

NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY SUBMISSION AUGUST 2022

[Music Education: Right from the Start](#), is a national collaborative initiative, led by Alberts | The Tony Foundation, and driven by our collective belief in the power of music to change lives. It has been developed in consultation with, and is supported by, individuals and organisations spanning the music industry, education, research and philanthropy. It is this initiative which is the focus of our submission. Specifically, the place and purpose of music education, its diverse benefits, the need to ensure that all Australian primary school children have access to quality, sequential and ongoing music education, and the importance of this in establishing a strong foundation for a flourishing and vibrant culture.

***Music Education: Right from the Start* recognises that all primary school students need, and have the right to a quality, sequential and ongoing music education.**

Prior to the May Federal 2022 election **Music Education: Right from the Start** wrote to the major parties urging their support for a national cultural plan as recommended by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts creative industries inquiry report *Sculpting a Cultural Plan* [Oct 2020] embracing support and measures for delivering quality music education.

We were not alone in this and are greatly encouraged by the new Government's prompt action in developing A National Cultural Policy. We would expect that this first policy would be the first iteration in a policy that allows for an ongoing and evolving commitment to Australian Arts and culture.

We have made several assumptions in crafting this submission which we expect would be shared:

- 'Culture' is not age dependent: it is experienced in its myriad forms from a child's first awakening through the entirety of their life.
- Culture is much larger than the 'arts, entertainment and cultural sector'.
- Music is a cultural cornerstone.
- A National Cultural Policy would embrace these premises within the parameters of "a comprehensive roadmap to guide the skills and resources required to transform and safeguard a diverse, vibrant and sustainable arts, entertainment and cultural sector now and into the future".

The place and purpose of Music Education in the National Cultural Policy:

- Music is a source of cultural transmission, personal and social well-being. It is of inherent personal value as well as being a source of social affinity - a public good.
- The music industry is significant and, at the same time, currently falls well short of its potential.
- The music industry will only thrive through nurturing both musical talent and an appreciation of music among the general population.
- Music education is an essential building block upon which each of these core needs are addressed.

Quality school music education aims to establish an enduring engagement with music for students, from which lifelong benefits flow. The benefits go well beyond any simple calculation of return on investment: music is a counterweight to the emotional and mental health distress and the sense of dislocation that is rampant among young people in these turbulent times. Music education is an antidote and an educational booster in the same package.

Recommendation 1: That the National Cultural Policy include the explicit recognition of the importance of quality, sequential and ongoing music education for all Australian children and identify quality music education for primary school children as an immediate priority backed by several initial undertakings. To support this we suggest:

- Establishing expectations of a ‘quality’ music education. A critical starting point is to explicitly recognise that the evidenced benefits (of music education) are dependent on a **quality** music education and an understanding of just what constitutes a ‘quality’ music education. Music Education: Right From the Start has sought to address this question and has developed its understanding drawing on the available research and evidence in consultation with a broad spectrum of advisers. That document is available [here](#).
- Increasing the provision of support and training for teachers (current and pre-service) to provide quality sequential classroom music education.
- Providing support for embedding strong music programs (via organisational partnerships and State/Federal funding and policy initiatives) for schools with low scores on the [Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage](#) (‘low ICSEA schools’).
- Connecting State and Federal Cultural and Education Ministers to address the opportunities of an integrated approach to arts education

Recommendation 2: That the National Cultural Policy extend its recognition of the centrality of First Nations heritage and culture to support for First Nations engagement in the evolution of quality music education in Australian schools.

BUILDING ON CREATIVE AUSTRALIA

The scope and supporting statements reference *Creative Australia* as is evident in the pillars upon which the new National Cultural Policy is to be built.

On the question of education *Creative Australia* recognised that “Everyone has the right to an arts education in school and the chance to reap the benefits it offers”. That policy has much to recommend it, including: its recognition the high level of community support for the Arts in education; its appreciation of the international evidence on the benefits; and the importance of the foundations that education can provide in nurturing cultural appreciation and engagement.

It remains true - and critically important to affirm – that:

..arts education is not only about developing the skills for a career as a creative professional. An arts-rich education that starts at school helps young people think critically and develop a strong sense of identity and high self-esteem. It also assists to develop future audiences, consumers and creators. Engagement in the arts at school also improves students’ performance in other areas of the curriculum, in particular for children who are ‘at risk’ and face other life challenges.

We would also note that *Creative Australia* boldly stated that:

The transformative capacity of arts and creative thinking will be accessible to every child through the new national arts curriculum, which supports a new generation of creators and audiences. This universal access to the arts curriculum will strengthen Australia's voice and develop creative thinking in every young Australian regardless of the career pathway they pursue.

It is here, where the rubber hits the road so to speak, that we would argue the new National Cultural Policy needs to give its greatest attention. While we commend the existence of a national curriculum in the arts and its recent review, it is not enough. Teaching time, training and a recognition of the place and purpose of music and the arts within a leading education among school leadership is required to teach the curriculum inclusive of all 5 art forms covered. For we can say that when it comes to music education currently, the reality is that the demonstrably transformative benefits of music education are simply not available to an unacceptably high number of Australia's primary students.

We have identified a number of key barriers to delivering universal access to quality music education (see [Music Education: A Sound Investment](#)).

These are essentially practical matters open to practical solutions; for example, properly equipping primary school teachers to confidently and competently deliver music in their classrooms through improved Initial Teacher Education, professional development and structured support such as mentoring and peer support. Underpinning this is the need to invest in research to understand better what arts learning is actually taking place in schools nationally.

FIRST NATIONS: RECOGNISING AND RESPECTING THE CRUCIAL PLACE OF THESE STORIES AT THE CENTRE OF OUR ARTS AND CULTURE

We are particularly conscious that music is deeply embedded in First Nations cultures, histories and experiences. We acknowledge and respect the richness of these living traditions. In saying this, we are conscious that First Nations peoples themselves are best placed to guide and advise on how this recognition is embedded in a national cultural policy.

For us, seeking advice and guidance from First Nations songmen and songwomen, musicians and educators in our efforts to ensure that the benefits of quality music education are not only available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students but embrace their own deep cultural roots in the education of all primary students, is a priority moving forward.

A PLACE FOR EVERY STORY: REFLECTING THE DIVERSITY OF OUR STORIES AND THE CONTRIBUTION OF ALL AUSTRALIANS AS THE CREATORS OF CULTURE

A quality music education acknowledges cultural and artistic backgrounds of the students, and the diversity of genres and cultural traditions. It is delivered by school teachers at times supported by external specialists and parents and community members.

THE CENTRALITY OF THE ARTIST: SUPPORTING THE ARTIST AS WORKER AND CELEBRATING THEIR ROLE AS THE CREATORS OF CULTURE

We advocate that all people, throughout all stages of their lives, are makers of music in addition to

consumers. As such an appreciation, understanding, and learning of music and the broader arts needs to be embedded within the foundations of our learning systems.

Quality music education is learning and teaching that results in musical and cognitive development that provides:

- continual support for the social and emotional wellbeing and academic development of students throughout their school years
- a deep appreciation and understanding of music as an artform that will be maintained into adult life
- positive and permanent cognitive enhancement that will be maintained into adult life

It recognises that music is for all – coming to music with different abilities, social and cultural experiences students learn to value the rich diversity of musical genres, instruments and traditions.

It appreciates the joy that music making brings – students learn to seek the intrinsic reward that working consistently on their music making can bring.

STRONG INSTITUTIONS: PROVIDING SUPPORT ACROSS THE SPECTRUM OF INSTITUTIONS WHICH SUSTAIN OUR ARTS AND CULTURE

We believe that this is a critical consideration in establishing a genuinely transformative National Cultural Policy. While it may be too much to hope for a ‘whole of government’ policy with teeth we would suggest that as a minimum:

- The National Cultural Policy should establish the principles that would guide all relevant departments in ensuring that their own efforts support the recognition, nurturing and development of “diverse, vibrant and sustainable arts, entertainment and cultural sector now and into the future”.
- Address the needs and expectations of key portfolios.
- Firmly establish the expectations that a quality, sequential and ongoing music education is available to every Australian primary school student with a clear intention of additional support into the secondary years.

Policy Implementation

We also support the suggestions proposed by the Philanthropy Australia Arts Funders Network regarding policy implementation, which relate particularly to building strong institutions, including:

- National Cultural Policy to be a whole-of-government policy with each department responsible for embedding policy within its activities and reporting on progress against shared KPIs,
- Each Minister to employ a Cultural Officer, responsible for connecting the departments within that Minister’s remit with the National Cultural Policy,
- Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet to employ a Cultural Secretary responsible for managing Cultural Officers, and
- Create a four-year review cycle for National Cultural Policy. Commit to creating a dynamic, iterative, and evolving policy that balances immediate opportunities with long term vision.

FURTHER ENGAGEMENT

We have, as requested, kept this submission brief. However, there is considerably more to share, including newly commissioned research, that may be relevant to consideration of the National Cultural Policy. We would be more than willing to elaborate on any of the matters raised here and their implications for the new policy.

ALBERTS | THE TONY FOUNDATION BACKGROUND

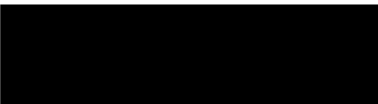
Alberts is a 137-year-old family business that has played a vital role in the evolution of Australia's media and popular culture since the early days of sheet music and music publishing through to the birth of commercial radio and television and the founding of the Australian pop and rock music industry. Founded in 1885 by Jacques Albert, the company is now run by members of the fifth generation under the guidance of fourth generation member Robert Albert. Alberts was a co-founder of the Australasian Performing Right Association (APRA) in 1926, introduced to protect the rights of writers, composers and publishers. The company is known for its long association with local musicians including AC/DC, The Easybeats, Stevie Wright, Harry Vanda and George Young; and more recent support of Megan Washington, Wally DeBacker and Josh Pyke. More recently, Alberts Impact Ventures which is focused on early stage direct venture capital investments, has backed new pioneers in the music industry including Muso (Muso is a next generation booking platform connecting artists and hirers) and Tixel (Tixel is providing a solution to the often-fraudulent second-hand ticket marketplace.)

In 2012 members of the fifth generation established The Tony Foundation, which strives to improve the life outcomes for young Australians through music.

Over recent years, the Tony Foundation has increased its focus on supporting music education programs in schools - through Musica Viva, The Song Room, the Australian Children's Music Foundation, and also funded the impact campaign for the ABC's three-part tele-series *Don't Stop the Music* which created a national conversation and call to action on music education. It is from this work that Music Education: Right from the Start evolved.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute this submission. We welcome the opportunity to discuss any of the above suggestions further.

Warm regards



Emily Albert
Executive Director
Alberts | The Tony Foundation



REFERENCES:

[Music Education: Right From the Start](#) , Dr Anita Collins, Dr Rachael Dwyer and Aden Date, Alberts | The Tony Foundation, 2020

[An Understanding of Quality Music Education](#), Music Education: Right from the Start, Alberts | The Tony Foundation, December 2021