

National Cultural Policy Submission

Australian Society for Music Education

Submitted: On behalf of a not-for-profit arts organisation

On behalf of an arts peak body

On behalf of an organisation with arts-components (e.g. community organisation, tourism, venue, health, education etc)

What challenges and opportunities do you see in the pillar or pillars most relevant to you?

Feel free to respond to any or all pillars:

First Nations

Challenge

There is still much to understand regarding First Nations musicians, music, and musical practices. Very limited human and educational resources are available to support the complexity of Australia being home to over 250 Indigenous language groups and their associated cultures and traditions.

Recommendation

Arts education is cultural education, and an opportunity exists to bridge the gap between Indigenous music and educational experiences. In addition to funding and support dedicated to First Nations musicians, music, and music educators, we also recommend substantial investment in the development of resources and professional learning opportunities that equip educators to teach and engage with First Nations music in ways that are authentic and culturally appropriate.

A Place for Every Story

Challenge

Australia's diverse population has a rich tapestry of genders, sexualities, religions, ethnicities, and cultures. However, many groups of Australians are still yet to be fairly represented in our national soundscape.

Recommendation

ASME advocates that the music of all people should be given opportunities to be heard, and initiatives are established to support and prioritise marginalised musicians, music, and musical practices in Australian music.

Challenge

Every Australian has the capacity to be musical, yet not every Australian has the opportunity. Access to quality and valued music education around the country is at a crisis point. It is estimated that two-thirds of Australian primary school children and one-third of secondary school students do not have access to music education. The provision of initial music teacher education at universities is diminishing, with specialist primary music teacher training inadequate.

Recommendation

The arts ministry collaborates with the education ministry at the Federal level and works with the State and Territory ministries to give value and priority to music education. ASME commends such initiatives as the South Australia Music Education Strategy, the National Music Teachers Mentoring

Program, and the Alberts Tony Foundation, Music Education: Right from the Start, which aim to address Australia's primary school music education crisis. There is now an opportunity for the federal government to proactively work with the States and Territories to address the provision and access to quality school music education and initial music teacher education.

The Centrality of the Artist Challenge

Music initiatives often focus on professional musician adults, whereas children, young people and the broader adult community are also artists now and in the future.

Recommendation

ASME advocates that all people are makers of music in addition to consumers and supports the development of artists at all levels. We recommend that cultural and arts policy feature initiatives for all community members to have opportunities for musical participation (as performers, composers, and audience members), particularly children and young people.

Strong Institutions Challenge

The 2005 National Review of Music Education reported the precarious nature of music education across the country. This report did have some influence on shaping state policy, research, and initiatives. However, nearly 20 years after the initial review, the federal government has done very little to address the recommendations highlighted in the report. Furthermore, much has changed during this time. A national arts curriculum has been implemented and seen the further erosion of music education across the country. The privileging of the STEM agenda has diverted value and funding from music in institutions. COVID-19 severely impacted music education and further diminished programs in school and tertiary institutions. There currently exists no comprehensive dataset on the provision and delivery of music education in Australian schools and tertiary education institutions. This lack of an accurate and broad understanding of the sector makes it difficult to prioritise where to invest funding.

Recommendation

We call on the federal government to conduct a national review on the current provision and quality of Australian school and tertiary music education. This review should elicit findings that, if implemented, will enrich the Australian cultural and artistic landscape.

Challenge

In recent years, creative arts offerings at tertiary institutions have suffered funding cuts and increased course fees for students under a "job-readiness" government agenda. This has resulted in a devaluing of creative arts programs in higher education and limiting arts education opportunities for Australians.

Recommendation

The federal government reviews the funding models for tertiary institutions moving towards a model that is fair and invests in the future of Australia's cultural and arts industries.

Challenge

The provision of initial music teacher education is at a crisis point. Accreditation requirements continue to diminish offerings to secondary music pedagogy and specialist primary music education is non-existent. We are seeing teacher shortages and principals struggling to recruit qualified music

teachers. Once flourishing and now underfunded music programs are unviable due to decades-long diversion of funds and are being disbanded.

Recommendation

The arts and education ministries work with AITSL to carefully reconsider the provision for specialist music teacher education in accreditation requirements, particularly for primary schools.

Challenge

Music Australia, which served as a peak body for the music industry, has been stripped of all its funding.

Recommendation

Funding is allocated to re-establish Music Australia or a similar body to represent Australia's broad music industry, including music education initiatives.

Challenge

Limited Australian resources exist to support specialist music educators. Responsibility for supporting music teachers is often deferred to the professional music teacher associations. These associations in Australia are non-profit and usually run by teacher-volunteers.

Recommendation

The federal government allocates funding to professional music teacher associations to assist in resource creation and professional learning opportunities specifically to support the growth and further education of Australian culture and artistry.

Challenge

The absent provision of specialist initial primary school music teacher education programs led to the creation of the National Music Teachers Mentoring Program by the late Richard Gill AO. This program is in high demand but exists on very limited funding.

Recommendation

We recommend securing funding and the expansion of programs such as the National Music Teachers Mentoring Program while not removing funding from State based education.

Challenge

Australian music companies, community organisations and ensembles provide important education outreach programs that support and enrich school music education offerings. However, while funding exists for these organisations, it is not enough, and education initiatives cannot realise their full potential.

Recommendation

ASME advocates for an increase in funding for music education initiatives of Australian companies, community organisations and ensembles to increase their reach and impact.

Reaching the Audience

Challenge

School children and young people are audiences now and of the future, however, schools, particularly in regional and remote areas, have limited access to live Australian music and performance opportunities.

Recommendation

We recommend further funding to state/territory, federal and community music organisations to increase their outreach so that all Australian children and young people can experience live music.

Please tell us how each of the 5 pillars are important to you and your practice and why. Feel free to respond to any or all that are applicable to you:

First Nations

Australian First Nations' music represents the oldest living music practices today and there is a need to better support First Nations' musicians and their music. Music is a medium in which Indigenous languages can be preserved, celebrated, and communicated. There is a high demand from music educators to learn more about First Nations musicians, their music and musical practices. ASME is committed to supporting music educators to embed First Nations' perspectives in their practice.

A Place for Every Story

Music offers opportunities to hear and tell the stories of people and communities. The Australian Curriculum mandates that all primary school students receive access to an arts education, including music. This provision is not always evident.

The Centrality of the Artist

ASME advocates that every person has the capacity to be musical with access to quality and valued music education. Children and young people are artists now and in the future. Music artworks should be developed by, with and for children and young people.

Strong Institutions

Strong institutions are needed to support and cultivate artists. School and tertiary institutions are critical in nurturing artists and collaborations, artist-teachers, and artworks. Universities are crucial in advancing Australian music innovation and research. Given the highly specialised nature of music, it has the greatest number of Professional Music Teacher Associations of all the curriculum subjects which are all teacher-volunteers. In addition, Australian companies, community music organisations and ensembles provide an important range of educational programs at local, state, and national level.

Reaching the Audience

Australian music is the soundtrack of Australian culture and life. Music is the first form of human communication and the activity recorded to have the most engagement from the general population. Children and young people are the audience of today and the future.

Are there any other things that you would like to see in a National Cultural Policy?

Education in a broad sense is a key to the success of implementing the cultural priorities of First Nations, stories, artists, institutions, and audiences. School and tertiary education in particular present an opportunity to invest and shape Australia's cultural future, however, music education in recent years has been a low priority for both the arts and education ministries.

Recommendation

ASME advocates that a sixth pillar entitled "Education" is established. Education is a crucial component of all pillars, but a dedicated cultural policy pillar can serve to drive and link cultural initiatives in and beyond established education institutions. A nation's culture is expressed through its arts. It is through every child's right to create and explore music making that creative and critical thinking capacities reflect the growing sophistication of our culture and the diversity in which this manifests. We welcome the collaboration on initiatives across the federal government portfolios.