

# National Cultural Policy Submission

## Musica Viva Australia

Musica Viva Australia was founded 75 years ago by a group of Jewish refugees fleeing World War II, hand in hand with volunteer committees in Australian cities and regional towns who formed a national network of people committed to the extraordinary quality and portability of chamber music. From these beginnings Musica Viva Australia has grown to become a key Australian arts organisation; Australia's largest chamber music touring presenter and one of the most prolific commissioners of new Australian music.

The [Musica Viva Australia In Schools](#) program, founded in 1981, tours to over 250,000 primary school children every year, in regional and metropolitan locations in every state and territory. This work is supported year-long by comprehensive, curriculum-aligned digital resources and teacher professional development, produced in-house and delivered online and in person, to support both specialist music teachers and generalist classroom teachers in bringing quality music education to their students.

Musica Viva works extensively and in partnership with individual artists and small ensembles to deliver concert and educational programs. It is the only major performing arts organisation to maintain state-based offices and dedicated staff across nearly every State and Territory. Combined with a national office base in Sydney, this organisational structure emphasises regional educational and artistic engagement led by local staff and allows Musica Viva to leverage Federal Government investment for state-based support across a range of private and public partnerships.

Musica Viva also plays an important and growing role in preparing young Australian musicians for musical careers, through a national Masterclass program, the [FutureMakers](#) artistic leadership program, the [Melbourne International Chamber Music Competition](#) and the recently launched [Strike A Chord – National Chamber Music Championship](#) for secondary school students.

### **1. What challenges and opportunities do you see in the pillar or pillars most relevant to you? Feel free to respond to any or all pillars:**

#### **First Nations**

Musica Viva Australia (MVA) recognises we must be proactive in working towards

reconciliation and do so in a structured and accountable way within our organisation and our broader sphere of influence in schools and the community.

Two of the most in-demand Musica Viva Australia In Schools ensembles, Dativuy Dreaming and Wyniss, were developed On Country in partnership with NAISDA Dance College. These two ensembles have reached 131,585 students across 705 performances in 392 schools Australia-wide between 2015 and 2021. Wyniss is scheduled to reach 15,941 students in 2022 through 97 concerts in 68 schools.

MVA is deeply committed to championing First Nations led music, culture and people through activity such as our partnership with NAISDA, teacher professional development focused on First Nations culture and Equity of access to MVA programs.

**Barrier:** Challenging and changing 'the way that things are done' in a western structured artform. In recent years considerable efforts to improve representation of First Nations culture have been made across the art music sector; however, there is still significant work to be done in all facets of First Nations engagement.

**Opportunity:** MVA is actively pursuing **collaborations with First Nations led organisations such as NAISDA, to create pathways for participation and employment in the sector for First Nations artists.**

### **A Place for Every Story**

The arts have a unique role to play in the construction of our national identity. Under Artistic Director Paul Kildea (a prolific commissioner of new Australian music over many decades) Musica Viva Australia has expanded its creation of new works, which present a compelling picture of contemporary Australia and the many cultures who, together, create our national story. For Musica Viva Australia this work begins in education, and we recognise that all primary school students need, and have the right to a quality, sequential and ongoing music education.

Our work includes presenting diverse stories to students through our 'Musica Viva Australia In Schools' program, our young artists programs including masterclasses, the FutureMakers artistic leadership program and Strike a Chord National Secondary Chamber Music Championship, and through accredited professional development opportunities for specialist and generalist teachers.

**Barrier:** Many disadvantaged schools, including geographically isolated and low ICSEA schools, do not have teachers with the capacity and confidence to embed strong musical tuition in their classrooms. This limitation disproportionately effects students of CaLD backgrounds, First Nations students, students living with disability and students from low socio-economic families.

### **Opportunities:**

**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**

### **The Centrality of the Artist**

Musica Viva Australia is one of Australia's largest employers of freelance classical musicians, in a typical year employing over 300 artists. A firm focus for MVA through COVID was the maximising of performance opportunities for artists via digital adaptation, and provision of cancellation fees where performances were unable to be retained. One of our central pillars is artist development, with a continuum of opportunities through primary, secondary, tertiary and post-tertiary stages.

**Barrier:** One of the fundamental challenges for freelance performing artists is the maintenance of a viable living, often through a mix of performing and teaching.

**Opportunity:** Expansion of regional touring programs, such as Playing Australia, will support both regional access to quality performing arts along with the economic benefits of touring activity, and increased performance opportunities for artists.

**Access to music teaching and live music programs for students across Australia** has the dual benefit of supporting viable artistic careers, and connecting students with the well-documented and significant benefits of a quality ongoing sequential music education.

### **Strong Institutions**

Strong institutions are crucial to the Australian arts ecology. As the leading chamber music organisation in Australia, Musica Viva Australia has a responsibility to world-class music and education opportunities for the artists, audiences, students and schools who work with us and access our programs. MVA is a source of ongoing employment for hundreds of Australian musicians and the first point of access to chamber music (and at times to any live music) that many Australian primary and secondary students receive.

As a peak national not-for-profit MVA has the capacity (unique in both the education and music sectors) to work collaboratively with stakeholders including all three tiers

of government, corporate and non-profit partners, navigating the complexities of communication systems and therefore allowing our artists to focus their energies on delivery of world-class art and teaching.

**Barrier:** Arts organisations currently face some of their most challenging circumstances in the post-COVID space, with diminished reserves, increased costs, and COVID cautious audiences often not yet back to previous levels.

**Opportunity:** Increasing Australia Council funding in order to extend the National Performing Arts Partnership framework would strengthen and repair the diverse cultural ecology established by peak organisations such as Musica Viva Australia.

This must take place in parallel with **greater support for the small-to-medium sector**, which has been severely impacted by both COVID and ongoing government cuts to Federal Arts funding in the small-to-medium organisational bracket.

### **Reaching the Audience**

Musica Viva Australia has one of the largest reaches by an arts organisation into primary and secondary schools in Australia, as well as a national reach into concert halls through our concerts program. In a typical year, for each dollar of Government investment in Musica Viva Australia's programs, two additional dollars of ticket income are generated from concert and education programs, and a further dollar from philanthropic income, particularly to increase the access and regional reach of our programs via programs such as 'Equal Music' which subsidise access to Musica Viva Australia In Schools programs.

The typical touring model that Musica Viva Australia employs to reach audiences Australia-wide has tangible and substantial economic impact – on viable livelihoods for musicians, and the economic flow-on effects of regional performances and accommodation

**Barrier:** In 2022 MVA still observes a tangible effect of the pandemic on audience development including hesitancy to gather in crowded spaces, ongoing restrictions in schools, and cancellations due to illness.

**Opportunity:** A **national performance insurance scheme (including for performances in schools)** would mitigate the current significantly increased risks to presenters and artists.

## **2. Please tell us how each of the 5 pillars are important to you and your practice and why. Feel free to respond to any or all that are applicable to you:**

### **First Nations**

As our artform evolves, MVA recognises that it is critical to include the practice and experience of First Nations artists in this evolution.

MVA has received final endorsement of its RAP from Reconciliation Australia. We currently partner with the National Aboriginal Islander Skills Development Association (NAISDA) to deliver a collaborative performance program. We continue to proactively seek opportunities to work alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists to develop performance programs for Musica Viva Australia In Schools live and online in metropolitan and regional centres. Musica Viva Australia is also committed to co-creating new work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, and to increasing contribution at governance level by participants from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

### **A Place for Every Story**

As an organisation founded by refugees seeking cultural expression, MVA prides itself on offering culturally diverse performance programs and musicians that represent our multi-cultural society, and we work with artists from a range of cultures, including the Torres Strait, Indonesia, Japan and Estonia.

Additionally, MVA has developed a national strategy to support students with diverse access needs as part of the Musica Viva Australia in Schools program.

MVA believes the power of a story lies not just in its telling, but in the capacity for our audiences to see themselves reflected in someone else. In turn, our audiences leave an experience with us a little more in tune with their own story and the world around them. When we present artists in schools and in concert halls, we do so with a deep respect for the stories being shared, and endeavour to make sure those stories are both culturally and musically diverse. Our aim is for the diverse community of Australia to see themselves reflected on stage and in performance in our schools.

### **The Centrality of the Artist**

As one of the largest employers of freelance musicians, Musica Viva Australia was proactive during COVID, committing funds from company reserves to provide support and work for over 460 artists in 2021 alone. During the pandemic, regular national online roundtable conversations with artists and sector workers were established to reduce isolation and support their wellbeing and practice, and still continue. These roundtables provide a unique platform for sector professionals to share challenges and opportunities within their work.

As demand for office space in MVA's National Office in Sydney has reduced because of our commitment to the hybrid workplace, we are able to provide subsidized office and rehearsal space for Ensemble Offspring and Omega Ensemble, two ensembles strongly aligned with MVA's commitment to the development of Australian work and sharing of Australian stories.

### **Strong Institutions**

Musica Viva Australia has a unique role in the sector in its capacity to provide artists with well-supported touring to a broader audience than they could reach on their own.

MVA's education touring programs are at a scale where they provide regular income for an orchestra's worth of artists over 4+ years, allowing them to integrate them into a sustainable mix of roles. Our commitment to quality means that artistic and pedagogical standards are maintained in all settings.

MVA is an efficient, high-capacity organisation and sector leader with broad geographic reach, which has undertaken significant adaptation and innovation in the face of the recent sector upheaval. We have a substantial national footprint, a track record of excellence in service delivery across a broad range of activities, and are uniquely positioned at this point in our history to continue to shape Australia's musical future in an active and collaborative way.

### **Reaching the Audience**

Musica Viva Australia is determined to increase reach to audiences and participants regardless of geographic, socio-economic or physical circumstances. We offer year-round engagement and support to teachers through a combination of live and digital delivery.

Our Equal Music Fund offers subsidised tickets for schools and students who would otherwise not be able to enjoy music education.

MVA offers tailored performance presentation, curriculum-aligned resources and PD to generalist and specialist teachers to support students with diverse access needs.

The advances in communication technology and networks brought about by the pandemic have made access to high quality music education more achievable for many regional, disadvantaged, or immuno-compromised audience members and students. Additionally, MVA has recognised an opportunity for post-Covid reinvigoration of in-person programs, to reflect on our strengths and to make room for innovation and growth.

### **3. Are there any other things that you would like to see in a National Cultural Policy?**

Musica Viva Australia would like to see **recognition of the arts across many portfolios**; that supporting art benefits the country's economy, community health and well-being; builds a national narrative; encourages tourism and enables a collective articulation of a national culture.

Musica Viva Australia believes it is critical to **ensure 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.
- A critical starting point is to explicitly recognise that the evidenced benefits of music education are dependent on an understanding of just what constitutes a 'quality' music education. The collaborative national music education advocacy initiative, led by the Tony Foundation, *Music Education: Right From the Start* has sought to address this question drawing on the available research and evidence in consultation with a broad spectrum of advisers.

We would therefore like to see a vision to provide **all Australian primary school students with quality, sequential and ongoing music education**. This will require co-operation between State and Federal Governments, and long-term planning to ensure an appropriately trained workforce is in place. It will also require investment in research to understand the current gaps and deficits in music education delivery, and guide the most effective interventions.