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Conflict of Interest Statement.

The author declares that submission was generated in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as potential conflict of interest.

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSE.

- Primary Teacher
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- Other (please specify)



Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Inclusion: Engaging in a Creative Victoria.

There is an extraordinary evidence base to support music education in schools. On the weekend of 19 and 20 April 2008, more than 1000 Australians responded to an invitation from the then Prime Minister, the Honorable Kevin Rudd MP and came to Parliament House in Canberra for the *Australia 2020 Summit: Thinking Big* with the purpose of discussing the agenda for the nation. The challenge was to help shape a long-term strategy for the nation's future, to tackle the long-term challenges confronting Australia by thinking in new ways. Attendees came from diverse backgrounds - some eminent in specialised fields; others 'ordinary' Australians.

The Summit covered a range of topics in 10 streams. Discussion was approached in different ways. The ambitions, themes and ideas that emerged reflected the backgrounds and passions of individual participants; the unique dynamics of each stream; and the varying challenges relating to each discussion area (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2008). Two of the ten streams appear to be especially relevant.

The political, economic, social and cultural fabric of Australian and global communities is enhanced through music education. The *Strengthening Communities, Supporting Families and Social Inclusion* stream was co-chaired by Mr Tim Costello AO; and the Honourable Tanya Plibersek MP. The stream examined the challenges and opportunities facing Australian families and communities in the context of enormous political, economic, social and cultural change. The group considered the following focus questions:

- Community and family life can give people the support, resilience and outlook they need to play a full part in Australia's future. What can we do to enable local communities to provide political, economic, social and cultural networks and support to every member?
- What are the root causes and consequences of political, economic, social and cultural exclusion? What roles can different sectors play in tackling them?
- What measures can we take to ensure that people feel safe in their homes and communities?
- What roles do the government, business and community sectors play in helping families care for older Australians; children and people with a disability?
- How do we ensure that all Australians have access to housing that is affordable, secure, safe and accessible?
- What can be done to help new Australians settle and participate in the community?
- Some localities experience chronic political, economic, social and cultural disadvantage. What needs to be done to ensure that communities have the appropriate infrastructure to foster people's health and wellbeing?

Six themes were agreed:

- responding to political, economic, social and cultural disadvantage;
- building community ownership;
- leadership structures, processes and partnerships;
- our common values;
- political, economic, social and cultural inclusion as a first-order issue; and
- stronger families.

Themes were subsequently refined:

- making political, economic, social and cultural inclusion a top priority;
- building and strengthening local communities;
- supporting and empowering families; and
- reducing political, economic, social and cultural disadvantage.

Focus groups were formed around these themes. Participants engaged in substantial debate in a plenary session. A number of ‘big’ and ‘cost-neutral’ policy ideas were agreed to by the stream, including:

- establish a *Charter of Human Rights* and a *National Action Plan on Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Inclusion*;
- place greater emphasis on early intervention and prevention;
- develop a *National Development Index* underpinned by specific measurable indicators of political, economic, social and cultural inclusion.
- establish a National Disability Insurance Scheme.

The stream agreed to an “Ambition Statement” that adopted notions of:

- Australia known throughout the world as a diverse, compassionate, fair and respectful society;
- every Australian is valued by and participates in society;
- every Australian has meaningful access to education, health, housing, work, justice, care and life opportunities;
- every Australian has a safe, healthy and supported childhood that allows them to fulfil their potential;
- every Australian feels a sense of belonging;
- Australian society embraces and celebrates Indigenous peoples;
- Australian society focuses on long-term prevention;
- Australian society experiences the benefits of return on political, economic, social and cultural investment; and
- Australian society regards social inclusion as equal and integral to a buoyant political, economic, social and cultural environment.

The stream adopted a “Proposed Framework for Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Inclusion in Australia”.

Academic performance of individual students is enhanced through music education. The *Towards a Creative Australia: The Future of The Arts, Film and Design* stream was co-chaired by Ms Cate Blanchett; Dr Julianne Schultz; and the Honourable Peter Garrett AM MP. Participants considered notions of the centrality of arts and creativity. Discussion began with ‘blockers’ to these notions, especially access to, and participation in arts and creativity; public perception and knowledge of arts and creativity; and the question of ‘arts’ in ‘creativity’. Participants agreed that the arts and creativity are absolutely central to societal culture, health and wellbeing, i.e.,

- acknowledgment that Australia should aspire to being a world leader in the creation of new research and development in *The Arts*;
- creativity as central to Australian life and Indigenous culture;
- recognition of the importance of cultural diversity;
- *The Arts* needing to be integrated in other sectors, such as health to help foster political, economic, social and cultural inclusion;
- creative arts as the core to all sectors of the economy - sectors fail to be dynamic in the absence of a creative core;
- the need for artists to be recognised in all sectors; and
- distinguishing the terms ‘the arts’, ‘creativity’ and ‘innovation’.

Groupings discussed mechanisms for change, i.e.,

- enhance community perceptions of artists to ensure that artists have mainstream recognition, e.g., civil honours;
- establish a Prime Minister’s Prize for the *Creative Australian of the Year* and other awards for excellence in *The Arts*;
- overtly value arts and artists at the federal government level, e.g., ensure that politicians attend arts events and foster a whole of government view of arts and creativity;
- allocate 1 per cent of each government portfolio’s funding to arts-related activities; and
- support a mentorship scheme for new artists.

Participants in the *Towards a Creative Australia: The Future of The Arts, Film and Design* stream then broke into several smaller groupings to consider notions of embedding arts and creativity in education. That notions of political, economic, social and cultural inclusion be respected and valued, statutory curriculum, assessment and reporting authorities in many education systems apparently commit to support of equity of access for *all* learners; and to developing diverse curriculum, assessment and reporting frameworks that will equip *all* children and young people of compulsory school age with the essential skills, knowledge and capabilities to thrive and compete with 21st century competencies in a globalised world.

For example, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is apparently committed to supporting equity of access to the Australian Curriculum for *all* learners, and to developing a curriculum that will equip *all* Australian children and young people of compulsory school age with the essential skills, knowledge and capabilities to thrive and compete in a globalised world (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2012a, 2012b, 2012c, 2012d).

The *Shape of the Australian Curriculum* described commitment to supporting equity and diversity in the *Australian Curriculum* framework for school aged children and young people including those:

- of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent;
- for whom English is an additional language or dialect;
- from rural and remote contexts;
- from low socio-economic settings;
- with complex special needs;
- with diverse personal or cultural backgrounds or religious affiliations; and
- with gifted and talented abilities.

Participants considered *arts and creative education* fundamental to development and learning of *all* Australian children and young people of compulsory school age (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2008, pp. 253-302). Participants strongly agreed on the fundamental importance of including *arts and creative education* in curriculum, assessment and reporting frameworks at all levels to develop critical and creative thinking, i.e.,

- national curriculum, assessment and reporting requirements to include *The Arts*;
- bringing *The Arts* into schools, e.g., practitioners in residence, national mentoring program funded by philanthropic funds and tax incentives; and
- creativity become a national research priority.

Emphasis should be on encouraging children's natural curiosity and imagination. The importance of encouraging development of curious and imaginative minds through the pursuit of *arts and creative education* was supported through learning and teaching of *The Arts* subdomains of Dance, Drama, Media, Music and Visual Arts. For example, the discipline-based key learning area *The Arts* describe *arts and creative education* as unique, expressive and creative. Students are engaged in critical and creative thinking that helps them understand themselves and the world (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA), 2008).

It should be noted that development and learning within and across the subdomains in *The Arts* curriculum, assessment and reporting frameworks are not universally understood. However, *musical development and learning* takes place in many formal and informal contexts. Music can move us to the heights or depths of emotion. It can persuade us to buy something, or remind us of our first date. It can lift us out of depression when nothing else can. It can get us dancing to its beat. Be it in a school or music studio, while making music with friends or family, or even while travelling in a car, walking through a shopping mall or watching television, our myriad sonic experiences accumulates from the earliest months of life to foster our facility for making sense of the sound worlds in which we live.

Musical development and learning is profoundly complex. Much evidence based enquiry and research has accumulated over at least 40 years regarding musical development and learning from conception and infancy, through childhood and adolescence and into adulthood (Davies, 1978; Hargreaves, 1986; Hodges (editor), 1996; Deutsch (editor), 2012; Radocy and Boyle, 2003; Hallam, Cross and Thaut (editors), 2009; Thompson, 2009; Hargreaves, Miell and MacDonald (editors), 2012; and McPherson and Welch (editors), 2012).

What happens when music and the brain mix it up? Doidge (2007) illustrated the strange workings and misfirings of the human mind: the brain is not 'fixed' or 'hardwired', but is capable of profound change throughout our lives. How precariously our worlds are poised on a little biochemistry. Moreover, it is noteworthy that, in more recent times, a persuasive case has been made for transformative and translational application of evidence based neuroscientific enquiry and research to education; first in the United States, and subsequently in the United Kingdom.

The power of music goes much, much further. Music occupies more areas of the brain than language does - humans are a musical species. A growing body of evidence based enquiry and research regarding the neuroscience of music has transformed and translated understandings of musical development and learning (Peretz and Zattore (editors), 2003; Gruhn and Raucher (editors), 2007). Can we use music to retrain the brain? Evidence based enquiry and research suggests that, yes, we can.

Earliest musical development and learning apparently begins with perception and cognition of a bewildering confusion of sound: recognizing a phone ring, understanding speech, listening to music, or recognizing a parent's voice. This extraordinary body of evidence based enquiry and research articulates ways in which individuals *make* music and *respond* to music. By definition, musical development and learning is a continuum across the lifespan from conception and infancy, through childhood and adolescence and into adulthood.

For example, development and learning within and across all key learning areas varies greatly within and across the many distinctive classifications of complex special needs. Development and learning varies greatly depending on the severity of the condition. But, nobody can truly know what is locked in the world of a child or young person with the many classifications of complex special needs. But it *is* possible to make such an apparently insular world fulfilling. Music in particular appears to be a potent tool to achieve new pathways.

Music seems to provide an outlet for expression and communication with others in an otherwise strange and confusing universe. Some may possess extraordinary musical gifts and talents despite sometimes complex severe, profound and multiple limitations (James, S (editor) (2012); Levitin and Bellugi, 1998; Miller, 1989; Ockelford, 2007; Ockelford, 2008; Ockelford, 2012a; Ockelford 2012b; Port Philip Specialist School (2008); Sacks, 2007).

Health and well being is promoted and maintained through music making. Music for expression, relaxation, anxiety reduction and communication is used to promote physical health and healthy behaviours. A healthy start to life is promoted. The impact of the significant brain damage is counteracted. Inclusion of these individuals strengthens the political, economic, cultural and social fabric of Australian and global communities. Individuals enjoy healthy, productive and fulfilling lives (Levitin, 2008; Rickard and McFerran (editors), 2012).

So, *music education* is considered valuable and essential for *all* Australian children and young people of compulsory school age. Evidence based enquiry and research regarding musical development and learning; neuroscience and the neuroscience of music illustrates that development and learning in this domain appears to be somewhat autonomous, although not entirely mutually exclusive of development and learning in other domains. The unique properties of musical elements appear to directly influence development and learning within and across psychobiological; sensation and perception; language; psychomotor; and psychosocial domains. Musical activity and experiences provide the foundation for development and learning beyond the music domain. An array of gestural, language, physical, emotional and social and other behaviours are observed through *making* music and *responding* to music. This body of evidence based enquiry and research articulates ways in which individuals develop an extraordinary array of *cross-curriculum capabilities* through *making* music and *responding* to music.

Creating and Making music focuses on musical ideas, skills, techniques, processes, performances and presentations. Musical concepts emerge from a range of starting points and stimuli. Experiences, ideas, feelings and understandings are explored through making, interpreting, performing, creating and presenting music. Creating and making musical works involves imagination and experimentation; planning; the application of music elements, principles and/or conventions; skills, techniques and processes; media, materials, equipment and technologies; reflection; and refinement. Individually and collaboratively, own musical works and works by other artists working in different historic and cultural contexts are explored.

Exploring and Responding music focuses on context, interpreting and responding, and criticism and aesthetics of music. It involves students analysing and developing understanding about own and others' musical works. Informed personal judgments are expressed. Involvement in evaluating meaning, ideas and/or content in finished products is integral to engagement in music.

Exploration of, and response to expressive qualities of musical works is informed by critical analysis of the use of elements, content and techniques and discussion about the nature, content, and formal, aesthetic and/or kinaesthetic qualities of musical works. Exploring the qualities of musical works involves use of music-specific language. Purposes and functions for which musical works are created, and audiences to whom they are presented are researched. Understandings of political, economic, social, cultural and historic contexts and constructs of musical works are developed. Ways that musical works reflect, construct, reinforce and challenge political, economic, social and cultural values and beliefs are considered.

By definition, the context of curriculum, assessment and reporting frameworks are acknowledged as fraught with profound challenges. Work and thought is genuinely appreciated. Efforts are valued and difficulties understood. Those who draft frameworks indeed contend with complex dilemmas. Constraints are extensively documented in the Australian *National Review of School Music Education: Augmenting the Diminished* (NRSME) inquiry into schools music education (Pascoe, et al., 2005). For many school settings, implementation of music curriculum, assessment and reporting frameworks are a profound challenge; but a challenge that should be made rather than evaded.

Authors of the NRSME reported profound challenges in equity of access; participation and engagement in school music for *all* Australian children and young people of compulsory school age; teacher pre-service and in-service education; support services for instrumental music, vocal music and music technology; support for productive partnerships and networking with music organisations, musicians, the music industry and the Australian community; support for principals and school leadership, allocated time in the timetable, adequate facilities and equipment; levels of accountability; and overall status of music in schools. The more recent (United Kingdom) *The Importance of Music: A National Plan for Music Education* reported similar constraints (Henley, 2011).

The NRSME devoted approximately 6 pages of the 313 page document to discussion of equity and diversity in school music education. For example, approximately 1½ pages were devoted to discussion of children and young people of compulsory school age with complex special needs. Approximately 2 pages were devoted to discussion of children and young people of compulsory school age with musical giftedness and talent.

The more recent (United Kingdom) *Music in Schools: Wider Still, and Wider (Quality and Inequality in Music Education 2008-2011)* highlighted the extraordinary efforts of a specialist school setting in north London that has also received national and international recognition as a best-practice model in the education and training of children and young people of compulsory school age with many classifications of complex special needs through development and introduction of an *Arts* curriculum framework; and highly successful professional practices correlated to learning standards and pathways (Office of Standards in Education (OFSTED), 2012a). Their work is also informed by international, regional and national evidence based enquiry and research. OFSTED has posted audio visual material of their work on the website *YouTube* (OFSTED, 2012b).

Apparently, there was much considered discussion about learning and teaching of *The Arts* in schools among participants in the *Towards a Creative Australia: The Future of The Arts, Film and Design* stream. Participants argued that no school child should be excluded from experiencing activities in *The Arts*. It was noted that, all too often, the refrain from schools was that, because of other curriculum pressures, *arts and creative education* was somehow discretionary or secondary. It was also noted that, all too often, there was profound risk of ‘dumbing-down’ *arts and creative education* into a bland, watered-down mish-mash of ‘creative arts’. It was suggested that there may be value in appointing an arts liaison officer or similar in each school or for group of schools. Such a specialist could assist with arranging visual and performing arts tours to schools, act as an arts resource person for other teachers and students, contribute to evaluating the quality of arts education, and work proactively to ensure that arts and culture were part of the mainstream school experience. In particular, attention was also drawn to very effective work done by specialist teachers in Australia, using music, dance and other arts forms to help students with complex special needs.

In the main, music is taught in generalist schools, rather than unique, selective entry music schools. Review teams visited many school settings. The NRSME reported many Australian children and young people of compulsory school age miss out on effective music education. Apparently, many Australian primary school settings offer no classroom music at all. Nevertheless, the NRSME highlighted many examples of excellent music education in schools.

That poor-quality instruction risked putting students off music was noted by participants. Participants observed that the quality and motivation of individual teachers was crucial.

It would seem reasonable to speculate that not many teachers feel truly competent or confident to teach music, let alone incorporate notions of equity and diversity. In particular, mandatory hours in music education offered in pre-service degrees for primary generalist classroom teachers appear to have significantly decreased over many years. There is no credible music framework that can be delivered by musically-uneducated teachers any more than there is a credible reading framework that can be delivered by a person who cannot read. Let us not pretend otherwise. The challenge of providing an adequate music education to teachers must be taken up by others.

Conclusion. In providing evidence to support music education in schools for the inquiry, several most important public policy documents appear to be especially relevant. Challenges and opportunities facing Australian families and communities in the context of enormous political, economic, social and cultural change were passionately argued in the *Strengthening Communities, Supporting Families and Social Inclusion* stream of the *Australia 2020 Summit: Thinking Big* conference. All sectors of the economy are recognised as having a significant role to play in mitigating political, economic, social and cultural exclusion (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2008, pp. 167-218).

The *Towards a Creative Australia: The Future of The Arts, Film and Design* passionately argued innovative political, economic, cultural and social benefit to the Australian and international community. Engagement in arts and creative education advance the national research priority of *Promoting and Maintaining Good Health: Promoting Good Health and Well Being* and associated goals. Engagement in arts and creative education promote political, economic, social and cultural inclusion, e.g.,

- give everyone a chance to explore their creativity and we may have a country where *music* can change people’s lives;
- *music* plays an important role in bridging gaps/breaking down barriers;
- reconnect with community through *music*;
- *music* should not only supported and invested in, but also recognised as a real mechanism for lasting political, economic, social and cultural change.

By definition, current provision of music education in the State of Victoria is acknowledged as fraught with profound challenges and opportunities, e.g., funding, optimum balance of mandates, supports and governance. Work and thought is genuinely appreciated. Efforts are valued and difficulties understood. Those who provide music education in Victoria indeed contend with complex dilemmas. However, the extent and quality of music education provision in Victorian schools must not be compromised.

- the State of Victoria must aspire to being leader in the creation of new research and development in *The Arts*;
- creativity is central to Victorian life and Indigenous culture in Victoria;
- *The Arts* needs to be integrated in other sectors such as health to help foster political, economic, social and cultural inclusion in Victoria;
- creativity is the core to all sectors of the Victorian economy - sectors fail to be dynamic in the absence of a creative core;
- enhance community perceptions of artists to ensure that Victorian artists have mainstream recognition, e.g., civil honours;
- establish a Victorian Premier's Prize for the *Creative Australian of the Year* and other awards for excellence in *The Arts*;
- overtly value arts and artists at the Victorian government level, e.g., ensure that politicians attend arts events and foster a whole of government view of arts and creativity;
- allocate 1 per cent of each government portfolio's funding to arts-related activities;
- support mentorship scheme(s) for new artists;
- connect schools, communities and arts practitioners through *arts and creativity* hubs that would provide a place to work and act as a one-stop shop for professional advice;
- ensure that teachers are paid and trained properly, and that they are valued;
- use online interactive information and computer technology to support *arts and creative education* learning and teaching, and improve access to *The Arts*.

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Biography.

Dr Helen Farrell has had a lifelong fascination for music as performer, teacher and researcher. She was admitted to an undergraduate qualification in primary school teaching; then to several postgraduate qualifications. She has had the extraordinary privilege of 30+ years in a range of leadership and management roles with high levels of responsibility in public sector primary schooling, special education and early childhood.

She has extensive experience, knowledge and skill in the development and delivery of music programs and interventions for children and young people with many classifications of complex special needs, some rare, who demonstrate a range of functional abilities and complex needs.

Working in the education and training of these children and young people, Helen noticed a number had very special musical abilities. She became interested in how we all intuitively make sense of *The Arts*, in particular, music. She was admitted to the degree of PhD in the University of Melbourne, August 2007.

Since admission to the degree of PhD, Helen was appointed Research Fellow in the *Music, Mind and Wellbeing (MMW)/National Music Therapy Research Unit (NaMTRU)*, one of the newest research initiatives hosted in the Melbourne Neuroscience Institute (MNI) in the University of Melbourne.

MMW/NaMTRU links a unique set of international, regional and national interdisciplinary collaborations in music, science, health, education and industry within and across the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music (MCM) and the Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences (MSPS).