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To: [Committee, Communications \(REPS\)](#)
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**Submission from: Deidre Rickards OAM (Music Educator and Performer)
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The Music Industry as defined on the ABC TripleJ website speaks in terms of numbers and gives us an impression of an Industry needing assistance for greater profit and wanting more support for economic gain from youth in Australia. (This to me is hardly inspiring when Music education in this country has a far greater need. It is knowing this, that I submit this document)

The “Music Industry” has been dictating to the Youth in this country ever since the advent of commercial radio. Children and teenagers are subjected to strong marketing strategies which prevent them from making informed Arts decisions for themselves. This stranglehold needs to be corrected by offering the children other options. An English teacher is trained to present a wide variety of reading material to students. The teachers in this subject are well trained in Universities and feel confident that they can inspire students and the success rate is satisfactory. Books are being read.

In 2018, one cannot say this about Music teachers. The training in Universities is limited so that those stepping into schools to teach music, can’t do it. As a result, many of them allow the aggressive marketing machine from the media to dominate the classroom. Australian children are not receiving a good music education. Most will never leave school and seek out a concert from the Sydney Symphony Orchestra because they don’t know what it is or what it has to offer. Sadly, they will see it as “elitist” music for a wealthy class of people and it shouldn’t ever be seen this way.

Sadly this poor standard of Music appreciation is reflected across a large mass of professional people in our community. It is rare for politicians to express interest in orchestral music. Paul Keating of course was the exception. We have come to accept that professional people may often know nothing about the subject of Music, except from what they’ve learned from the commercial marketing strategies exercised so effectively in this country. This is a problem but it can be

addressed if Politicians allowed and supported the idea of financing a better quality programme of training for Music teachers. At this point, I need to point out that the training I received from 1963-1966 at Newcastle Conservatorium was far superior to what is offered now. I have since had a successful and satisfying career in Music education. The training in most institutions is pathetic and inadequate. The proof lies with the product. Most Music teachers cannot offer a good Music programme in the schools today. The Universities are not providing a good training programme for them.

The greatest need in the “Music Industry” is for Universities to work in with Conservatoriums in order to provide good training for those who wish to be Music teachers. These trainees need to be trained as we do our sports people in the Institute of Sport. They need a high degree of skill in performance (the AMEB has appropriate benchmarks which could be used here. Any teacher should be prepared to reach an AMusA level before going into a school), they need to be able to Compose in a variety of styles and they need a comprehensive Listening repertoire. They should also have the training to conduct choirs and orchestras. Most of all, they need to be able to engage students with Music tasks which are fascinating and educationally liberating.

Please take a look at what is happening in Muswellbrook NSW today! Kim Williams has opened an independent Primary school, calling it a Music Academy named after Richard Gill, the great music educator. The Muswellbrook Council is helping to finance it. (an article exists in Limelight magazine describing the project and why it is supported by this community).

With the incredibly short sighted vision of those who are pushing the STEM approach to teaching our children instead of the STEAM approach, we are naturally going to see a backlash as the community responds by establishing funds for specialist Music schools so that their children can receive a good, well rounded music education.

Richard Gill is quoted as saying the following:

“Music is important for the following reasons: it is abstract, it doesn’t mean anything outside itself. Music does not describe. Music does not narrate. Music does not tell stories. Music evokes. Music suggests, music implies, and music opens up the mind of a child in an extraordinary way. This abstraction about

music is what offers a child the chance to move into a really special way of thinking.”

Our communities would not have to separate the learning disciplines if the training of music teachers was given greater attention so that the graduates were inspired and confident. Somehow, it was decided to downgrade the subject of Music in schools and now we have a disastrous situation where the classroom music programmes are not respected. School executives seem to be happy if the Music staff present school Musicals to the general public and not much interest is given to the need for Music staff to offer good quality music programmes in the classroom.

To summarise

I would like to support the Music Industry in this country (and this includes all genres of Music) by providing all children with the opportunity for quality music education programmes. To do this they need well trained, confident, dedicated Music teachers. At the moment the Tertiary sector is not producing these workers. Universities have downgraded the Music Courses and the product is weak. Funds need to be made available to train these people properly and the benchmark for entry and graduation needs to be lifted. Australia needs the best quality Music teachers to do the job properly.

If Politicians wish to support the Music Industry, they need to start with Music education for all children. This message is not new. Richard Gill has said before. It is time for some action!

Deidre Rickards OAM