

18 July 2024

Ms Julia Finn
Chair, Joint Select Committee on Arts and Music Education and Training in New South Wales
NSW Parliament

Via email: ArtsandMusic@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Ms Julia Finn,

I welcome the opportunity to provide brief comments in relation to the inquiry into Arts and Music Education and Training in New South Wales.

Established under the *Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014*, the Advocate for Children and Young People (**ACYP**) is an independent statutory appointment overseen by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Children and Young People. ACYP advocates for and promotes the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people aged 0-24 years and promotes their participation in decisions that affect their lives. The Act requires ACYP to 'give priority to the interests and needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people' and to 'focus on systemic issues affecting children and young people'. Further information about ACYP's work can be found at: www.acyp.nsw.gov.au.

Given the focus of ACYP's work, our submission is focused on the following Terms of Reference:

- a) The quality and effectiveness of arts and creative industries education, including:
 - (ix) ways that students can learn entrepreneurial skills and gain industry experience to ensure they are job-ready
 - (xi) factors influencing student decisions to pursue further arts education, including but not limited to course choice, course location and the method of study
- b) the quality and effectiveness of music education and training, including:
 - (viii) ways that students can learn entrepreneurial skills and gain industry experience to ensure they are job-ready
 - (x) factors influencing student decisions to pursue further arts education, including but not limited to course choice, course location and the method of study

I welcome the Committee's focus on enhancing job readiness and identifying barriers to arts and music education and training. I hear directly from many children and young people about their passions, dreams and aspirations, as well as the barriers that prevent them from achieving their goals. When asked what the main issues that young people in NSW face today in 2024 Youth Week Poll, the top three themes that emerged were the high cost of living/inflation, education, and unemployment/access to jobs. Children and young people raised several concerns, including feeling

pressure to succeed, a desire for curriculum that focused on relevant practical skills, and the cost of education for their parents.

Young people appreciate opportunities to gain experience through education and training ahead of their transition into the workforce. Providing pathways to meaningful experience in their chosen industry was a key issue raised by young people during the consultations which informed ACYP's [Cost of Living](#) report. Career development can provide opportunities for mentorship and access to networks, which is critical given many young people, particularly those from regional NSW, refrain it's "not what you know, but who you know".¹ This report found that many young people believe they have lower employment prospects due to a lack of pre-existing connections with employers and local opportunities. Learners from rural and regional communities, such as young musicians, face multiple layers of disadvantage, which can include a lack of specialist teachers, resources and opportunities².

Cost of living consultations highlighted the costs associated with study was a key consideration when deciding future education and employment aspirations. This included course fees, the costs of course materials, and the location and method of study. Any support provided must take into account this broader context. Young people will greatly benefit from additional support in accessing education and improving their employability, in particular, to gain mentorship, networks and real-world experiences.

To ensure that students can make informed decisions, it is important that clear and accurate information about education and training options are easily accessible. When asked whether they feel they have sufficient access to learning and support for career development in the 2024 Youth Week Poll, 72% of children and young people explained that they either do not have enough information (23%) or have some information but would like more (49%). Knowledge plays a crucial role in decision-making, especially for children and young people who may not be familiar with the fields they are seeking a career in. More transparent information in arts and music education and training will empower students to plan effectively and better determine their careers of interest. This includes information about different course requirements, fee structures, career pathways and entry-level salaries.

Careers in creative industries are very attractive to children and young people. To relay some examples of the aspirations of children and young people from ACYP's recently published [Postcards to the Advocate](#):

"A dream would be to be a singer-songwriter and pursue music". – Olivia, 12 years old

"To discover my creative passion – I want to make something that leaves an impact after me – a book, movie, etc". – Lachlan, 7 years old

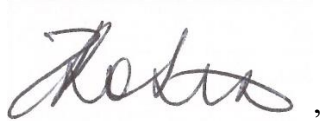
"I hope I can change someone's life with my art. I hope to tell stories that inspire people". – Ella, 13 years old

¹ <https://www.acyp.nsw.gov.au/cost-of-living-report>

² <https://www.scu.edu.au/news/2024/tc-youth-orchestras-fight-music-inequality/>

Thank you once for the opportunity to provide feedback in relation to the inquiry into Arts and Music Education and Training in New South Wales. I trust this information has been of some assistance to the Inquiry. Should you wish to discuss these matters further, please do not hesitate to contact my office via: acyp@acyp.nsw.gov.au or ph: (02) 9248 0970.

Yours Sincerely,



Zoë Robinson

Advocate for Children and Young People

Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People