education and, importantly, to offer professional development for generalist primary school teachers. The need for such professional development is amply demonstrated by the fact that 2,100 primary school teachers availed themselves of the opportunity this year. The workshops prepare the teachers to teach just one song, the program song. While the workshop materials are perhaps unusually attractive, it is not unreasonable to suppose that many teachers sign up because they actually do not know how to teach a song.

That day, ABC Radio National's *Bush Telegraph* program broadcast *Music: Count Us In* live from Bicheno Primary School in Tasmania⁵. In response to that broadcast, on September 5, the program's producer read listener responses from the program's Mail Bag. One listener, Doug, highlighted the case for music education for the very young⁶, writing:

I agree that exposure to a structured music program for young aged children gives children an enormous advantage.

As licensee of a childcare centre in Bundaberg, we introduced a music program at the beginning of this year.

From two years of age our children are given at least two music classes per week where they learn to pitch notes, replicate rhythm and move to music.

⁴ *Music: Count Us In*, for program details see <http://musiccountusin.org.au/>.

⁵ Pryor, C. 2011, *Bush Telegraph broadcasts from Bicheno, Tasmania for Music Count Us In*, Bush Telegraph, Radio National, ABC, 1 September 2011, accessed 5 September 2011 <http://www.abc.net.au/rural/telegraph/content/2011/s3307633.htm>.

⁶ Mail Bag, 2011, *Bush Telegraph*, Radio National, ABC, 5 September 2011, accessed 5 September 2011 http://mpegmedia.abc.net.au/rural/telegraph/201109/r823255_7484068.mp3.

We have two year olds who can barely talk able to sing out the words to our songs.

It's sad that so few children today receive any music education at all.

Where some childcare centres can address music skills shortages by utilising specialist teachers on contract. This, however, is often not a strategy that can be utilised in public primary schools, where music is taught by generalist teachers in all states and territories save only Queensland and Tasmania.

The Music Council notes the discussion in the Draft Report on the workforce for family support programs, the references to music therapy and programs such as *Sing and Grow*, and the observations about the diversity of family support programs and comments that non-cognitive skills are possibly best delivered in out of hours school programs. The Music Council is also aware that these programs reach only a fraction of Australia's young children. Whilst not in any way discounting the value of such programs – indeed, the Music Council supports the expansion of such programs – the Music Council nonetheless considers that all children are entitled to a rich and appropriate music education through regular in-school provision including in preschools. Family support programs should not be seen as filling gaps in current early childhood development and care delivery.

The Music Council is not equipped and would not presume to comment on the quality of the education and training of the Early Childhood and Care workforce other than in respect of music. However, as had been hoped had been made clear in the Council's earlier submission, it is totally inadequate in the case of music. Music has, as the Commission has noted, an important contribution to make in the development of non-cognitive skills and, in any event, should be an important part of any rounded education, available for all Australian children from early childhood onwards, delivered by appropriately qualified education and care practitioners.

The Music Council thanks the Productivity Commission for the opportunity to make this further submission. We are pleased to respond to any request for detail or explanation.

Yours sincerely

Dr Richard Letts AM
Executive Director