



24 May 2026

Dear Review Committee

Re: Submission to the National Cultural Policy Consultation

I write as a music educator, researcher, leader, and policy advocate. I am a Senior Lecturer in Music Education at Edith Cowan University (ECU) in Perth, Western Australia, and Immediate Past President of the Australian Society for Music Education (ASME), the national representative body for music education in Australia. I am a member of the National Advocates for Arts Education (NAAE), and an advisory board member for Music Education: Right from the Start and Australian Youth Orchestra's (AYO) Music in Music. I also serve as Convenor of Kodály Australia's Education Committee, which oversees the Australian Kodály Certificate (AKC) — one of the largest providers of comprehensive music teacher professional certification in Australia, grounded in the principle that every person has a right to a quality music education. I am a Fulbright Scholar (2025–26, Teachers College, Columbia University), and my research sits at the intersection of music, education, and psychology, with a focus on musical flourishing across the lifespan — in schools, community programs, and settings serving people experiencing adversity (Goopy, 2024; Goopy, 2026a; Goopy & MacArthur, 2026a, 2026b).

I welcome the opportunity to contribute to Australia's next National Cultural Policy. I write in strong support of submissions from ASME, NAAE, Music Education: Right from the Start, AYO's Music in Me, and The Song Room. My submission argues that music education must be explicitly strengthened across all five pillars of the next version of the policy, and that a dedicated sixth pillar — Arts Education, Training and Pathways — is essential to give music education the visibility, accountability, and investment it deserves.

1. The Case for Music Education: Cultural, Economic, and Social Significance

Music is one of humanity's oldest and most universal cultural practices — a primary means through which individuals and communities express identity, transmit knowledge across generations, and build belonging. In Australia, music is woven into national life from First Nations songlines, the oldest continuous cultural traditions on earth, to a contemporary music industry generating \$10.76 billion in revenue annually (Creative Australia, 2026). Music education is the gateway through which all Australians come to participate in, learn from, and create within this cultural life. Yet that gateway is closing. Senior secondary music enrolments have fallen 16% nationally since 2012; more than 40 creative arts university courses have been discontinued since 2018; and average music education training in primary teaching degrees has collapsed from 17 hours to just 8. Access to quality, sequential music education remains deeply uneven, and these structural failures have not yet translated into change in students' everyday experience (Collins & Dwyer, 2026).

My research at the intersection of music, education, and psychology demonstrates that music education supports wellbeing and musical flourishing across the full span of life. People of all ages intentionally use music to manage emotions, build connections, sustain their mental health, and find meaning — and actively learning music amplifies these wellbeing benefits beyond what listening alone can achieve (Goopy, 2024; Goopy, 2026b; Goopy & MacArthur, 2026a, 2026b). Music-wellbeing literacy — the capability to use music intentionally to maintain or improve one's own and others' wellbeing — is a concept I have developed to frame these benefits as a practical educational and public health investment (Goopy, 2026b; Goopy, 2022). Adults who received arts education as children are 56% more likely to attend live music events throughout

their lives, directly sustaining the cultural sector that the policy aims to grow. Music education is not a service to children; it is an investment in Australia's cultural future.

2. Responses to the Five Pillars of Revive

Pillar 1: First Nations First

Australia's First Nations peoples have the world's oldest continuous musical traditions, and strengthening music education is essential to honouring, transmitting, and sustaining those traditions through genuine cultural partnership. My recent research with The Song Room's Deadly Arts Early Years program delivered in government primary schools found that Noongar culture and arts — expressed through song, dance, language, and storytelling — represent a primary pathway to children's wellbeing that generic programs cannot replicate, and that songlines offer a more comprehensive framework for children's flourishing than Western psychological models alone (Goopy, Lemon, McPherson, Jackson-Barrett & West, 2026).

Recommendations:

- Embed Indigenous teaching artists as permanent, funded members of school communities — not visiting artists — as a primary mechanism for delivering culturally grounded arts education, as evidenced by The Song Room's Deadly Arts Early Years program (Goopy et al., 2026).
- Fund multi-year, First Nations-led community arts and music education programs in primary schools, prioritising schools serving high proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, with program design led by First Nations communities.
- Adopt multimodal, culturally responsive approaches to assessing the impact of First Nations arts education programs, recognising that the wellbeing and cultural outcomes of these programs cannot be adequately measured by Western standardised frameworks alone.

Pillar 2: A Place for Every Story

Every person deserves opportunities to grow and develop their musical voice. Strengthening music education is one of the most powerful ways to ensure that all Australians — regardless of background, geography, or circumstance — can tell their stories, be heard, and participate in cultural life as creators. Yet access to quality, sequential music education remains deeply uneven. This is not exceptional; it is a routine consequence of failing to treat music education as a universal entitlement. Research across schools and community music settings has consistently found that songwriting provides people with a means of communication, emotional expression, and connection that other forms of language cannot replicate (Goopy, 2026b; Goopy, 2023). For those experiencing adversity — including trauma, mental illness, and marginalisation — music education can be a pathway back into education and life (Goopy, 2026a). The Song Room and AYO's Music in Me are exemplary in ensuring this access reaches those who need it most.

- Commit explicitly to equitable access to ongoing and sequential music education for all Australians, with targeted funding for schools and community programs serving disadvantaged communities, regional and remote areas, and populations experiencing adversity.
- Provide sustained, multi-year funding for organisations such as The Song Room and AYO's Music in Me program, which extend quality music education into schools and communities that lack the capacity to build it independently, ensuring music is not only the privilege of those who can afford private tuition.
- Recognise songwriting and contemporary music creation as legitimate and powerful means through which all Australians — and particularly those experiencing adversity — can tell their stories, be heard, and develop voice and agency as cultural participants (Goopy, 2026a, 2026b).

Pillar 3: The Centrality of the Artist

All Australians are participants and creators of culture, and young people are no exception. They use music to process emotions, connect with others, find belonging, and express something true about their experience

of the world — what I have called music-wellbeing literacy: the capability to use music intentionally to maintain or improve one's own and others' wellbeing (Goopy, 2026b). This is active cultural practice, not passive consumption. My research demonstrates that these musical practices support young people's wellbeing in profound and measurable ways — as a protective factor during adolescence, as a source of purpose and connection, and as a means of flourishing through challenging life circumstances (Goopy, 2024; Goopy, 2026a, 2026b; Goopy & MacArthur, 2026a). Music education's role is to recognise young people as the cultural participants they already are, and to grow and develop their capacity to make, respond to, and use music with greater skill, intentionality, and meaning. Musical flourishing — joyful and meaningful ways of living well in and through music — must be the central aim of school music programs, not merely technical skill development or career preparation (Goopy, 2024; Goopy, 2026b).

Music educators are also artists, and the policy must recognise their dual identity — as practitioner and educator — investing accordingly in their training, wellbeing, and career pathways. My research has found that the teacher's professional relationship with students — as a credible musical model, ethical mentor, and genuine carer — is the single most significant factor shaping students' musical and personal wellbeing (Goopy, 2024; Forbes, Goopy & Krause, 2024; Goopy, 2026a). This makes who teaches music, and how they are prepared, a matter of cultural policy. Yet Music ranked 10th out of 13 subjects in NSW teacher confidence at just 17%, against 96% for English and 91% for Maths (Collins & Dwyer, 2026) — a direct consequence of ITE preparation collapsing to an average of 8 hours. As Convenor of Kodály Australia's Education Committee, I oversee the Australian Kodály Certificate (AKC) — one of the largest providers of music teacher professional certification in Australia — and know firsthand the transformative impact of sustained professional learning that national policy can resource and legitimise.

Recommendations:

- Recognise young people as cultural participants and creators within the new policy — not as future audiences or artists-in-training — and reflect this in funding, program design, and cultural infrastructure decisions. This means prioritising school and community music programs that support young people's wellbeing and creative development through music-making, not only programs focused on technical outcomes or career pathways.
- Increase investment in initial teacher education programs to restore and expand music-specific training for primary generalist teachers. The current average of 8 hours of music education training is a structural failure; a minimum of 30 hours is needed to equip teachers to deliver quality, sequential music education.
- Fund sustained and sequentially structured professional learning for aspiring and practising music educators, including support for nationally recognised pathways such as the Australian Kodály Certificate, ensuring music teachers have access to high-quality and practical pedagogical development throughout their careers.

Pillar 4: Strong Cultural Infrastructure

Settings are cultural infrastructure. Schools, community music organisations, private studios, music education providers, and early childhood programs are each sites of genuine cultural production, wellbeing, and community life. Strengthening music education means investing in this entire ecosystem. My research across schools and community programs has found consistently that where music education is resourced and valued — in whatever setting — people engage, wellbeing deepens, and communities are enriched (Goopy, 2022; Goopy, 2024; Goopy, 2026b; Goopy & MacArthur, 2026b). Organisations like The Song Room and AYO's Music in Me are exemplary in extending this cultural infrastructure into settings that cannot build it independently.

Recommendations:

- Establish a dedicated national fund for school music infrastructure — including instrument lending libraries, recording and creative spaces, and specialist staffing — with priority weighting for regional, remote, and high-disadvantage schools, recognising that quality music infrastructure must be available in every school, not only elite or specialist ones.

- Support the ongoing operation of community music education organisations — including The Song Room and AYO's Music in Me — through multi-year funding agreements that enable program continuity, evidence-based practice development, and genuine impact at scale.
- Mandate that national school improvement frameworks recognise music and arts education as core learning areas, not optional enrichment, with accountability mechanisms that track music education provision and outcomes across all Australian schools.

Pillar 5: Engaging the Audience

Audiences are made through music education. My research has found that music-wellbeing literacy capabilities developed through music education are carried into adulthood and across the lifespan, deepening cultural participation and sustaining engagement with music well beyond school (Goopy, 2024; Goopy, 2026b; Goopy, 2023). Critically, actively learning music amplifies these wellbeing effects beyond what listening alone achieves: those who make music develop a deeper and more intentional relationship with it as listeners and cultural participants throughout their lives (Goopy & MacArthur, 2026a). This is confirmed by sector evidence showing adults who received arts education as children are 56% more likely to attend live music events. They become the audiences, supporters, and advocates that sustain Australia's cultural ecosystem. Music education does not merely serve the cultural sector; it sustains it.

Music education is also uniquely placed to develop the capabilities — creativity, adaptability, collaboration, analytical thinking — identified as most essential in an AI-shaped future. Investing in musical learners today is the most effective long-term strategy for growing engaged cultural citizens, skilled professionals, and resilient communities. Engaging the audiences of tomorrow means strengthening music education now.

Recommendations:

- Establish clear metrics linking arts education investment to audience participation outcomes across the lifespan, tracking both cultural engagement and the wellbeing, economic, and social returns of music education over time.
- Commission longitudinal research to track the cultural participation pathways of Australians who received quality music education in school, with findings used to inform future policy cycles and investment decisions.
- Invest in adult and community music education opportunities that enable Australians to engage with music as makers and learners across the full lifespan — not only in school — recognising that the audience development benefits of music education are most fully realised when participation is sustained and supported into adulthood.

3. Advocating for a Sixth Pillar: Arts Education, Training and Pathways

I advocate strongly for the inclusion of a sixth pillar in the next version of the National Cultural Policy dedicated explicitly to Arts Education, Training and Pathways. The recommendations embedded across each of the five pillars above demonstrate that music education must be strengthened within each of them; but without being named as a standalone priority, arts education will continue to be threaded through policy without the visibility, accountability structures, or dedicated investment it requires. The question is no longer whether music education matters, but how it can be delivered consistently and at scale. A sixth pillar provides the policy architecture to answer that question.

A sixth pillar would establish arts education as a fundamental human right and a core dimension of national cultural life — not a means to another end. It would create formal, named commitments with dedicated funding, measurable outcomes, and cross-portfolio governance linking the arts, education, health, and employment portfolios in ways the five existing pillars do not. It would encompass: sequential and equitable music and arts education from early childhood through senior secondary; quality initial and ongoing teacher education; clear pathways into tertiary study, vocational training, and professional artistic careers; First Nations arts education as a sovereign cultural priority; and a national research agenda into the cultural, wellbeing, and economic outcomes of arts education. My work on music-wellbeing literacy provides direct

evidence for each of these dimensions, demonstrating that music education develops people's capacity to flourish as cultural citizens across the lifespan (Goopy, 2026b; Goopy & MacArthur, 2026a).

The conditions for this shift are now in place. There is broader sector alignment, stronger evidence, and growing state-level commitment — including NSW's 10-year Music Education Plan and South Australia's sustained strategy. What has been missing is the federal policy architecture to coordinate and sustain these efforts nationally. A sixth pillar would provide it. Australia has produced the research, built the coalitions, and demonstrated the models. This policy review is the moment to name arts education as what it has always been: essential.

Recommendations:

- Establish a sixth pillar — Arts Education, Training and Pathways — with dedicated funding, a cross-portfolio governance structure linking arts, education, health, and employment, and clear national targets for equitable access to quality music and arts education across all school and community settings.
- Use the sixth pillar to establish a national framework for music teacher education and professional learning — setting minimum standards for ITE, funding sequentially structured in-service pathways including nationally recognised certifications such as the Australian Kodály Certificate, and tracking teacher confidence and capability in music across all jurisdictions.
- Commission a national longitudinal research program into the cultural, wellbeing, and economic outcomes of arts education investment, building on the evidence base established through Music Education: Right from the Start and positioning Australia as a world leader in arts education research and policy.

I am thankful for the opportunity to contribute to this consultation. Australia has the evidence, the organisations, and the expertise to make music education a defining priority of its next National Cultural Policy. I commend this submission to the panel and would welcome the opportunity to provide further evidence or appear before any expert consultation process.

Yours sincerely

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