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Australia's representative to the International Music Council



Music Council of Australia

Education and Training Workforce: Schools
Productivity Commission
February 16, 2012

By email: schools@pc.gov.au

Dear Commissioners,

Re: The Schools Workforce Study

The Music Council of Australia appreciates the opportunity to make a contribution to the study being undertaken by the Productivity Commission into The Schools Workforce.

The Music Council notes that the Productivity Commission is required to establish 'whether the knowledge and skills base of the workforce, and its deployment within and across schools and regions, are appropriate to meet the community's needs'.

The Music Council has for many years been concerned about the inadequacy of music teaching in schools – particularly for the years K-6. Currently, in all states except Queensland and Tasmania, primary school generalist classroom teachers are given the responsibility for delivering the music curriculum. However, Music Council research shows that on average the mandatory music instruction in the preservice degree is only 17 hours, or 10 hours for a postgraduate qualification.

As a preparation for teaching music throughout the seven primary school years – or even, indeed, only one of those years – this is ludicrously inadequate.

The situation will be thrown further into relief when the new Australian Curriculum for the arts is introduced. Most primary school teachers will be unable to deliver the curriculum despite the commitment of all Ministers for Education through the 'Melbourne Manifesto' that all children should receive an education in performing and visual arts.

At present, it is mostly the children of the affluent who receive an adequate music education. Music Council research shows that 23% of public schools, most of them secondary schools, offer a music education that would meet the general requirements laid

down by the National Review of School Music Education for a sequential, continuous, developmental curriculum. The standards are met by 88% of independent schools. Parents of students in public schools in the more affluent neighbourhoods often will pay independently for specialist music instruction after school hours. 87% of respondents to an Australian Music Association survey agree that it should be mandatory for schools to offer a music education to every child.¹ There is both enormous interest and enormous inequity and the latter arises directly from the lack of music education provided to primary school teachers.

Last year, the Music Council made a submission to the House Committee on Infrastructure and Communications' Inquiry into the role and potential of the National Broadband regarding the possibilities that the National Broadband Network offers in this regard.²

In 2012 the Music Council made submissions to the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into The Education and Training Workforce: Early Childhood Development³ as well as to the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations' Review of Funding for Schooling⁴.

In November last year, the Music Council made a submission to the Minister for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Proposals for National Initiatives in Music Education*. A copy is attached. Pages 11 to 27 specifically address school music and arts education. The Music Council considers the points made in this submission to the Minister are pertinent to the Productivity Commission's current study. Other approaches included in the submission might also be of interest to the Commission.

We would be pleased to respond to invitations from the Commission to provide further information.

Yours sincerely

Richard Letts, AM, PhD, AB (UC Berkeley)
Executive Director

¹ <http://www.mca.org.au/research/research-reports/other-research/107-australians-attitudes-to-music>

² See online at

<http://www.mca.org.au/images/pdf/Advocacy2011/mcaAD11NBN%20submission%20feb25.pdf>.

³ See online at <http://www.mca.org.au/images/pdf/Advocacy2011/mcaAD11earlychild%20prodcom.pdf> and <http://www.mca.org.au/images/pdf/Advocacy2011/mcaAD11Early%20Childhood%20Development%20Workforce%20Sept%202011.pdf>.

⁴ See online at <http://www.mca.org.au/advocacy/2011-papers/16292-submission-to-the-review-of-funding-for-schooling>.