



National Cultural Policy Submission

Kim Cunio: ANU School of Music

The ANU School of music (formerly the Canberra School of Music), is a class leading music and training institution that has changed the musical landscape in this country due to a demonstrated commitment to First Nations music. It conducts a deep exploration of what Australian music is today. It has 6 Indigenous staff and the first non-European Head of a music School in Australia. It teaches classical, jazz and contemporary music and teaches every student to record their music. The Head of School is working closely with the major musical cultural institutions of Canberra to create a hub that is making a significant change to music inclusivity in Australia.

This submission starts by making the case for music schools and in particular this music school. Music at the ANU provides a cultural glue to the community that cannot be overstated. The ANU School of Music is the largest employer of musicians in the city, running a series of programs that keep professional musicians working in functionally a regional centre for music. It can be argued that having a class of professional musicians is the cultural version of having enough GPs in a city or regional area, musicians look after the cultural well being of a community, and without the ANU School of music there would be no critical mass of musicians in Canberra. Some reasons why the ANU School of Music is so important are:

1. **The university pays musicians and artists well**, better than any other employer. Programs that are funded through government grants see musicians paid in a manner that is different to receiving a one-off grant – it allows musicians to be employed on their larger body of skills, to become less dependent on grant writing and other parts of the ‘gig economy’. Musicians employed by the university have the opportunity to work over the course of a number of years, in tenured positions or long-term contracts. They have access to superannuation and professional development. The university provides a significant number of technical and developmental jobs that offer musicians and artists the opportunity to diversify and develop a portfolio career.
2. **Long-term structural and in-kind contributions.** The ANU School of Music provides the facilities that keep music presented to the public. Canberra has a concert hall because it has a music school. Canberra’s best recording studio is paid for and housed at the ANU. The Canberra Symphony Orchestra rehearses and performs at the ANU. The Canberra International Music Festival is freely lent a concert grand piano and all of its other instruments by the ANU School of Music. The ANU

School of Music subsidises numerous professional and community music groups who rehearse in the premises, they hire (at cost price) our spaces and instruments. They use our \$400,000 Steinway pianos, paid for and maintained by the university. They receive care and mentorship by the largest musical institution in town – an institution that sees its role as a progressive place that builds social inclusion.

3. **The ANU School of Music allows our best musicians to train to an international standard** and to retrain later in their career through Masters and Doctoral programs, which are situated to support the professional portfolio musician. Canberra musicians return to Australia and the capital after successful national and international careers – they work at the music school and share their expertise.
4. **The ANU School of Music works with international embassies** providing the potential for our government to exercise soft power. While this is largely successful modest resourcing would see a high return on investment, offering skilled diplomacy through music.

Achievements

The ANU School of Music can be rightfully described as being at the centre of a process of musical and cultural renewal in the national capital. This can be seen by the following.

1. **A 2 million ANU funded project to provide a free Indigenous recording studio.** *Yil Lull* studio has changed the landscape of what an Institution can offer, breaking the ivory tower and making a mainstream music school First Nations focussed. This is allowing the music school to become a 'place' for Indigenous music. This offers government a partnership opportunity.
2. **A free Indigenous composers program** (Ngarra Burria), which provides the majority of new First Nations Art Music to the country. This program is studied around the world as it has graduated 15 professional composers who now tell First Nations stories through art music. It has also won national and international awards.
3. **Collaborations with neuroscience, astrophysics**, nationally and internationally - a significant cultural contribution at all levels of society that sees music at the ANU reimagine what music can be, setting the brain and the stars to music, showing the musicians can be scientists and activists – that they can have well founded opinions and be more than 'the entertainment'.
4. **Significant collaborations with our major partners.** The ANU (represented by the School of Music) has negotiated a 10 year MoA with the Canberra Symphony Orchestra (CSO), which involves students and professionals playing together as well as the provision of major events and strategic initiatives. In no other Australian city does the symphony and the music school work together in this manner, which could be described as ground breaking. Our organisations can provide long term opportunities for music and reconciliation through music. The Canberra International Music Festival (CIMF) also works closely with the ANU School of Music, also with Indigenous programming. Other notable partners of the ANU School of Music are the National Folk Festival (NFF) and Music for Canberra (MFC).
5. **Breaking the ivory tower.** The ANU School of Music invites First Nations musicians to play and record, instead of studying Indigenous musicians the ANU School of Music enables Indigenous music through a process of Indigenous led co-design. It is trialling the first system of teaching non-western instruments as we teach western instruments in Australia (ie. with weekly lessons). The ANU School of Music conducts free community programs in the ACT that are targeted towards popular music making and studio recording, giving Mums and Dads the opportunity to experience a music school close up. It is moving its programs off site to go to communities, from Eden to the ACT, mentoring music studios in North Qld, opening a free asylum seekers recording studio in the Prime Ministers

electorate in Sydney, scoping a free Indigenous audio engineering program, all at the time of writing this submission.

Challenges

There are a number of challenges that are important to identify that have the potential to inform future government policy as relevant examples of the current challenges in our sector.

1. **There is a tacit expectation that the university should pay for the musical activities that are run in Canberra.** A long-term and well documented funding crisis in higher education was epitomised by an active disregard towards Higher Education and the Arts by the previous Coalition government. Tertiary music schools suffered terribly in the previous 9 years of Coalition government. This led to significant financial stresses not long after the major financial crisis of 2012, that almost led to the close of the ANU School of Music a decade ago. The ANU was grew tired of spending millions on the national music school for little thanks. The ANU School of Music is punching well above its weight as can be seen in this submission – it however needs an injection of capital to fulfil its role in the nation’s capital, (the ANU School of Music was initially funded centrally in the pre Dawkins era by government as music in the nation’s capital is vital to our international esteem and soft power). With a small capital injection it can support the work of government in the arts and larger policy spaces, which can be housed in Canberra due to the proximity of the ANU School of Music. 1-2 Research Fellows would provide a platform to frame national policy.
2. **There is an implied assumption at the Territory level that a tertiary music school should not play any part in high school education.** This has led to the ending of ACT government funding for the successful ‘H course’ that provided free musical education in Canberra for nearly 4 decades. This was an ‘Institute of Sport’ for musically gifted high school students. Because it was free it enabled all children to become high-level musicians. The long-term effects are regressive as high level classical and jazz training is now only available to children in the private school, system or to those who have wealthy parents.
3. **There is difficulty with an organisation such as the ANU School of Music directly applying for arts funding** – this places an artist who is employed at a university, or the whole university at a disadvantage, leading to increased short term thinking in our sector, as our teachers are firstly and always practicing musicians. While one response might be to encourage academic artists to apply for an Australian Research Council (ARC) grant, the ratio of artistic practice music grants is almost negligible and functionally impossible to achieve. What this means ‘on the ground’ is that when we apply for funding we seem comparatively expensive because we pay our artists well.
4. **The significant body and diversity of artistic work that takes place in university cultural institutions is largely not counted in economic and social terms** – this can inform future government economic studies and the opportunity for our sector to partner with a progressive government is significant.

In terms of reviewing cultural policy the ANU School of Music suggests the following:

1. Given that the ANU School of Music has developed nation-leading expertise in working with First Nations musicians we recommend that a **National Institute of First Nations Music**, funded by government and the ANU, to be Indigenous led, working for our national interest, to utilise the expertise held by the ANU and our musical partners the Australia Council, the CSO, the CIMF and the NFF. **This could include our present work on campus and be expanded to include a mobile campus and a presence in the North of Australia.** The budget would be modest for this and the gains would be significant.

2. **A study that looks at the economic benefits of the tertiary arts sector undertaken by the ANU in partnership with the Australia Council for the Arts.**
3. **A partnership / pilot that can see government and the ANU develop joint initiatives,** One recent successful example is the Australia Council and ANU School of Music *Space to Create* which saw 8 First Nations Musicians and 4 mentors come together for a residency at the ANU school of Music. We need this to be a working model for the future. The ANU School of Music can potentially offer national higher degree training program for arts administrators, particularly those working in First Nations arts and culture as well as targeted short courses for First Nations musicians.
4. **An arts / music policy centre / think tank housed at the ANU.** The ANU School of Music works with the Crawford Centre and is capable of developing a body that can bring together the leading thinkers to Canberra to interface with government and provide a long-term policy 'voice'. It is also worth mentioning our peak body the Deans and Directors of the Creative Arts (DDCA) which is an excellent potential collaborator in this space.

Blue Sky

We are in a period where it is possible to think about the long term for arts and culture. **The ANU School of Music suggests that we need to appoint national artistic leaders and house them in Canberra for each major discipline. We have a pressing need for a Chief Artist, Musician and Writer, just as we have a Chief Scientist.** They can be housed at the ANU to make works that are genuinely nation building. The potential return on investment would be highly significant.

Personal conclusions

I write to this submission with cultural positionality – as an Iraqi / Indian man of mixed descent – the first person such as myself to lead a music school in Australia. As a composer and musicologist who works with everything from traditional music to the sounds of space, I have a significant skill set that can interface with creatives and institutions. I have the privilege of working with Bob McMullan as the Chair of our Advisory Board. I feel that this time and its inherent opportunity should not be lost and I would welcome the chance to personally support and work more closely with the Commonwealth Government, as does the ANU School of Music.

Faithfully,

Professor Kim Cunio

Head, ANU School of Music