AMPAG submission to:

Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee

INQUIRY

Teaching and learning—maximising our investment in Australian schools

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AMPAG: WHO WE ARE

AMPAG, as the representative body of Australia's 28 major performing arts companies, gives its member companies a national voice and presence. It was formed in 1999 because the companies saw a critical need to work together on policy issues across their art forms.

AMPAG's mission is to promote awareness of the contribution of major performing arts to the community and to ensure that these companies are adequately supported. By doing so, AMPAG helps guarantee their long-term success, ensuring their ongoing excellence across the various artforms, their contribution to the Australian cultural environment and their accessibility to all Australians.

AMPAG COMPANIES' ROLE IN ARTS EDUCATION

One in every five Australian school children is reached by major performing arts company education programs each year. The companies work closely with schools and communities to develop the content.

The major performing arts companies performed to 571 000 children and spent 795 000 hours in schools in 2011.

AMPAG RESPONSE TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

(a) the effectiveness of current classroom practices in assisting children to realise their potential in Australian schools

Classroom practices
We believe, in the past, the curriculum of arts teaching in Australian schools has not reflected the benefits that can be derived from arts learning. Up until now, arts education has been erratic and inconsistent across states, schools and school systems. While the soon-to-be-implemented National Arts Curriculum will define the parameters of arts education that must be taught in Australian schools from foundation to Year 10, it will still be largely implemented by state departments. We believe robust, consistent teaching, with full school and state government support, are essential to extract the maximum benefit from the arts curriculum.

Realising potential
It is widely documented in the US, Canada, the UK, Europe and Australia, that students whose learning is embedded in the arts achieve better grades and overall test scores, are less likely to leave school early, rarely report boredom and have a more positive self-concept than students who are deprived of arts experiences. They are also more likely to become involved in community service. (*The Arts and Australian Education: Realising potential*, Robyn Ewing).

This has been known for a long time. A 2002 study, *Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Achievement* (Deasy), analysed 62 earlier research studies that explored the relationship between the cognitive capacities developed through learning and communicating in dance, drama, music and the visual arts, and students' academic and social skills. His major findings on the positive effects derived by those involved in arts-rich education programs included:

- positive achievements in reading, language and mathematics development
- evidence of increased higher order thinking skills and capacities
- evidence of increased motivation to learn

- improvements in effective social behaviours.

These results have been confirmed in Australian studies. For example, the *Learning to learn through the Arts@Direk Primary School*, South Australia found that the scores for all students in the Year 4 arts-rich group were significantly higher than those of a matched 'non-arts-rich' group on literacy, numeracy and writing and were significantly higher on the three generic competencies of problem-solving, planning and organising, communication and working with others.

> The arts are not so much a result of inspiration and innate talent as they are a person's capacity for creative thinking and imagining, problem solving, creative judgement and a host of other mental processes. The arts represent forms of cognition every bit as potent as the verbal and logical/mathematical forms of cognition that have been the traditional focus of public education. —D Cooper-Solomon, *The arts are essential*, 1995

Arts education also has intrinsic benefits, for example:

- the pleasure and emotional stimulation of a personal, 'felt' response
- captivation by an imaginative experience
- an expanded capacity for empathy leading to the potential for creating social bonds and shared experiences of art
- cognitive growth in being able to make sense of art
- the ability to find a voice to express communal meaning through art

(*Gifts of the muse: Reframing the debate about the benefits of the Arts*, K McCarthy, E Ondaatje, L Zakaras, & A Brooks, 2004)

While the new National Curriculum bodes better for arts education than previously, how arts education is realised in schools—and the emphasis given to the various art forms—depends on the jurisdiction and the school.

> Arts learning develops creative individuals and critical thinkers … The Arts provides for the practice of creative qualities, openness, multiple perspectives, diversity, ambiguity and complexity, passion, joy, fun and play as essential qualities to support creative thinking, risk taking, problem solving and innovation. — *Shape of the Australian Curriculum – the Arts*, Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2011

A 2007 study by R Ewing & R Gibson—*Creative teaching or teaching creatively? Using creative arts strategies in preservice teacher education*—found that creating performance opportunities in the classroom tends to be underused and undervalued as a pedagogical tool by Australian teachers.

This is despite the 1999 study by EB Fiske (*Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning*) which found that students who were involved in music and drama achieved higher levels of success in mathematics and reading than those who were not.

Providing a quality arts experience in the classroom is especially important for young people from low-socioeconomic groups who may not have had the opportunity to engage with the arts outside school.

> More than twice as many 12th grade, high music-involved, low SES students performed at high levels of math proficiency as non music-involved, low SES 12th grade students ... By 12th grade the high-music, low SES students had pulled significantly ahead of the average student in math proficiency (33.1 percent to 21.3 percent). —EB Fiske, *Champions of Change*

The importance of cultural engagement to Indigenous youth
Many of the major performing arts companies regularly target Indigenous youth in their education programs. They recognise that a strong cultural identity contributes to Indigenous wellbeing and to building healthy, safe and supportive communities.

Bangarra, Australia's leading Indigneous performing arts company, runs Indigenous Youth Workshops, studio visits for young Indigenous people, residency workshops and performances around the country. Other companies also host workshops and programs for Indigenous youth. For example, Circus Oz's Blakrobatics Program seeks out the talent in Indigenous dance, theatre, comedy, visual art and music to enrich the contemporary circus art form. The State Theatre Company of South Australia has an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Artistic Development program, and the Australian Ballet often collaborates with Bangarra and runs its own workshops in regional areas.

> From our ongoing collaborations with Bangarra Dance Theatre to our Education workshops in Indigenous communities around Australia, we relish the chance to connect ballet with Indigenous dance. —David McAllister, Artistic Director, The Australian Ballet.

Research from the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey shows that the benefits of high participation in cultural activities to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people include:

- markedly better physical and mental health
- higher rates of secondary school completion
- are more likely to gain a post-school qualification
- are more likely to be employed
- are less likely to abuse alcohol or be charged by the police.

Additionally, in remote areas feeling happy is associated with cultural activities such as making or performing Indigenous arts.

[See Office for the Arts' *Indigenous Culture Support* fact sheet, http://www.arts.gov.au/sites/default/files/indigenous/ics/ics-factsheet.pdf

(b) the structure and governance of school administration 'local and central' and its impact on teaching and learning

The National Arts Curriculum will define the kind of arts learning that must be undertaken from foundation to Year 10 in Australian schools. However, it is up to individual state/territory governments to define the hours of arts education that will be needed to fulfill the curriculum. It is also unclear how the curriculum and its implementation are to be monitored—for example, whether and how audits would be carried out to ensure schools were meeting their arts education obligations.

Despite the myriad available evidence of the value of the arts, and the realisation of a National Arts Curriculum, teaching arts is still not a core priority for some Australian schools. Many schools are, these days, data-driven. Their academic emphases react to results in core testing, Year 12 results, student improvement data etc. And in such a climate, the arts slide down the priority list, despite the clear 'big picture' evidence of its benefits in overall results.

It is worth asking the question, who do parents or teachers go to if the school is not fulfilling the intention of the arts curriculum?

> Any school Principal who makes a decision to reduce teaching time in Arts subjects is making a decision not to educate children properly. —Richard Gill, blogspot, [http://richardgill.blogspot.com.au/2010_11_01_archive.html]

Quality creative arts engagement can affect the whole school, broadening the school's educational approach, forming cross-curricular links, and enabling it to focus on creativity. It can enhance the school's profile and unify the whole school behind a common purpose, at the same time as creating a positive culture for learning within the school.

(c) the influence of family members in supporting the rights of children to receive a quality education

The major performing arts companies take their educative role very seriously—not just of children but of the wider community, including families. We believe it is crucial that families are encouraged—by government, by schools, by individual teachers—to support their children's right to receive an arts education.

> Parents need to know that it is through participation in arts subjects that the mind, imagination, spirit and soul of a child are stimulated. Through this stimulation comes a bonus in all other areas of learning. Music, for example, when it is properly taught, requires an extraordinarily high level of listening and concentration from the student. It requires the student to have a capacity to work in the abstract, an ability to work across several skill areas simultaneously and the ability to rationalise this verbally. —Richard Gill, blogspot [http://richardgill.blogspot.com.au/]

(d) the adequacy of tools available for teachers to create and maintain an optimal learning environment

We believe the professional arts industry has an important role in providing expertise to enrich the classroom experience and to provide professional development for teachers. The major performing arts companies have much to offer as examples of professional practice, delivering excellence and innovation in the performing arts. This needs to be promoted in the implementation of the new curriculum. All the major performing arts companies already engage directly with schools in developing and enhancing their arts experience.

In 2011 they reached 570,000 students in schools around Australia, providing high quality education engagement.

The major performing arts companies can offer:

- extensive, dynamic, accessible education programs for children and young adults of all ages
- professional high quality performances in all areas of the performing arts, in all capital cities and many regional centres
- enrichment for classroom programs, to enhance the work done by classroom teachers via workshops and live and streamed performances
- professional learning opportunities for teachers in arts education
- professional opportunities for teachers to learn how to employ the arts curriculum as a pedagogical tool across all subjects
- a range of teaching materials (interactive, digital and paper) to facilitate arts teaching in the classroom

- expertise in working with and interpreting and performing art works by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- training programs for young artists, creating pathways into employment in the profession.

The major performing arts companies are innovative and forward looking. For example, Melbourne Theatre Company supports youth ambassador programs that invite two-way discussion and development of active arts and community citizenship. Musica Viva has built a ground-breaking music education software that supports the new national arts curriculum across all states. The Australian Chamber Orchestra has created a revolutionary 3D chamber orchestra for students and communities to directly experience playing in and conducting an orchestra. Sydney Theatre Company, in partnership with Sydney University, runs its powerful School Drama program that uses drama to teach English and literacy to young learners. It's an artist-in-residence program focusing on teacher professional learning which provides a sustainable impact long after the artist has left the school.

With government support, programs such as these can be made available to all students—but it requires a raised awareness among government, schools, principals, teachers and families, and a commitment to create opportunities for Australian children.

(e) factors influencing the selection, training, professional development, career progression and retention of teachers in the Australian education system

> We conclude that there is a lack of alignment between what the evidence shows is the impact of the arts on learning, and efforts being made, especially in Australia, England and the United States, to turn around performance in schools. — B Caldwell & T Vaughan, *Transforming Education Through The Arts*, 2012

It would be an understatement to say that the content of current tertiary education in teaching does not place a priority on arts practice. For example, currently Australian tertiary institutions spend anything from 0 to 54 hours on music education (average of 17 hours in total) over the course of the degree—and even less for post-graduate courses with an average of 10 hours of music education. This is in stark contrast to Finland which builds 270 hours of music education into its teaching degrees and Korea with 160 hours. Both countries surpassed Australia on the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment rankings. Richard Letts, Executive Director of the Music Council of Australia, has called for a minimum of an hour a week—that is, 112 hours over the course of a degree—to improve the ability of a generalist classroom teacher to deliver the national curriculum in music. Intervention to lift the hours of arts education in tertiary degrees is crucial to break the perpetual downward spiral of the ability of generalist teachers to teach the arts curriculum.

Australia's current record of arts education is clearly insufficient to ensure new teachers are competent and confident in teaching arts-based curriculum content at either primary or secondary level. While music tends to fair better (because professional music teachers often deliver the specialised music courses), teachers of dance and drama are often untrained and unqualified. The ramifications are felt through the industry. With a lack of teacher skill and knowledge, and cuts to pre-service teacher training, the sustainability of the industry will be affected as they will be ill-equipped to deliver the new aspirational curriculum.

(f) other related matters

Delivering a high quality performing arts curriculum depends on robust, practical partnerships between schools and performing arts companies.

A major international study, *The Wow Factor: Global Research Compendium on the Impact of the Arts in Education* (Bamford, 2006), identified that the kind of improved outcomes for

students mentioned above (that is, improved outcomes in literacy, in school attendance and engaging otherwise disengaged students) are most likely to emerge from quality arts programs characterised by strong partnerships with external arts organisations and artists.

Dr Susan Davis, Senior Lecturer at CQ University (previously Central Queensland University) emphasised the importance of these partnerships in a letter to John-Paul Langbroek, Queensland Minister for Education, Employment and Training—a letter written in the wake of the recent Queensland Government cuts to Education Liaison Officer roles based in professional arts organisations.

> Programs offered by QTC [Queensland Theatre Company] and QPAC [Queensland Performing Arts Centre] have been providing access to quality arts and cultural experiences that thousands of young people will not otherwise access, in particular those students from low socio-economic backgrounds whose parents are not able to pay for private arts lessons and experiences. … Furthermore, a major international study identified that these kind of improved outcomes are most likely to emerge from 'quality' arts programs, in particular those that are characterized by strong partnerships with outside arts organisations and artists (Bamford, 2006).
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> This fact was clearly recognised by all state and federal governments in 2007 through the commitment of Education and Cultural Ministers to the 'National Education and the Arts Statement' (MCEETYA & CMC, 2007).
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> Key principles from this statement affirm that:
>
> - creating partnerships strengthens community identity and local cultures
> - connecting schools with the arts and cultural sector enriches learning outcomes.
>
> — Dr Susan Davis, Senior Lecturer at CQ University

Jurisdictions agreed at that time to 'facilitate sustainable partnerships between the education, arts and cultural sectors to enrich learning in and through the arts'.

We wholeheartedly endorse that principle—and we take this opportunity to remind government of the importance of its commitment to this partnership and ask that it demonstrates its commitment not just in words, but in deeds.

CONCLUSION

AMPAG calls on educators and education institutions around the country to more seriously consider the impact of arts learning on the abilities (intellectual, social, emotional, creative) of children and young people—and to examine the content and delivery of their arts curricula. We also call on higher education institutions to have regard to the evidence of arts teaching in developing their tertiary courses in teaching.

AMPAG also calls on government to better support arts education through its range of grants for specific purposes, and to champion and advocate with higher education institutions and state and territory governments for greater emphasis to be placed on arts education.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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APPENDIX A

List of AMPAG member companies & their location

Adelaide Symphony Orchestra	South Australia
Australian Brandenburg Orchestra	New South Wales
Australian Chamber Orchestra	New South Wales
Bangarra Dance Theatre	New South Wales
Bell Shakespeare	New South Wales
Belvoir	New South Wales
Black Swan State Theatre Company	Western Australia
Circus Oz	Victoria
Malthouse Theatre	Victoria
Melbourne Symphony Orchestra	Victoria
Melbourne Theatre Company	Victoria
Musica Viva Australia	New South Wales
Opera Australia	New South Wales
Opera Queensland	Queensland
Orchestra Victoria	Victoria
Queensland Ballet	Queensland
Queensland Symphony Orchestra	Queensland
Queensland Theatre Company	Queensland
State Opera South Australia	South Australia
State Theatre Company of South Australia	South Australia
Sydney Dance Company	New South Wales
Sydney Symphony	New South Wales
Sydney Theatre Company	New South Wales
The Australian Ballet	Victoria
Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra	Tasmania
West Australian Ballet	Western Australia
West Australian Opera	Western Australia
West Australian Symphony Orchestra	Western Australia