

Music to Our Ears



A Guide for Parents in the Campaign for Music Education in Schools



Music Council of Australia

The CALEDONIA
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What is ‘Music to Our Ears’?

This report presents the compelling case for more music in Australian schools based on the evidence proving the benefits of music education, the context in Australia where most students do not have an adequate music education at school (many students have none at all), the need for action, and case studies of artists and schools that demonstrate the value of music education in schools.

‘Music to Our Ears’ is part of the Parental Engagement Project, an initiative of Shark Island, The Caledonia Foundation and the Music Council of Australia.

What is the Parental Engagement Project?

The campaign for more music in schools involves advocating to governments, school principals and education bureaucracies, raising public awareness of the need to support music education, finding solutions to improve access to music education for Australian students, and supporting educators. We believe that parents play a key role in supporting and encouraging creativity throughout the school years, particularly through music.

This project is part of the ongoing campaign by the Music Council and other organisations to improve the provision of music in schools. It aims to give parents the tools to advocate for more music in their school, and to provide resources, practical information and inspiration for parents wanting to support music in the school.

Credits

‘Music to Our Ears’ was commissioned by The Caledonia Foundation and Shark Island Productions, prepared by Annie O’Rourke (89° Degrees East) and written by Dennis Glover and Fiona Hehir. Editing and additional content by Chris Bowen, Dr Richard Letts and Alex Masso (Music Council of Australia)

More Online

This report is just one component of the Parental Engagement Project. For more resources, information and practical support see www.moremusictoolkit.org.au

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Introduction

This report is part of a major new collaborative partnership between Shark Island, The Caledonia Foundation and the Music Council of Australia.

By launching “Music to Our Ears”, we aim to extend the campaign for more music education in Australian schools. We want to see Australian parents at the heart of this campaign. That’s why we are calling upon you to take action to help secure a music education for your children, your school and your community.

Despite the many government and academic reports and numerous initiatives of the Music Council and others, there are still too many Australian children missing out on music education and all the benefits associated with it. This needs to change.

Music can be a vital, indeed an essential, part of a modern school curriculum. Music education aids the development of crucial learning capabilities, has powerful and positive effects on student behaviour and school culture, contributes to the development of Australian culture, and prepares students for jobs in the creative industries.

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“ *We teach music because it is unique and good. We teach music so that children can make their own music. We teach music because it acts in a unique way on the heart, mind, soul and spirit of the child, stimulating thought and imagination in very special ways.*

These are the real reasons for teaching music.

There are, as well, some wonderful bonuses of a tangible nature which can eventuate when music is taught. It is a matter of fact that the faculty of hearing is one of the first faculties developed in the womb. It is also a fact that in order to comprehend music, hearing, in the form of focused listening and strong concentration, must occur.ⁱ

Richard Gill

”

What We Know About Music Education

Music is an important part of school life

1. *Students enjoy making music and many continue to play music throughout their lives after a good music education in school*
2. *Music programs can bring the school community together, raise the school's profile in the community, and boost morale*



Music education can have benefits to other areas of learning

3. *Enhances fine motor skills*
4. *Fosters superior working memory*
5. *Cultivates creative thinking*

Music education facilitates student academic achievement

6. *Improves recall and retention of verbal information*
7. *Can support skills in other subject areas such as reading and language, maths, and other artforms*



Music education develops the creative capacities for lifelong success

8. *Sharpens student attentiveness and creativity*
9. *Strengthens perseverance*
10. *Supports better study habits and self-esteem.*

Despite the many benefits, music education is not receiving the level of support it needs. As a result of inadequate attention and funding, music has struggled to compete in an increasingly crowded curriculum.

The criteria for success in improving Australia's music education were set out back in 2005, in the National Review of School Music Educationⁱⁱ, which defined quality school music education as 'access to music education that is **continuous, sequential and developmental**, regardless of geographic location, socio-economic circumstances, culture and ability.' The Australian Government, along with state and territory governments and opposition parties committed themselves to work towards such provision.

Progress is slow and we understand the situation in some area has worsened. Recent research finds that provision of music in Australian schools is inadequate:

- 63 per cent of primary schools offer no classroom music
- 34 per cent of secondary schools offer no classroom musicⁱⁱⁱ
- only in the states of Queensland and Tasmania is music a mandatory part of the primary school curriculum in government schools and taught by specialist music teachers As a result, access to quality music education in schools has become highly inequitable:
- Less than a quarter of government schools (primary and secondary) offer a program that would meet the standard of 'continuous, developmental and sequential' music education in the National Review
- Over three quarters of independent schools meet this standard^{iv}

Many Australian children from families that are unable to afford private education or after-school music tuition are missing out on the educational benefits and cultural literacy that music provides. This situation must be addressed.

Other nations are showing the way. The five top countries in the international ranking of school systems surpassed Australian scores in reading, writing, mathematics and science. They are Finland, Sweden, South Korea, Shanghai and Hong Kong and they also all have far better school music programs than Australia. Music education may contribute to their academic success and obviously it does not get in the way. A rapid improvement in the quality of music education the United Kingdom in the decade 1999-2009 shows what can be achieved when the will is present.

What Can Governments Do?

The Music Council of Australia has identified five Government actions to enable all Australian children to access music education and this report endorses these actions:

1. A commitment to deliver an exciting, soundly based music education program to every child
2. A sufficient number of teachers trained to be able to teach the 'sequential, developmental, continuous' music curriculum
3. Commitment of sufficient classroom time for music education to deliver, at a minimum, the curriculum
4. Provision, over time, of musical instruments, equipment and facilities to adequately support a good music education program
5. Encouragement of mutually beneficial relationships between school music programs and the community, the profession and the industry

The state has a role to play in solving the problem of the paucity of music education, but so do individual schools, parents, and the music sector acting together. The Australian Curriculum and the Review of Funding for School (better known as the 'Gonski Review'^v) make now the right moment to start a discussion in your school and community about more attention and greater resourcing of music in our schools.

Parental Engagement

We believe that parents can instigate real change through grassroots activity at a scale that is achievable. Given the right information and support, you and other parents have the capacity to make changes in your school to ensure that state funds are used to provide a core program of quality music education for your children. You may also be able to collaborate with other parents to enrich the music program through contributions of time, skills or money, providing instruments, or after-school programs in band, singing, music theatre, song writing, or wherever your imaginations take you.

The Parental Engagement Toolkit outlines ideas for action to enable parents to make a real difference to the music education of Australian children. Go to www.moremusic toolkit.org.au to find more information, case studies and resources to help you advocate for and support music in your school.

Australians today are engaged in an important debate about the funding, quality and equity of our schools. The recommendations of the Gonski Review of school education have been a central issue of national debate during 2013. The major policy disagreements to date have been over funding models, teaching methods, foundational skills like literacy and numeracy, collecting and publishing student performance data, the national curriculum, teacher training and pay.

One word, though, has been absent: music. This is surprising, because across the world, leading educators recognise the crucial importance that creative disciplines like music play in keeping our young people engaged with school, bringing out their true talents, and preparing them for the challenges of a fast innovating economy. Some parents too worry that their children will become bored at school, slowly disengage and drop out; you know the vital need to keep your children interested and engaged with their schooling. As this report will show, we believe music education is an important part of the answer.

While we know that learning music is intrinsically rewarding, this report makes the case for universal access to music education in Australian schools as an effective step towards improving the creativity, performance and equity of our schools.

1. It draws on the findings of government reviews, the latest academic evidence, the testimony of leading music educators, and the experience of some of Australia's leading songwriters and performers to demonstrate why the music education in schools deserves greater attention.
2. It sets out the current, highly inadequate, state of music education in Australian schools.
3. It proposes some broad directions for public policy makers to consider.
4. It suggests that the practical answers require not just better public policy at the national, state and territory level, but greater awareness of the benefits of music education at the school level.

We believe that parents have a major role to play. Our aim is to encourage you, the parents, to get involved with your school to show that you believe in music and to give a greater priority to music. This will mean pressing your school to devote more discretionary resources to music teachers and programs and assisting your school to find the necessary resources to support teachers in this task.

This report is to help inform you. Better informed parents, who believe their children and community could benefit from music, will be better equipped for the campaign for more music education in schools. Simply by reading this report, you'll be making a great start in the campaign for more music education in our schools.

What is the Evidence to Support More Music Education?

“ I would teach children music, physics and philosophy; but most importantly music; for in the patterns of music and all the arts, are the keys to learning. ”

Plato

The major benefits of teaching music are widely understood by educational experts. In addition to the intrinsic benefits that musicians understand, music education has well documented benefits in the socialisation, cognitive development and achievements of students. It makes our culture richer and it also makes economic sense.

Music's intrinsic and extrinsic benefits are documented abundantly in academic literature and studies conducted all over the world over the past several decades. **This evidence can be summarised under three main headings: behavioural, cultural and economic, and academic, as outlined in detail in this section.**

The Behavioural Benefits

One of the major positive benefits of school music programs is that they have been found to improve standards of student behaviour and commitment to study, and generally to lift the morale of schools. In an era of major parental concern about the lack of positive discipline in schools and the problems caused by disruptive children, this is a benefit of school music programs that many parents will welcome. They are also findings that parents intuitively understand, as they watch their children's confidence, discipline and enjoyment of learning increase as they become proficient in a musical discipline. The major findings in this area include the following:

An effective music program can contribute to the life and the reputation of a school.

Learning music improves social and emotional wellbeing. Caldwell and Vaughan's research for the Song Room showed that longer-term participants in its programs showed the highest percentage of students with high rates of social and emotional wellbeing (resilience, positive social skills, positive work orientation and engagement skills). Participants in the Song Room's music programs—which cover 200 schools and 40,000 students annually—were less likely to report feeling stressed, unsafe and that they were failures, and more likely to report feeling confident and interested in their schoolwork.^{vi}

Additional findings by Dr Anne Lierse in her major study 'Side-lining music education in Australian schools: can the new Australian Curriculum change this?' highlights proven 'emotional, therapeutic and motivational benefits to students' of music education and its benefits to 'the development of the whole child in the personal, social and intellectual domains' as well as developing concentration, teamwork, self-confidence and emotional sensitivity.^{vii}

Learning music reduces absenteeism rates. The Song Room research also found that long-term Song Room participants had a 65 per cent lower absenteeism rate than non-participants.^{viii}

Learning music lowers school drop-out rates. A 1990 study in Florida showed that participation in music, art and drama classes tended to lower school drop-out rates. A further study of the Pittsburgh school system found that students with no ensemble music coursework had a dropout rate of 7.4 per

cent, while students with one to two years of music studies had a dropout rate of 1 per cent, and students with three or more years of music studies had a dropout rate of 0 per cent.

Learning music keeps children out of trouble. The *Champions for Change* report—a major Harvard, Stanford and Columbia University backed study of children in disadvantaged school districts—has found that students who study music and participate in school bands were far less likely to become involved with drug and alcohol abuse than other students. A further study conducted in Rhode Island found significant reductions in the arrest records of people who were involved in music.

Virtually every person every day experiences music. Every person has the capacity to enjoy and make music. Every culture in the world includes music in some form: for ceremony, relaxation, communication, celebration and enjoyment. The world would be inconceivable without music. Imagine the absence of music in our lives. Imagine a group of teenagers without an MP3 player.

Music Council of Australia

The Cultural and Economic Benefits

Music education helps keep Australian culture strong on the world stage. An education in music provides access to our musical cultural heritage and helps sustain it. As the Music Council of Australia stated in its submission to the Victorian Government's *Inquiry into the Extent, Benefits and Potential of Music Education in Australian Schools*: 'It is self-evident that an effective music education supports the retention, transmission and further evolution of the national musical culture'. It is important to the way in which we present ourselves to the world, as a sophisticated, high achieving culture. Numerous fine recording artists from all musical genres provide an important avenue of promoting Australia to the world. The recent Grammy Award win of Wally De Backer (aka Gotye) is the latest proof of this. As seen in the case study below, he and others owe at least part of their success in music to the music education they received while at school.

Music education prepares people for employment. In the contemporary world, Australian music is a significant contributor to the nation's economy. Music is a large employer, which crosses more than 150 job categories for musical and music-related careers, many of which require a music education.^{ix} As Sir Ken Robinson has argued, our education system, with its emphasis on mathematics, science and literacy, was created in response to the Industrial Revolution at the start of the nineteenth century. This was a time when there were few jobs in areas like the arts and the creative industries. Now, technological advances and mass cultural literacy have created millions upon millions of such jobs, and the subjects our schools teach need to reflect this need.

Music education contributes strongly to our economy. Today, the music industry, defined broadly, is estimated at over \$7 billion value-added annually, which is more than double that of forestry and fishing, five times that of gas and equal to wood and paper products.^x Most directly it covers:

- live performance
- music broadcasting
- the recording industry
- music publishing
- music education
- entertainment within hospitality venues.

Presently, Australia has a major negative balance of trade in music services. We import three to five times more music than we export, measured in royalty payments. Creating the base for a larger music industry by investing in school music education would be in our economic interests. It can be done, even by nations like Australia that have comparatively small populations. Sweden, with a far smaller population than ours, has a positive trade balance in music—attributed by a Swedish study to their music education system.^{xi}

The Academic Benefits

“ *The very things that promote literacy and numeracy are the arts, beginning with serious arts education in the early years. If we want a creative nation, an imaginative nation, a thinking nation and a nation of individuals, then we must increase the time for arts education, especially music education.* ”

Richard Gill

Learning music develops and improves learning abilities. Music education develops basic cognitive and learning skills that improve student performance across all subject areas. This claim is supported by a wide range of Australian and international academic literature across areas of brain research, psychology and behavioural studies.

Learning music improves auditory skills. Neural researchers at Northwestern University in the United States have found that students who had musical training in childhood were better able to pick out a wider range of essential elements of sound, like pitch, timing and timbre. This ability to discern the components of sound plays a major role in developing a child’s capacity to make sound-to-meaning connections, learn to speak and learn written languages, including foreign languages.^{xii}

Learning music enhances early childhood development of the brain. Research at the University of California has found that learning and playing music builds or modifies neural pathways related to spatial reasoning tasks, which are crucial for higher brain functions. This study showed that preschool children who received basic piano keyboard instruction scored an average of 34 per cent higher on tests of their reasoning skills than children who were given computer and singing lessons.^{xiii} This is backed up by a recent study, published in *The Journal of Neuroscience* in February 2013, which suggests that:

musical training before the age of seven has a significant effect on the development of the brain, showing that those who began early had stronger connections between motor regions - the parts of the brain that help you plan and carry out movements.

The study provides strong evidence that the years between ages six and eight are a ‘sensitive period’ when musical training interacts with normal brain development to produce long-lasting changes in motor abilities and brain structure.^{xiv}

Learning music can enhance non-musical abilities. A two-year Swiss study involved 1,200 children in 50 schools. They were taken from regular classes for three additional one-hour music classes per week. At the end of the experiment, despite missing regular classes, these students were better at languages, learned to read more easily, had better social relations, demonstrated more enjoyment in school, and had a lower stress level than those who remained in regular classes.^{xv}

Learning music improves test scores in key academic subjects. A 12-year study linked to Harvard, Stanford and Columbia universities that tracked more than 25,000 students, found that across all

backgrounds, music students get higher marks in school tests than students who do not study music.^{xvi} It found, in particular, that participation in music programs makes a significant difference to students from low-income backgrounds and that sustained music participation is highly correlated to success in mathematics and reading.

In Australia, the Song Room research by Caldwell and Vaughan found that participation in Song Room musical programs dramatically reduced truancy, followed by higher rates of academic achievement by students compared to those in matched schools which did not have Song Room programs.^{xvii} Its most significant finding—of a one-year-equivalent average gain in NAPLAN literacy for participants in 18-month Song Room programs—shows the potential for music to play a positive role in achieving the Australian Government’s Closing the Gap objectives for Indigenous students.

Learning music helps under-achieving students catch up. Research into test results of more than 15,000 students in Ohio in 2006 revealed that students learning a musical instrument outperformed non-instrumental-music students from their own socioeconomic status at all year levels in all subjects (science, maths, reading and citizenship). What’s more, by the Ninth-Grade, low-socioeconomic instrumental music students’ results surpassed those of the high-socioeconomic non-instrumental music students in all subjects.^{xviii}

Music Education, Creativity, and NAPLAN

The case for more music education starts with the importance of creativity and the arts to successfully educating our children. This is a major issue across the world, but one that has not received the attention it deserves here in Australia.

In the face of revolutions in information technology, medical sciences, sustainability, global entertainment and other fields, nations are more conscious than ever before of the need to improve the performance of their school systems. This has led some governments around the world to increase emphasis on less creative, more quantifiable aspects of education. While basic skills like literacy, numeracy, reading and scientific knowledge—easy to measure and compare—have properly gained attention and resources, less quantifiable but equally important aspects of schooling, like music and the arts generally, have not.

The counter-case for greater creativity in school education has been made most forcefully by the English–American educator, Sir Ken Robinson. A landmark report from the UK published in 1999, from a national advisory committee chaired by Robinson, found that the measures then underway in Britain to improve the educational performance of schools needed to be balanced by efforts to improve the creativity in schools, including the teaching of music.^{xix}

In 2008, the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), which tests students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 in numeracy, reading, writing and language conventions (spelling, grammar and punctuation) was introduced in all Australian schools. Since then, many Australian educators, teachers and parents have expressed publicly concerns that creativity is suffering, including, to name just some, educator and conductor, Richard Gill; teacher and writer Christopher Bantick; Professor Brian Caldwell; primary school principal, Anne Nelson; and many parents through the ‘Say no to NAPLAN’ coalition^{xx}. The Whitlam Institute’s *High Stakes Testing Literature Review* supports these fears and states:

There is considerable evidence in the international literature of the impact that high stakes testing can have on the quality of the learning experience of children. Evidence has emerged that such testing can structure the educational experiences of students in ways that limit the development of the range of skills and literacies needed in the modern world, encouraging low-level thinking and promoting outcome measures rather than the intrinsic processes of learning and acquiring knowledge.

The Whitlam Institute’s report cites this international evidence in detail for those who would like to explore the topic further. The Report also found that three-quarters of teachers in Australian schools responding to a survey believed that the new testing regime was reducing the amount of time schools were spending on other subjects that are not tested.^{xxi} As Richard Gill points out in his arguments against the NAPLAN testing, improving the creative aspect of music education is an important place to start^{xxii}. He describes music education as the acquisition of skills that enable students to invent their own music. Music education often does not encourage musical creativity but it can be designed to do so.

Case Studies: Successful Musicians and Their Music Education

We asked some of Australia’s most successful contemporary Australian musicians, Missy Higgins, ‘Goyte’ and ‘Gurrumul’ to tell us about their experiences of music during their school days.



Missy Higgins

Missy Higgins attended Geelong Grammar School. There she received an education in three instruments, played in the school orchestra, at school concerts and studied music through to her VCE in Year 12. While many teenagers might play music in their bedrooms, Missy spent all of her free time, after school and on weekends, in the boarding school music room. It goes without saying that music was Missy’s favourite subject at school.

Missy’s school days played a huge role in her musical development and she credits her school music education with her entry into the industry via the Triple J Unearthed competition, which she won for a

“I think music is absolutely crucial. It was the perfect outlet for all that teenage angst. Not only was it educational and good for my brain development, but it was cathartic as well... Growing up is a lot easier when you can express yourself through something like music.”

- Missy Higgins

song, All for believing, that she penned for a Year 10 Musical Composition assignment. Missy also acknowledges her teachers’ important role in her development, in particular, her jazz teacher Paul Rettke who instilled in her the confidence to excel and turn her talent into a career.

Missy studied classical piano in primary and middle school and then crossed over to jazz in high school which she continued through to Year 12. During her school days, she also learned to play oboe and guitar. Her school provided many opportunities to perform live for an audience—playing oboe in the school orchestra and singing and playing guitar with a couple of rock bands as well as solo at school concerts.

Wally De Backer - aka 'Gotye'

Grammy award winning Wally De Backer ('Gotye') also recounts a highly positive experience with music at school. Wally didn't have any music education that he can remember during primary school days, but his secondary school gave him a lot of great opportunities to pursue and learn about music. At Parade College, a Christian Brothers boys' school in Melbourne's northern suburbs, Wally was taught classroom music, undertook private drum lessons and studied Music Solo Performance in VCE. The school also provided a stage for Wally to sing in the school musical, play euphonium in the brass band and drums in various other school bands. Wally made friends from studying music at school too and formed his first band, 'Downstares', with high school friends from his year.

Wally praises his school teachers, not only in the music department but also in English and Literature who introduced him to inspiring albums, poets and writers. He names many of these teachers including Michael Martin, his first drum teacher, who inspired him greatly with a variety of drum styles and exploring new kinds of music he'd never heard before; Martin MacAulay, the head of music who inspired Wally in classroom music and as leader of the brass band as well as other teachers; Nathan Xenopontas, Mr Callaghan and Paul Ryan. Wally makes special mention of Martin MacAulay's irreverence, humour, and fantastic energy for exploring the potential for music to communicate a wide range of emotions.

Whilst music was Wally's favourite subject at school, he also loved learning Japanese, art and graphics. Music helped make his school days highly positive and enjoyable.

“Music puts you in touch with a part of yourself that other things like language and mathematics can't quite touch. Call it your soul, maybe. I think engaging with music is where I've found the most spiritual connection to things... and that started at school, being given the opportunity to discover the depth music had to offer.”

- Gotye



Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu

One of Australia's most successful international musicians, Gurrumul was born in Galiwin'ku (Elcho Island), off the coast of Arnhem Land, about 580 kilometres from Darwin. He is from the Gumatj clan of the Yolngu and his mother is from the Galpu nation.

Despite growing up on a remote island, being born blind, speaking only a limited amount of English and being acutely shy, he plays drums, keyboard, guitar and the didgeridoo and is known throughout the world for the clarity of his singing voice.

Although by no means standard, the music education Gurrumul received from his family and community from an early age allowed him to realise his talents and tell his stories to the world.

Michael Hohnen, Gurrumul's bass player, collaborator and friend, told us:

Gurrumul comes from a completely different education from me. I played cricket and footy 'til I was 14 when I got thrown onto a double bass at Melbourne High and then to the VCA (Victorian College of the Arts) to my surprise and shock.

For his school education he went to Shepherdson College—the local school on Elcho Island—and for a short period down to Geelong to study Braille which he wasn't interested in.

Gurrumul was educated by immersion, cultural immersion—from his aunties, parents and grandmothers, with love and lullabies; from his uncles, fathers and grandfathers through ceremony songs and storytelling, much of it through music. Throughout his childhood, he was built, given or bought tin cans, sticks, toy keyboards, piano accordions, nylon string guitars, and later, clap sticks (bilma) and didgeridoos (yidaki). He learned foot stomping calling and whooping, vocalisations of traditional songs and their different sounds, and so much more.



Like many cultures that have oral history, everything in education for Yolngu is in song, dance, storytelling, culture, ceremony, art and derived and inspired by nature, ancestral history and the spirit world and that is what probably brought out his unique expression in music and song.

He tells me on every tour, 'Jasmine (his daughter) goes to school every day', and I know he sees that this is going to be a key to her empowerment and future.

Gurrumul was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Music by the University of Sydney in 2012.

Gurrumul was educated by immersion, cultural immersion—from his aunties, parents and grandmothers, with love and lullabies; from his uncles, fathers and grandfathers through ceremony songs and storytelling, much of it through music.

- Michael Hohnen

The State of Play - Music Education in Australia Today

The case for music education is a strong one, but in Australian schools today music is taught patchily, and inequitably. In a small number of fortunate (and generally well-funded) schools, music is recognised as part of the core curriculum, and as a major selling-point to parents. But there are too many schools where little or no music is taught, and whilst some states provide adequate music programs in their schools, most do not.

Too many students are missing out

In 2004, in response to pressure from music educators, the Australian Government undertook the National Review of School Music Education which was published in 2005.^{xxiii}

It set out the goal of government policy to be the provision of:

*access to music education that is **continuous, sequential and developmental**, regardless of geographic location, socio-economic circumstances, culture and ability.*

An analysis of the state of music education undertaken for the Music Council found that while over three quarters of independent schools have music programs that meet these criteria, only about a quarter of public schools do.^{xxiv}

Further research completed by Dr Irina Petrova at the University of New South Wales in 2012 found that:

- 63 per cent of primary schools offer no classroom music; and
- 34 per cent of secondary schools offer no classroom music.^{xxv}

The provision of school music education varies strongly across the states and territories, but at the time of writing there is no current, detailed state-by-state analysis. To inform this report, the following qualitative analysis of the teaching of music in government schools in each state and territory was prepared. We know that:

- only in the states of Queensland and Tasmania is music mandatory and taught in the primary school curriculum
- only in those two states are specialist music teachers employed in every government school
- with the exception of Queensland and Tasmania there is a critical lack of demand for specialist music teachers and of sufficiently trained general classroom teachers equipped to teach music.

It is plain from this analysis that the goals of the National Review, conducted in 2005, are not being met.

Most disappointingly, from a national policy perspective, the opportunity to learn music is highly inequitable. This inequity must be a major aim of policy in the era of the Gonski Review.

Music Education and the Gonski Reforms

Whilst the Gonski Review does not cover music or indeed the arts in any detail, its broad aims clearly align with the aims of this report, especially its goal of achieving equity within a school system characterised by quality and intellectual vibrancy.

- **63 per cent of primary schools offer no classroom music**
- **34 per cent of secondary schools offer no classroom music^{xxiv}**
- **Less than a quarter of government schools offer music education that would meet the recommendations of the National Review of School Music Education**
- **Over three quarters of independent schools meet the criteria^{xxiii}**

Gonski ‘strongly supports the idea that demography must not equal destiny’. The panel’s terms of reference centre on achieving greater equity in Australia’s schooling system by pursuing a number of attributes, one of which is promoting excellent educational outcomes for all Australian students. Gonski points out that by Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) standards, the Australian school system is achieving only average equity. The effect on their expectations of success of a student’s socioeconomic background, ethnicity and where they live and go to school is stronger in Australia than in many other OECD countries. As outlined earlier in this report, music education is a highly effective means of promoting equity by improving the academic results and behaviour of children in the lowest socio-economic schools. The Australian work of Caldwell and Vaughan represents a powerful argument for greater investment in music education to achieve the goals the Gonski panel has set.

While the emphasis in the Gonski report is on those subjects measured by Australia’s National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the review’s report clearly acknowledges the crucial importance of creative education. In the same vein as Sir Ken Robinson, the report states that: ‘In response to the world becoming a more integrated, technological and global community, students must not only master the core skills, but also develop a capacity for problem solving and decision making; creative and critical thinking; collaboration, communication and negotiation.’ Gonski quotes Hannon who argues that ‘practices and ideas about leadership, learning, collaboration and the release of collective creativity, which are commonplace in today’s workplaces and enterprises, should be a central aim of schools in equipping students for the 21st century.’ As the foregoing has demonstrated, improving music education in Australian schools provides a powerful means of fulfilling this important aim of education.

The National Curriculum

As a result of curriculum reforms over recent decades, music has been forced to compete for crowded curriculum space and classroom time with other subjects, including other ‘arts’ subjects (visual arts, media, dance, drama). This has not been remedied in the new Australian Curriculum. All five arts areas of the new Australian Curriculum will effectively compete with each other and other subjects including literacy and numeracy, meaning that music may receive as little as 15–20 minutes of class time per week.

Dr Richard Letts has been involved in the campaign for universal access to music education in Australia for many years and has advocated for music to be included in the national curriculum. Here is his perspective on The Australian Curriculum and the potential for improving the provision of music in Australian schools.



The new national Australian Curriculum in music is a credible document and should be a positive stimulus to improvement in the design of school music programs. At the secondary level, the specialist music teachers will be able to bring their professional skills and experience to manage any changes required by the new curriculum. However, at the primary school level, the most obvious initial outcome will be a dramatisation of the inabilities of classroom teachers to deliver this benchmark curriculum in the government school classrooms.

This problem results from decades of tokenism towards arts education in the teacher training courses offered by universities. With an average of 17 hours of mandatory music education in their undergraduate courses, primary school teachers are not equipped to teach any music curriculum, including the national curriculum. The problem is now not only with the musical competency of new graduates but with the accumulation from the long history: tens of thousands

of teachers have the responsibility for teaching music but lack the skills to do so. The scale of the problem of remediation is daunting.

The strategy that would produce by far the best result and would be simplest to introduce is the use of specialist music teachers. 87% of Queensland primary schools use specialist teachers and so do nearly all Tasmanian schools and a good number in SA and WA. Preferably, the states would mandate music and provide the teachers as in Qld. The alternative is that with increased delegated powers and budgets, school principals choose to hire specialists, a good solution but one that will produce a less consistent and stable outcome.

Probably the biggest obstacle to the use of specialist music teachers is the lack of supply. Since there have not been formalised positions, in most states there are no formal courses to prepare primary school specialists. This needs to be rectified. We believe that there will be many people who would leap at the opportunity to gain qualifications and teach music in primary schools. Meanwhile, principals in most states can hire expert musicians even though they do not have teacher accreditation, who can then teach under some limitations specified by the state.

International comparisons

Many other nations are way ahead of Australia when it comes to music education in schools.

It is notable that the countries with the highest scores in reading, maths and science, including China (Shanghai), Hong Kong, Finland, Singapore and South Korea, mandate approximately one to two hours of music education per week^{xxvi}.

The most educationally successful of all countries, Finland, has a strong tradition of music education, invests strongly in music from kindergarten upwards, has highly-trained music teachers in every school, and maintains a strong network of specialist music schools. Even general classroom teachers who teach music have received around 270 hours of music education as part of their teacher qualifications. In Korea the figure is 160 hours. (In Australia the average is 17 hours for teachers with undergraduate teaching degrees and 10 hours for teachers with postgraduate degrees.^{xxvii})

Other school systems that score higher than us on PISA rankings, like those of Shanghai, Hong Kong and Singapore, have music taught wholly by music specialists.^{xxviii}

Finland represents a high bar for us to jump, but progress is possible. With the right policies on curriculum, teacher training and resourcing, the United Kingdom was able to significantly improve its performance in the ten years between 1999 and 2009.

Now is the time for action

While the Labor Government was elected in 2007 with a policy to 'create a comprehensive music education in our schools and educational institutions', and agreed with the states and territories in 2008 to 'initiate action to increase access to school music education, with an initial focus on primary schools which have no music programs', little actual progress has been made. However, with the Gonski review and the Australian Curriculum processes coming to a culmination, this is the right moment to renew the push for more and better music education in Australian schools.

Case Studies

Albert Park College

Creating a successful public school music program

What can happen when schools respond to parental demands for a strong music education program? The answer is a school infused with student excitement and success—and one that is incredibly popular.

In 2011, Albert Park College (APC) in Melbourne's inner south east re-opened with all new buildings and staff. The school has begun incredibly well, with major interest from families across Melbourne and strong enrolments—so strong in fact that it has caused major controversy as parents have clamoured to get their children into the school. One of the reasons for this is the school's determination to match high academic standards with an emphasis on creativity—and at the heart of this creativity is the school's high-class music program.

APC has its origins in a local community campaign to replace its secondary college, which closed in 2006 after falling academic standards caused parents to lose confidence in it and enrolments to collapse. So unpopular had the school become, that it was decided to bulldoze its buildings and start again from scratch with a new principal, new teaching staff, and a new philosophy that reflected the needs of the whole community, with its mixture of highly-educated professional families and disadvantaged families living in public housing estates.

During the extensive consultations that preceded the design of the school, it was clear that parents valued three things above all else: a nurturing community that kept their children interested in school, high academic standards to prepare them for university or other courses, and artistic endeavour, especially in the field of music.

The school principal, Steve Cook, who had led the rejuvenation of another previously under-performing secondary school, Williamstown High, believes that whilst basic learning skills like literacy and numeracy are the necessary foundations of a successful school, to make a school truly flourish you have to have a strong focus on what really interests parents and students.

Steve Cook argues that this isn't just a case of providing a strong, stand-alone music program, but of integrating music into a broad artistic and humanities-based school ethos. Student research assignments, for instance, often include creative components such as music compositions, recitals and performances. Music and technology are combined via multi-media assignments, including by using the iPad's full potential to compose and study pieces of music. There is a strong emphasis on public performance right throughout the school, with the goal of getting students to feel comfortable in front of their peers and to strive for their best in the public spotlight—an aspect of the arts and music that has obvious worth to almost every school graduate.

Whilst the school only began in 2011, Steve Cook believes it rivals the most established non-government schools in the quality and density of student coverage of its music program.

The school music program

Students at Albert Park College have the opportunity to study music intensively for a full six years, currently across three music programs: Classical, Contemporary and Multicultural.

In its first year (2011) 90 of the intake of 150 students were learning an instrument or singing in the school choir. In its second year (2012) 170 of the school's 320 students were in the music program. At

the time of writing, the school projects that this year 250 of its 480 students will be involved in the program. And the school aims to keep the proportion of its students involved in music at 50 percent or above into the future—exceeding the proportion at some of the State’s top non-government schools.

What can we learn from schools like Albert Park College?

It is obvious that not every school is in the fortunate position of APC—of being able to start again from the ground-up around a heavily music-based curriculum. But the major lessons from APC are nonetheless real and applicable to established schools that are looking to improve their appeal. In a broader sense they also potentially provide a way forward for state education departments as they approach the question of how to make individual public schools more attractive to parents in the face of intense competition from well-resourced non-government schools.

Four major lessons stand out:

1. **Successful music programs are generated from the bottom-up, not the top-down.** Every school must be addressed to the particular needs of its community. For some this may be science, for others sport, and for yet others trades skills. But for many families music is an essential, obvious and highly-popular answer to the question: ‘what should my school be really good at?’ At APC the drive for music education came from the parents; unless the school satisfied their demands for a creative education, it is unlikely the school would have been such a success.
2. **It’s not just about having an isolated, piecemeal music program, but of making creativity central to the school’s culture.** Offering an array of instrumental classes is of course essential, but just as essential is the centrality of music to the school. Simply offering the minimum number of classroom music hours required to conform to national standards will never be enough to create a flourishing music culture that can sustain itself as it develops. Parents and school leaders alike need to believe in the importance of music in developing creative and other important learning skills.
3. **It requires resources and focus of effort.** APC is not a wealthy school, but it has managed to create a stand-out music program because the school community and leadership recognise its crucial importance and have devoted discretionary resources to making it a success. With resources for things like music always destined to be scarce, school communities that want the benefits of music education for their children need to make music a priority when it comes to competing demand for resources.
4. **It requires moral leadership from the music sector as well.** Successful music programs usually require strong partnerships with professional musicians and music organisations. APC’s strong relationships with the Australian National Academy of Music (ANAM), WotOpera and Victorian universities demonstrate that the music sector needs to play a part by finding ways to nurture and assist music programs in schools. You don’t create a great sector by accident but through finding and nurturing talent and by developing musical interests among potential future music consumers.

Read an extended version of this case study online to find out more about the school’s music facilities, specific elements of its program, and the focus on creativity and music in Year 9.

www.moremusic toolkit.org.au

Boggabilla Central School

According to the Sydney Morning Herald, Boggabilla Central School is located in the lowest socio economic community in New South Wales. Boggabilla has an almost entirely indigenous student population. There are no music opportunities available to the Boggabilla community outside the school and no students are involved in consistent learning of music apart from becoming involved in the school-based music program.

Too small to afford a specialist music teacher, the school has shuffled around staff and classes to make room for one. As a result, all students and staff now have access to musical resources in the school. As of 2011, all primary classes and Stage 4 class groups have dedicated music lessons each week, which has seen a massive growth in confidence and skills in playing and understanding music.

In addition to the timetabled lessons, students have been invited to participate in extra-curricular music-learning opportunities at lunch and after school. The school has also started staging musicals which give the students something to aim for and are a monumental endeavour to work as a school community. While the students have received the most benefit from these music activities—enjoying more variety of activities at lunchtime and the kudos of achieving success in local eisteddfod and talent quests—the wider community has also benefited from watching performances and from living with the improved ambience of having more music in the school.

The greatest challenge was to find singers who would be confident enough to face an audience. A previous music teacher had tried for three years to make this happen without success. The school has now achieved this by making singing a part of school life through:

- singing several times a week
- teachers performing with the students
- frequently practising with microphones
- choosing songs that the students love listening to themselves (Justin Bieber, Mariah Carey, Glee Club) as performance pieces in addition to the ones nominated by the teacher
- inviting experienced singers from the community to workshops with the singers for a school performance
- providing extrinsic rewards for participation

Likewise, the students' difficulty with literacy and numeracy has required a customised approach—simplification of guitar chords and bass lines and an emphasis on the patterns of notes and chord structures. More able players have been mentored in improvisation and lead lines to decorate the songs.

One of the significant achievements of this program is the composition of a new school song based on the 'You Can Do It' social values program. The students and their families take pride in joyfully expressing these values as they sing the song.

The true success of music at Boggabilla however, is more confidence and positivity in the school. Music has now become a conspicuous second hook (after sport) for success—it means different kids can express themselves successfully which gives them confidence to try in other academic endeavours. Indeed, some can even contemplate a career in music. And... the students have to be sent home from practices!

Many remote Indigenous schools in the Northern Territory, New South Wales and South Australia benefit from The Music Outback Foundation which brings music education into the classrooms of remote communities. Further information can be found at <http://musicoutback.com.au>

Bourke St Public School

Music has become a big part of school life at Burke St Public School in inner Sydney, which only a few years ago was disadvantaged, well under capacity, lacking in any substantial music program. It wouldn't have happened without an enthusiastic and supportive team driving this change at the school – the parents.

“They have been really supportive and allowed us to do things I wouldn't have dreamed of,” says Principal Peter Johnston, “everything from fundraising to performing for the kids themselves, the parents have been backing the music program all the way along.”

The P&C decided that the primary purpose of its fundraising efforts in 2012 would be to support the establishment of a comprehensive music program at the school, which raised \$40,000. “Now every kid has a recorder, we have had visiting artists, Music Viva come each year, and we're building up a band program,” says Peter. Recently students from the school performed at the Sydney Opera House, a proud moment for this small school and its enthusiastic young musicians.

Parents have also helped organise a series of performances within the school called Bourke St Beats that has included hip hop, vocal groups, bands and more. Once a month, on a Friday afternoon at 2.30pm, the concerts are held in the hall for all students, exposing them to music as performance in a diverse, inspiring and inclusive way. Taking the parental participation even further, a “Dad's Band” has also started with a group of four fathers to perform at the school.

Such a major change in the school's music program has come after only a few years of effort. “It wasn't that long ago that we had none of this,” Peter Johnston tells us, “but with the support of the school community we're making music an integral part of this school. The kids love it.”

Boneo Primary School

Boneo Primary School is a school of 270 students on Victoria's Mornington Peninsular, south of Melbourne. Although the population of Boneo is very small, students come from all over the Peninsula to attend the school. This is a school that enjoys the support of its whole community to help keep its music program running and keep it accessible to every child:

- Local service clubs, organisations and businesses, including the Shire Band have provided many of the instruments children play—many Boneo families are without the means to buy instruments
- The Magistrate's Court Poor Box has funded students' music lessons when their families have found themselves in hardship
- The Rotary Club and community donations provide sponsorship for the annual Band Tour
- School activities such as 'Boneo's Got Talent', 'Boneo Idol' and 'Puttin' on the Hits', each request a gold coin donation for entry

Any student at Boneo who wants to play an instrument is able to do so:

- Students are able to learn flute, clarinet, violin, saxophone, trumpet, trombone, piano, euphonium, keyboard, guitar, bass guitar and drums
- All students from Prep to Year 6 are involved in instrumental music
- The school has a 'Jam Hub' for keyboard, guitar, bass and drum kit which the students use during class time
- All students undertake African drumming as part of their class lessons
- Over one-third of the students have private instrumental lessons

Most of the students rent their instruments by the term for a nominal fee that covers instrument maintenance. Lessons are held both during class time and after school so parents can choose which option suits them best. The school provides individual lessons for \$10 a week and lessons are also

open to parents. Two classroom teachers teach music—one teaching singing and one teaching group African drumming at lunchtime for \$2 per student. (The proceeds of the drumming go to support African students).

Boneo also excels at its extra-curricular music activities:

- The school has a Concert Band which all students from Year 2 up are able to join without audition. The band plays at every school assembly, school performances, and at community events. The percussion section of the band includes djembes and congas so the African drummers are included.
- Every year, the school organises and runs a Music Camp which involves three days intensive music tuition and a community concert. Five other schools are invited to take part.
- The highlight of the school's program each year is the Band Tour. The Band has toured Sydney, Adelaide, Hobart, Brisbane and Toowoomba. In each city, the students play at landmark venues like the Sydney Cricket Ground and the Adelaide Oval.

“*The most obvious benefit of the instrumental program for our students is in their self-esteem. We are very proud of our instrumental music students and they are very proud of themselves. Our students are involved in all major Peninsula community events from Anzac Day to Carols By Candlelight.*”

Q - Boneo Primary School

Croxton Special School

Croxton Special School is a multi-campus specialist school for students with an intellectual disability. The school has a main campus with 90 students aged 5-18 and 60 students enrolled in off-campus programs at mainstream primary and secondary schools. Many of Croxton's students are marginalised or under-represented through disability and low socio-economic circumstance.

The music therapy program at Croxton is structured to achieve increased feelings of self-worth and self-esteem. Students are expected to demonstrate positive, pro-social behaviour towards each other. The program is delivered with a strengths-based approach, drawing on students' capabilities rather than their disability.

The music program's success is measured through children's development of skills integrated within regular classroom time. As students progress through their primary years, success is achieved through increased confidence in students, for example, presenting themselves at regular assembly performances and at the annual school presentation night.

The school's culture for lunchtime music activities has begun a positive shift in student-teacher involvement—teachers are joining the group for their own enjoyment, providing great modelling for students. Students notice their own teacher developing skills which adds to the student's feelings of success. With each year, more students and staff have developed a positive affinity with the music program and this is reflected in school council and school community's interest in and support for the program.

The students at Croxton thrive on structure and boundaries and the music room endeavours to provide flexibility within this model by continuing to develop creativity within a structured environment.

More Online

The Music to Our Ears report makes the case for more music in Australian schools and sets the scene for the Parental Engagement Project. This report is available online as part of the More Music Toolkit, the Music Council of Australia's school music advocacy resource.

What's included?

- Summaries of all stages of the Australian Curriculum for music, including relevant resources and ideas for classroom music
- Articles explaining the opportunities and possibilities for school music, such as the Orff and Kodaly approaches, instrumental groups, and programs on offer such as Music: Count Us In
- More case studies of schools and communities successfully supporting music education
- A parent's guide to instrument choices
- A guide for advocacy to bring more music into your school

www.MoreMusicToolkit.org.au/Parents

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Music to Our Ears

This report presents the compelling case for more music in Australian schools based on the evidence proving the benefits of music education, the context in Australia where most students do not have an adequate music education at school (many students have none at all), the need for action, and case studies of artists and schools that demonstrate the value of music education in schools.

'Music to Our Ears' is part of the Parental Engagement Project, an initiative of Shark Island, The Caledonia Foundation and the Music Council of Australia.

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