



## Public submission made to the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools

Submitter: APRA AMCOS  
Submitting as a: Peak body  
State: NSW

### Summary

APRA AMCOS makes this submission to the Review Panel in the context of our role as a peak body representing 94,000 members who are songwriters, composers and music publishers. We license organisations to play, perform, copy, record or make available our members' music, and we distribute the royalties to our members.

Since 2014, we have partnered with the Australian government on a pioneering in-school mentoring program which sees high profile career writers and producers work with students and teachers in secondary schools. The program aims to transfer technical and enterprise skills to students and help scaffold young people in to the global industry. Our submission draws on the University of Tasmania's third party evaluation of the program.

Arising from our keen interest in Australia's cultural and economic advancement at home and internationally, our submission in the main addresses the question: 'what should educational success for Australian students and schools look like?'. In summary, our points are:

- a) that equitable, foundational music learning in schools be prioritised, even from the early years. It's good for students, good for schools and makes sound economic sense. A STEM focus is critical, but not if it means we sideline the Arts. Students thrive with STEAM;
- b) that young people's access to the world of work beyond the school gate be enhanced, with increased industry partnerships and mentoring;
- c) that enterprise skills and entrepreneurial thinking be embedded across the curriculum;
- d) that students and teachers work collaboratively, creatively and across curriculum;
- e) that the skills of industry partners be tapped to help deliver relevant teacher professional learning;

- f) that priority be given to delivering access for girls to under-represented industries and to engagement for at-risk, disadvantaged students.

## Main submission

### 1. About APRA AMCOS

- 1.1. APRA AMCOS makes this submission to the Review Panel in the context of our role as a peak body representing 94,000+ members who are songwriters, composers and music publishers. We license organisations to play, perform, copy, record or make available our members' music, and we distribute the royalties to our members.
- 1.2. Over the last two decades, the digital disruption occurring in the global music industry has provided both challenges and opportunities for Australia's content creators, many of whom enter the industry at an increasingly young age, often bypassing tertiary training. In recognition of this, we have been working in partnership with the Australian government on a national in-school mentoring program since 2014, SongMakers. It aims to broaden young people's understanding of the diversity of careers in the global music industry and to help scaffold them in. In this submission we draw on longitudinal, third party research into the program.
- 1.3. Arising from our keen interest in Australia's cultural and economic advancement at home and internationally we address the question: 'what should educational success for Australian students and schools look like?' Our key points, in summary, are:
  - a) that equitable, foundational music learning in schools be prioritised, even from the early years. It's good for students, good for schools and makes sound economic sense. A STEM focus is critical, but not if it means we sideline the Arts. Students thrive with STEAM;
  - b) that young people's access to the world of work beyond the school gate be enhanced, with increased industry partnerships and mentoring;
  - c) that enterprise skills and entrepreneurial thinking be embedded across the curriculum;
  - d) that students and teachers work collaboratively, creatively and across curriculum;
  - e) that the skills of industry partners be tapped to help deliver relevant teacher professional learning;
  - f) that priority be given to delivering access for girls to under-represented industries, and engagement for at-risk, disadvantaged students.

### 2. Industry/school context

- 2.1. While 60% of Australia's year 12 school leavers elect not to undertake tertiary training directly after school, our research shows this trend to be more marked in the contemporary music industry. For example, in the last 4 years, 85% of the winners of APRA AMCOS' Songwriter or Breakthrough Songwriter of the Year awards have joined the industry straight from school with no university education. These include Troye Sivan, the four members of 5 Seconds of Summer and Grammy winner, Harley Streten, aka Flume.
- 2.2. Australia's songwriters are breaking through the global charts at an increasingly young age. Billboard charting writers, Sarah Aarons, Alex Hope, Flume and Troye Sivan are all under 25 and part of the new guard of young Australian music creatives making waves not long out of high school.
- 2.3. With no apprenticeship or professional accreditation for songwriters or producers, and with the directly-from-school-to-work transition being so marked for aspirant songwriters, we recognise the importance of secondary school as the point of access to Australia's next generation of global hit-makers into a global recorded music industry estimated to be worth over AUD20 billion.
- 2.4. Collaboration is a strong hallmark of success for writers. On last year's ARIA Top 50 Australian Artist Singles only 6 songs were composed by a sole writer. A study into last year's top 100 Billboard chart hits found it takes an average of 4.53 songwriters to create a global hit single.
- 2.5. In our experience, senior school music curricula and assessment regimes prioritise an individual student's technical proficiency, often by recreating existing repertoire, and underplay the skills that will give a young person's music career the best chance at sustainability - the ability to create new work, especially in collaboration with others.
3. Industry/government partnership context:
  - 3.1. As noted above, since 2013 APRA AMCOS have partnered with the Australian government on a national in-school mentoring program - SongMakers. This program facilitates high profile songwriters and producers to work alongside students and teachers in senior secondary schools on an intensive real-world project about creativity, collaboration and developing career pathways in music. The in-school workshops are supported by curriculum materials freely available to all Australian schools from the program website.
  - 3.2. A strength of the program is the depth of skills and experience of the mentors who between them have over 20 ARIA Awards, 30 APRA Awards and even a Grammy. They include Lior, Katie Noonan, Megan Washington, Rai Thistlethwayte (Thirsty Merc), Ilan Kidron (The Potbelleez), Kav

Temperley (Eskimo Joe) and JP Fung (Birds of Tokyo, Last Dinosaurs, Daniel Johns).

3.3. While dramatic changes in the music industry present exciting opportunities for young creatives, the pace of that change makes it nearly impossible for teachers to keep up with developments. The SongMakers program helps teachers deliver relevant, popular music education that matches the industry's opportunities with students' aspirations. The program also provides transferable enterprise skills that benefit all participating students, not just those who may pursue a music career after school.

3.4. The program has reached schools in regional, rural and remote areas (34% of participating schools) where access to vocational opportunities of this kind are limited; the workshop gender split is 50:50, making it one of the most successful interventions to engage young women in the music industry – a cohort otherwise under-represented in the industry; and its success has spawned an innovation which sees our mentors working with traumatised young people at two Flexible Learning Centres in regional VIC (Wodonga and Shepparton), with support from Creative Victoria.

3.5. The SongMakers program has been found to be:

“internationally significant in the field of arts education and vocational education, with few comparable programs demonstrating the kinds of consistent and sustained positive outcomes for student learning – particularly an understanding of what's required to be work-ready and successful in a contemporary music career.”

In focus groups conducted four years on from their SongMakers experience, former students' say they now have a 'proven' understanding that the music industry is a viable career option, with half working in the music industry or studying music; others continuing to practice music in band or solo settings with aspirations for continued industry engagement.

“All former students so far interviewed have commented on the impact of the program on:

- helping them to set their professional and career goals
- enabling them to effectively participate in collaborative group work in their current work and study contexts
- giving them a lasting sense of self-confidence and esteem with regards to their personal and professional choices and experiences”

4. What should educational success for Australian students and schools look like?

4.1. Equitable, foundational music learning from the early years and STEAM focus

- 4.1.1. International and Australian research finds that arts education generally and music education specifically are uniquely beneficial to students' learning at school – intrinsically, and extrinsically for its links to improved literacy and numeracy, and social and emotional wellbeing. With Australian research showing that 23% of government schools provide meaningful music education compared with 88% of independent schools, it is evident that provision of music education in Australia is grossly inequitable to the detriment of most Australian students. We would like to see the reinstatement of music's status as a 'must-have' component of every child's education.
- 4.1.2. While we support the current moves by governments to improve Australia's performance in the STEM subjects – after all the contemporary music industry demands high levels of digital literacy with the laptop the instrument of choice for many of our most-successful young creators - we caution against a reductionist approach which sidelines the Arts in the process. Students thrive best with STEAM:
- “there is incontrovertible national and international evidence of the benefits of participation in arts education, including music education—indeed, it may well be more powerful for music education than in any other field in the Arts—not only from the intrinsic merits of participation in arts education but also the benefits it brings more widely to learning and personal and social wellbeing.”
- 4.1.3. Aside from its many lifelong benefits to students, research shows a strong connection between music education and a country's music export success too. Sweden is consistently one of the top three net exporters of music (the others are the US and UK) and the largest on a per capita basis. Research has found this success is due in part to Sweden's tradition of State-funded music education through its schools and network of municipal music schools - whose curricula has prioritised student-friendly activities such as songwriting, recording and mixing. The SongMakers mentoring program is our response to the Swedish example as recognition that, over the longer term, focused investment on young people as co-creators and producers - not just consumers/re-creators of popular music - will see cultural and economic rewards for Australia:
- “(SongMakers outcomes) ... can be viewed collectively as a multilayered contribution to fostering Australia's new popular music ecology: that is, directly supporting skill development, increasing awareness of industry processes of collaboration, furthering young

people's career aspirations, and creating new professional collaborations and authentic industry standard licensing agreements for the use of young people's work."

#### 4.2. Real world mentoring

4.2.1. The Foundation for Young Australians (FYA) says that, globally, young people are seeking more real world preparation, citing research that 78% believe internships and apprenticeships are critical for success, but 60% saying they have insufficient access to these opportunities.

4.2.2. We support the FYA's call for Australia's education systems to focus more on: "immersive, real world experiences to build the skills and capabilities which will enable young people to adapt to an ever-changing environment."

4.2.3. We are committed to playing our part by continuing our work in this area.

#### 4.3. Enterprise skills and entrepreneurialism

4.3.1. We support calls by the OECD for education systems and school curricula to prioritise the development of creative, critical thinking and collaborative skills. These skills are especially critical for young music industry hopefuls in Australia, as 2 out of every 3 of our musicians are self-employed.

4.3.2. For today's aspirant writers and performers in the contemporary music industry there is no 'workplace' in the traditional sense (American songwriter, Jimmy Webb, has said "our offices are between our ears") and young people must enter the industry with a 'start up' mindset, requiring enterprise skills and entrepreneurial intent.

4.3.3. Potbelleez frontman, Ilan Kidron, who divides his time between Sydney and LA as an award-winning co-writer, is a mentor on SongMakers:

"We try to get across that you have to develop a particular set of skills if you're a career writer. You've got to be creative; able to work well with others; be resilient when disappointments come up; have a good understanding of the online world; have a working knowledge of industry-standard software like ProTools or Logic; and hone business skills like international marketing and accounting. And you have to be able to do all that wherever you find yourself because there's no 'workplace' in the traditional sense. How many jobs demand that? It's scary and hard but it's also really, really exciting."

- 4.3.4. Recent research finds that 69% of young people have aspirations to start their own business, yet more than half say they lack the skills to do it. Young people want to be job creators, not job seekers – and for aspirant career musicians, this mindset is compulsory, not optional.

#### 4.4. Working collaboratively, creatively and across the curriculum

- 4.4.1. Mostly, senior secondary music teachers find themselves in the service of music curricula that prioritise the assessment of an individual student's technical proficiency as a player or singer in recreating another's work. This is out of step with the contemporary music industry which demands and rewards originality, creativity and collaboration (see above).

- 4.4.2. Under the SongMakers model, students work in small, collaborative groups to write and record new music, under time pressures which simulate authentic, real world studio conditions – guided by mentors who pass on first-hand career insights along the way. As such, it is a unique fast-tracking program for young creatives:

“If I could go back and be in the shoes of these kids...man...I think my career would have been so much easier. To open their eyes to the many different career paths: it took me ten years to find that out.” JP Fung, producer

#### 4.5. Teacher professional learning: collaborations with industry

- 4.5.1. Again, the pace of change in the contemporary music industry presents challenges for teachers to deliver relevant, authentic, popular music education in their classrooms. Our national Teacher Advisory Group, convened to provide ongoing guidance to the SongMakers program, made a call for increased teacher professional learning (PL) in production technology, citing the gap in students' interest and expectations and teachers' own capacities in this area.

- 4.5.2. We partnered with tertiary provider JMC Academies to pilot industry-focused teacher PL in three States: VIC, NSW and QLD in May 2017. We cite this initiative as an industry/government/private sector partnership to deliver industry-relevant teacher professional learning:

“This workshop was perfectly targeted at music teachers, many of whom have had difficulties teaching songwriting or production to their own students. The mentors demonstrated the ease with which teachers can record and produce student compositions or performances, with the intention to then have students writing, recording and producing on their own. The skills explored on this

day aligned perfectly with the deficits that often occur in music education. For many, this was the first time playing with audio technology - given the shift in students engagement and experience with recording technology (with GarageBand and other music software becoming so commonplace). This was pivotal in thrusting music education into 21st Century classroom practice.” Romina Zapulla, Music teacher/Cocurricula coordinator, Domremy College, Sydney (Teacher Advisory Group, SongMakers).

- 4.5.3. APRA AMCOS also supports teachers and schools by providing access to comprehensive music licensing for all schools throughout Australia. APRA AMCOS’ music performance, print and recording licences allow staff and students to publicly perform, copy and otherwise use music from APRA AMCOS’ vast repertoire of music for school-related activities, on and off campus. The APRA AMCOS ARIA Audio Visual Licence allows schools to make and copy audio and audio-visual recordings and to synchronise music with any visual format for educational purposes and even live-stream a school performance on their website.

#### 4.6. Increasing girls’ access to under-represented industries

- 4.6.1. We support moves to improve girls’ access to industries in which the gender gap is problematic. Music has its own issues with gender inequity – particularly in the areas of production and engineering. Again, SongMakers is an important industry initiative to address this.

“I have said since day one that I wish we had something like SongMakers when I was at school! I’m very encouraged to see the amount of young women stepping forward to say they are interested in production, rather than the more traditional route of singing. Being a role model in this area is very important to me.” SongMakers mentor, producer/engineer, Anna Lavery.

#### 4.7. At risk/Traumatised young people

- 4.7.1. We strongly encourage systemic changes that increase engagement in arts activities for students at risk of disengaging – or already disengaged - from school. Participation in music programs has been found to improve young people’s school attendance, keep them out of trouble and regulate their social and emotional wellbeing.
- 4.7.2. This is mirrored in our own example of having worked with the Wodonga Flexible Learning Centre whose students have disengaged from mainstream education for a variety of reason, including trauma and anxiety. Building on our SongMakers experience, we worked under Creative Victoria funding to pilot a 30-week program in which our



industry mentors worked intensively with 8 of the Centre's at risk students (ages 14 – 17).

- 4.7.3. Ostensibly a hip hop program about writing and recording under the theme 'See Us Hear Us' (SUHU), authentic industry engagement appears to have been a key element of the extra-musical outcomes for these students, including school engagement and commitment to learning. Prior to joining the See Us Hear Us initiative all students had demonstrated low concentration levels or an inability and reluctance to work in a group situation:

"The engagement of students in the SUHU initiative was remarkable: 95-100% attendance for all participants throughout the 30 week program. Students were able to work for four hours without a break, maintaining focus and enthusiasm. Students were willing to turn off their mobile phones and hand them into a group box. They learnt to prioritise commitments including arranging meetings outside of the SUHU program times. In one instance when a student was required to attend the local police station to give a statement, he requested the police officer meet him at Wodonga Flexible Learning Centre so he would miss as little of the program as possible." Kristy Shaddock, supervising teacher, Wodonga Flexible Learning Centre.