

## Musica Viva Australia: 2026 National Cultural Policy Submission

### Overview

Musica Viva Australia delivers the largest music education program of any arts organisation in Australia and is an internationally significant platform for touring and commissioning chamber music. A National Performing Arts Partnership Framework organisation, Musica Viva Australia (MVA) reaches over 250,000 Australians annually, with more than 85% of that audience under the age of 18. MVA programs are delivered in all states and territories, from Western Sydney to Katherine, Kununurra, Mt Isa, Launceston and beyond.

From our position in the sector, we acknowledge the important focus of Revive's five pillars: First Nations First, A Place for Every Story, The Centrality of the Artist, Strong Cultural Infrastructure and Engaging the Audience. As signatories to the National Performing Arts Partnership Framework companies' National Cultural Policy submission, we are also critically aware of the current crisis facing the performing arts sector and its workers. Significantly higher costs, particularly in travel and production; critical skills shortages; changes to consumer behaviour post COVID-19, impacts of cost-of-living pressures; and the sustainability of careers in the creative industries, are placing untenable strain on organisations. The NPAPF is based on an almost thirty-year-old funding model which is no longer fit-for-purpose, and every part of the arts ecosystem, from independent artists to small to medium sized companies to NPAPF organisations, is facing extreme threats to ongoing viability.

**MVA echoes the calls from colleagues across the sectors for increased federal government investment in the arts and cultural sector to ensure a thriving and sustainable arts ecosystem that benefits all Australians.**

Musica Viva Australia is also a signatory to Music Education: Right from the Start's National Cultural Policy submission, which calls for *quality, sequential, and ongoing music education* as the right of every Australian child. We note that although youth arts and education were cited amongst the guiding principles of Revive, there has been limited support or action from the government in this critical area. For many arts organisations already experiencing the financial pressures outlined above, this lack of investment creates a paradox: our largest audiences and greatest avenue for artist employment are in our education and youth programs; however, their delivery places untenable strain on core funding.

**MVA strongly endorses the call from sector colleagues to strengthen the role of creative arts education in the National Cultural Policy by establishing a dedicated Pillar for arts education and participation for young people.**

## **Investment in Creative Arts Education – Music**

*“Quality, sequential, and ongoing music education delivers wide-reaching benefits for students. It supports cognitive development and strengthens academic achievement – particularly in literacy and numeracy. It also improves school engagement, retention, and participation, and enhances well-being, inclusion, and both personal and social growth.” [Music Education: A Sound Investment report](#).*

Research by [Music Education: Right from the Start](#) has found that over 73% of NSW teachers are not confident delivering music education independently in the classroom, despite 90% recognising its cognitive and social benefits. This is unsurprising considering that music education hours during generalist teaching degrees have more than halved over the past 13 years, with an average of only 8–9 hours delivered across a four-year degree ([Fading Notes – Music Education for the Next Generation of Primary Teachers report](#)). In Victoria, as little as six hours of music education is delivered across a four-year teaching degree.

Not-for-profit organisations such as Musica Viva Australia have an important role to fill in bridging the gap between teacher knowledge and the quality arts education that young Australians deserve. Programs such [Musica Viva Australia In Schools](#) provide comprehensive classroom resources, high quality performances, and engaging professional development that supports teacher confidence and capacity. The program provides sustained employment opportunities for artists and supports the pipeline of next generation professional creatives in Australia. Without such programs, many young Australians, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, have limited access to an education that includes culture, creativity, and the arts.

### **Musica Viva Australia makes the following recommendations:**

1. Leverage respected private sector and NFP organisations with proven programs, such as Musica Viva Australia, to create opportunities for enriching musical experiences in schools.
2. Consider both **breadth** and **depth** of engagement when investing in music education: breadth of access ensures that all children have access to music experiences, while depth of engagement ensures that quality, sequential and ongoing learning takes place. A strong investment model requires both to be successful.
3. Invest in music education by providing generalist primary school teachers with access to quality curriculum-aligned resources, professional development, incursions and excursions that will improve their confidence and capacity.
4. Invest in models that consider and support the learning needs of all Australian school students, including students with disability, First Nations students, students with English as a second language, and students experiencing disadvantage.

5. Invest in programs that strengthen the broader youth arts ecosystem. Complementary programs that are not explicitly curriculum-aligned play a valuable role in supporting the pipeline of career artists, as well as the development of creative, innovative and civic-minded young people.

MVA would like to highlight **three effective, proven models** delivered under MVA's Education portfolio. Each of these programs has inbuilt mechanisms designed to address disadvantage in creative arts education by supporting teachers and students to access high quality music education experiences. Despite this, each program is limited by the extreme financial environment facing the arts sector. With additional funding, these tested, independently evaluated models could be easily scaled, increasing access to quality, sequential, and ongoing music education for all young Australians.

### **Model 1: Musica Viva Australia's Music Education Residency Program**

Musica Viva Australia's [Music Education Residency Program](#) is an immersive, three-year program designed to support the implementation of comprehensive and effective music education. Typically located in areas of socio-economic disadvantage, MVA's goal is to work with primary schools to ensure that music education becomes an integral part of the school's culture, ensuring that generations of children receive the educational and intrinsic benefits of a quality music education.

Residency schools are paired with a professional teaching artist and provided with tailored learning resources and instruments. Ongoing support and experiential learning are then provided through the Musica Viva Australia In Schools program including access to a portfolio of free professional development and digital learning resources. Generalist teachers are supported to become confident in music instruction through mentorship with the teaching artist, access to MVA's 12-week [Music Education for the Primary Classroom](#), and ongoing Professional Development.

Musica Viva Australia's 3-year residency programs are **effective, scalable, and independently reviewed via longitudinal evaluation undertaken by [REDACTED]** Since 2010, 28 schools in Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia have participated in the Residency model, with 12 schools across Australia currently delivering the program. **The only multi-year model of its kind in Australia** and a proven example of how **depth of impact** can be achieved through not-for-profit partnerships, with increased investment these residencies could be rolled out across areas of need in all states and territories.

## Story -

At [REDACTED] Musica Viva Australia Teaching Artist [REDACTED] works with students and teachers to embed music education into the school culture. Supported for the last three years by the West Australian Government through its Creative Learning Partnerships program, [REDACTED] is paired with [REDACTED] teacher [REDACTED]. Together, with the support of MVA's resourcing, they have embedded a culture of music at the school.

"It is very rewarding to see that through our great partnership, our revision of concepts, explicit approach to teaching new concepts, excellent team teaching, and keeping the fun and engagement levels high, the students are really retaining what we have taught them," says [REDACTED]. "So many students are now 'at standard', even though they are still quite new to learning music."

With an ICSEA score [REDACTED], and an ATSI population of between [REDACTED] is a priority school for MVA's Residency model. The school's ethos of providing an inclusive, connected school community where everyone belongs and succeeds is supported by the provision of a wholistic music education.

"There is a real sense of excitement when the kids come to music class, and kids have been coming to school deliberately on their music day which is great," says [REDACTED]. "Engagement and focus levels are also up in classrooms following a music class. Confidence and creativity, and a sense of belonging for some students, is definitely being impacted for the better as well."

**Watch:** [MVA Music Education Residency Program \(Ashcroft Public School NSW\)](#)

**Watch:** [MVA Music Education Residency Program \(Gosnells/Neering Brook Primary Schools WA\)](#)

## Model 2: Musica Viva Australia In Schools

The [Musica Viva Australia In Schools](#) (MVAIS) program delivered 920 performances at 662 schools in 2025, reaching over 140,000 Australian teachers and students. A core component of MVA's work and the largest music education program in Australia, MVAIS is predominantly funded by private philanthropy and select state government investment, alongside modest ticket income. Despite this, the program reaches students across all states and territories, providing young Australians with high quality music experiences in their schools. Increased investment would not only increase the reach of this program, but would provide additional support for students experiencing disadvantage, regional and remote schools, and low ICSEA schools to access this program.

Access, equity, and inclusion are core pillars of the MVAIS program. MVAIS ensembles draw from a wide range of cultural and musical backgrounds, including First Nations cultures, Japanese, Taiwanese and Singaporean traditions and Chilean and Latin American musicians. Each MVAIS ensemble works with a Diverse Access Needs specialist to create adapted versions of touring shows suitable for

presentation in specialist schools. Supported by state government funding and private philanthropy, MVA provides subsidised ticket pricing for low ICSEA schools. A suite of teaching and learning resources and professional development opportunities, curriculum aligned across all four Australian curricula, accompany each show, supporting generalists and specialist teachers alike to deliver quality music education in their classrooms.

The benefits of the MVAIS program are well documented. 78% of teachers surveyed nationally agreed or strongly agreed that MVAIS performances have a **positive impact on student behaviour** while at school. 72% teachers agree or strongly agree that MVAIS performances have a positive impact on **student attendance**. Wellbeing and socio-emotional health are also supported as students have opportunities to express themselves in creative ways.

### **Story – Wyniss**

Since 2018, Musica Viva Australia In Schools show *Wyniss* has toured Australia, sharing songs, traditions, games and cultural knowledge from the Torres Strait. Developed in conjunction with NAISDA Dance College and led by [REDACTED] *Wyniss* has reached nearly half a million Australian students since its inception.

For many young Australians, *Wyniss* is their first encounter with Torres Strait Islander music and culture. By comparing their own childhood games to those from the Torres Strait, students come to understand the importance of traditions, and to be thankful to those who teach them. For First Nations students, *Wyniss* is a powerful demonstration of culture in action, shared by an intergenerational group of Elders and emerging performers. For all Australian students, *Wyniss* teaches empathy, respect, cultural understanding and awareness of First Nations stories.

*“The best aspect of the performances was the impact this experience had on **improving cultural understanding, empathy and inclusion throughout the whole school population**. Activities performed in the lead up to the incursion helped students to understand the geography, flags and cultural landscape of their country. The performers were generous, kind, funny and engaging. It was an authentic and beneficial experience for all of us.”* Teacher at [REDACTED] in [REDACTED] [REDACTED] speaking about touring show *Wyniss*.

**Watch:** [Yirara College students interview Wyniss musicians \(2023\)](#)

**Watch:** [Wyniss in the Northern Territory](#)

**Watch:** [Musica Viva Australia In Schools 2026](#)

### Model 3: Strike A Chord

[Strike A Chord](#) (SAC) is an annual, national initiative, and the only program of its kind in Australia. Designed to foster participation in chamber music by secondary students of all skill levels and backgrounds – from beginner to emerging professional – it offers accessible, meaningful opportunities to play, collaborate and be mentored. SAC reflects MVA’s commitment to opening doors to music education and participation, improved student engagement and wellbeing, and creating professional pathways into the wider arts sector. **Despite being a truly national initiative, Strike A Chord currently receives no federal or state government support. Beyond 2026, funding for this program remains uncertain.**

The core pillars of Strike A Chord are:

- **Coaching Program:** free, in person coaching to low ICSEA, remote and regional schools and ensembles with First Nations participants.
- **Regional Residencies:** intensive models where professional ensembles work in regional communities for several days, delivering coaching, one-on-one lessons, and collaborative community performances.
- **Competition:** A nationwide chamber music competition for both Foundation and Championship level students, culminating in the National Final in Melbourne. This element is a pipeline ensuring a rich future for the professional sector by feeding institutions such as ANAM and the ACO, SSO and MSO fellowship training programs.

Story – [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED], a school in a low ICSEA area of [REDACTED] first engaged with Strike A Chord in 2024 when two groups entered the Foundation Section of the competition. The school’s sole music teacher, [REDACTED] had worked hard over the previous two years to develop a diverse instrumental music program, reaching around 200 students each week in strings, singing, piano and brass. Strike A Chord supported this thriving program by sending two tutors [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] of the [REDACTED] to [REDACTED] for a full day of coaching and workshops.

In 2025, an intensive program was designed to support [REDACTED] further, acknowledging the school’s ongoing challenges of funding, resourcing and distance alongside its strong commitment to music. This time, all four members of the [REDACTED] travelled to deliver a series of tutorials, workshops, individual lessons and a side-by-side performances over two days. The intensive was tailored to the specific needs of the student cohort, resulting in a highly targeted delivery of information and development of skills amongst the students.

*“This was probably the thing that, more than anything else, made me want to actually pursue music as my career.”* 2025 student participant and four-time Strike A Chord finalist.

*“Strike a Chord is one of the most exciting developments to take place in the Australian music scene in recent history. Through the Strike A Chord initiative, Musica Viva Australia is providing a national strategy to build these qualities in our young people and is strengthening the next generation and Australia in ways that we can only imagine.”* [REDACTED] Strike A Chord Juror

**Watch:** [Introduction to 2025 finalists](#)

**Watch:** [2025 National Final panel discussion](#) featuring SAC alumni and current participants, music teachers and tertiary partners, discussing the value and impact of Strike A Chord.

### **Conclusion**

Despite the good work and progress made under Revive, the cultural sector is at a critical juncture. Faced with challenging economic, social and geopolitical conditions that are outside of our control, every part of the sector, from NPAPF organisations to independent artists, faces real threats to viability. From Musica Viva Australia’s vantage point, this environment means that, despite the known value of creative arts education and participation programs for young people, programs cannot be scaled to meet demand, and the programs that service the most vulnerable young Australians are at the most risk of being shuttered entirely. The cascading effect of these pressures is alarming: not only do young people lose access to a wholistic arts education, but the pipeline is fundamentally limited: fewer artists are trained, fewer artists are employed, less art is made and fewer Australian have access to the benefits of the arts in their lives.

Notwithstanding this critical situation, proven models designed to support the creative lives of young Australians exist, delivered by Australia’s creative infrastructure including companies like MVA, and can be effectively scaled with proper investment. Musica Viva Australia calls on the Australian government to prioritise this critical area of the arts ecology in the next National Cultural Policy by establishing a dedicated Pillar for arts education and participation for young people, for the benefit of our young people, artists and industry.

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