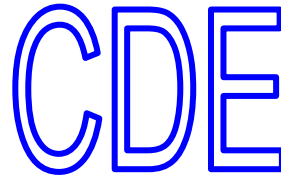


Council for Dance Educators Ltd

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ABN 83 146 234 282

5th July 2011

The Secretary
House Standing Committee on Education and Employment
House of Representatives, PO Box 6021
Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600

Submission Number: 05
Date Received: 05/07/2011



Submission to

Inquiry into the Schools Assistance Amendment Bill 2011

1. Executive Summary

We are responding to the Inquiry into the Schools Assistance Amendment Bill 2011 as the major representative organisation for the Australian Dance Societies.

Our submission understands the intent of the Bill to extend time for implementation. We support this intent since it will allow time for better implementation of suggestions we wish to submit relating to the dance-in-schools curriculum.

These are all the more important in government's due diligence needs to assess consequences arising from potential implementation strategies **before** moving to implementation and management by regulation.

The Council for Dance Educators Ltd (CDE) is a not-for-profit company specifically charged with liaising with top level government and arts education instrumentalities in the formulation of teaching curriculum and associated standards across both private and government dance training sectors.

As a facilitating peak group, formally elected by the dance societies, this organisation already include six dance-training societies which represent more than 3,000 dance teachers and over 200,000 student assessments annually.

Each party in our alliance brings with it a strong and extensive foundation and history of excellence in dance education pedagogy and a commitment to further development, which will continue a provenance spanning more than 70 years. This founding presence has secured Australian dance training outcomes at a highly respected international level without significant government contribution or interest to date.

The current processes for the recently dance-in-schools is overseen by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority - ACARA.

The recent intervention by the government in all sectors of dance training are of vital concern to the whole of Australia's dance training and education sector, particularly in setting a national framework that will impact and shape the whole industry in the long term, both for private and public dance training providers, in both schools and studios.

2. Key Issues regarding the Inquiry into the Schools Assistance Amendment Bill 2011

As the peak body representing the private dance schools, the key issues of concern relate to consequences arising from past and present planning:

2.1 Diversity of delivery & content - engaging and consultation with the private sector.

Total omission of acknowledging private dance studios in respect of mutual recognition of results under the

school dance curriculum administered by ACARA will create fundamental inequities between students taught in the school education systems and the majority, who attain their skills, experience and expertise outside of the education systems, through the private dance societies. For many of these students it will create serious inefficiencies for them by making them learn a basic dance curriculum, when their work in the private dance studios is at a more advanced level, in order for them to receive the requisite recognition for school marks. As most students of a school age study dance at private studios, this inequity will significantly impact this group by devaluing such higher skills. It will simultaneously detract from the diversity of different genres of dance in the private studios.

2.2 There is no overarching framework

As the traditional and historical custodians of dance standards, student teaching and assessment within our own organizations in Australia, (and surrounding SE Asian countries), we recognise the need to embrace and engage in new directions with government to create new national dance and training curriculum standards where none existed at the national level prior to 2011.

Accordingly, we endorse the new thrust for dance in schools in principle, and have expressed to ACARA the desire to take a keen "peak" participating role as a representative body in the proposed ACARA National Schools Curriculum relating to dance. This must consider the needs of the education of dance students, which is predominantly part-time in private studios while the students are attending school.

3. Addressing Dance teacher demand shortfalls.

We observe that that when any curriculum is introduced, there will be an extremely high shortfall of qualified teachers, whether drawn from the school teaching professions or dance teaching professions.

There seems to be no planning or, worse, interest in leveraging existing and substantial dance training skills of studio teachers to adequately address this shortfall to ensure dance-in-schools enjoys a successful public acceptance.

Both of these professional resources will need significant and urgent upskilling if the implementation phase is to gain wide public acceptance as to availability of teachers and the quality of the curriculum and teachers themselves:

- * General teachers will need significant dance teaching skills
- * Dance teachers will need (general classroom) teaching skills.

We note that the new training package for Community Dance includes "Skills Set" purporting to provide a regular teacher with the skills to teach dance. It would seem appropriate to also provide a complementary "skill set" to give dance teachers skills enough to teach at various levels in the school curriculum.

We suggest it will be easier to adequately upskill a qualified (TAE) dance teacher in classroom education needs than the obverse of a general teacher being upskilled in dance where the core competencies have to be performed and therefore learnt while their bodies are at an early age. They really should have an advanced dance skill learnt at the traditional studio!

This observation is at the heart of the suggestion that CDE, working with ACARA in partnership so that students can be offered the best dance training irrespective of trainer whether in public private tuition. After all, this applies to the established inclusiveness of the regular school curriculum, why not dance?

Our group see that the lack of genuine consultation to date has locked out our voices, when in fact the private studios could assist schools in training partnership where qualified school teachers could supervise

qualified dance teachers.

Our opinion of continuing down the exclusion track where sectional interests override the needs of the real stakeholders, namely dance students, will lead to a 'dumbing down" of dance standards, opportunities for young people and lack of access to the diversity of dance.

4. Request for involvement

Since ACARA's entry in developing dance curriculum and in-school provisioning is an entirely new dance training delivery paradigm, we have looked forward to a more direct partnership with government in the dance sector. No offer has yet been extended.

As the peak body representing private dance teachers in Australia, we therefore request the opportunity to participate in the consultative process on the Schools Assistance Amendment Bill 2011 to ensure that it adequately represents this significant number of students who are studying dance in the private sector.

Yours sincerely

John Lancaster
Chairman/CEO
Council for Dance Educators Ltd

*Addendum to
Submission by Council for Dance Educators
for
Inquiry into the Schools Assistance Amendment Bill 2011*

1. Executive Summary

*The current processes at both school curriculum by ACARA, and vocational levels by IBSA, * are of vital concern to the whole of Australia's dance training and education sector, setting a national framework that will impact and shape the whole industry in the long term, both for private and public dance training providers, in both schools and studios.*

**Live performance training package - National Dance qualifications - NDQ*

Recommendations

- *Define stakeholders as all students of dance whether in public or private schools or dance studios.*
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- *Take a step back from a rushed process*
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- *Conduct a genuine dance training industry environmental scan*
- *Conduct an industry (dance) impact study*
- *Engage with existing dance training industry - expand executive planning*
- *Provide mutual recognition of assessment results - industry agreed (minimum benchmarks) standards*
- *Provide upskilling of school teachers in dance training*
- *Provide upskilling of dance teachers in school teaching*
- *Adopt policy of retaining diversity and building on existing expertise and resources*

Why was CDE formed?

The catalyst for this formation was the lack of industry “environmental scan” undertaken by IBSA for the abovementioned NDQ project, the outcomes of which, so far, don’t fulfil the promise and potential government could have realised by more closely engaging directly with the main providers of dance training for the young trainee.

All societies welcome the contribution governments of all persuasions and states have made to supporting **dance performance sector**; companies, choreographers etc. Just as CDE recognised that the NDQ could have brought welcome improvements in pre-professional dance training we also welcome the concept of introducing dance in schools as a contribution to the awareness of dance.

We have grave reservation about government entering the **dance training** sector so precipitously without adequate consultation and pre-analysis of providers and post implementation impacts.

Dance in Schools Curriculum CDE positional statement

As the traditional and historical custodians of dance standards, student teaching and assessment within our own organizations in Australia, (and surrounding SE Asian countries), we nevertheless recognise the need to embrace and engage in new directions with government to create new national dance and training curriculum standards where none existed at the national level prior to 2011.

Accordingly, we endorse the new thrust for dance in schools in principle, and have expressed to ACARA the desire to take a keen “peak” participating role as a representative body in the proposed ACARA National Schools Curriculum relating to dance.

Industry consultation

ACARA will contend that consultation has taken place. From a CDE member perspective, we reject that this has been the case to date! On reading recent ACARA public newsletters and request for feedback, we have learnt that most decisions have been made; the whole dance curriculum is well advanced to implementation with technical writers and advisory panels

now in place, well before any genuine industry engagement. CDE suggest this “consultation” process was just a “tick-a-box” mass marketing attempting to claim that industry had been “consulted”.

While ACARA are familiar with most aspects of school curriculum, to introduce a complete suite of dance curriculum from Kinder to Year 12 is certainly ambitious since it (ACARA) has no prior significant involvement in this sector, nor direct engagement or indeed any in depth information about current practitioners in the dance training industry at large!

Identification and validation of real end use stakeholders.

We respectfully suggest that the government needs to unequivocally state that the end user stakeholders are:

All students of dance whether in public schools, private schools or dance studios.

Providing leadership in dance training.

The government still has the opportunity to provide leadership. Currently we suggest that this is not the case, rather sectional interests have been allowed to control the agenda in the guise of providing dance curriculum for all.

It would appear that business and/or employment interests of a restricted set of users, have conveniently sidelined the private studios, and ignored the true end user students and teachers in all sectors.

Alternatively, providing frameworks for portability of training, via mutual recognition of examination results [obviously needing a dance standards framework agreed by both government (MCEECDYA/ACARA) and the dance societies]. To date there has been no discussion let alone establishment of such as an overarching framework.

This is the substantial challenge for an inclusive and forward-looking government to engender a constructive approach by all. CDE are willing to contribute their participation.

Request for involvement

Since ACARA’s entry in developing dance curriculum and in-school provisioning is an entirely new dance training delivery paradigm, we have looked forward to a more direct partnership with government in the dance sector, but **we have not been given the opportunity to even suggest this concept** - so much for consultation with industry!

In fact, three CDE executives were asked by the organisers not to attend a recent DEA industry information meeting in Sydney, at short notice in spite of paying weeks in advance in response to an industry wide invitation. Another opportunity lost for engagement with our sector.

Dance Industry Pre- & Post implementation Environmental Scans/studies

We are particularly interested in figures and facts that would provide an insight into prior studies showing how ACARA intends to target stakeholders. Answers/material/references to the following would be appreciated and go a long way to help our understanding of government intentions:

We have asked ACARA for the following:

Has ACARA:

Developed any K-12 dance student participation distribution models based on ABS statistics (schools vs. private studio) based on age, state, schooling providers?

Sought any validation data on student numbers, ages and genres currently taught in private studios by direct survey of dance societies?

Undertaken any analysis of dance society curriculum including pedagogic methods and of progressions (a fundamental element in all dance tuition) honed over the last century?

Surveyed how training is being delivered to all students via all pathways (private & public)? Including:

How many delivery organisations exist?

How many students are in the various catchments of school vs. private studios?

What is the split across all ages in dance teaching by any provider?

What genres of dance are taught?

What qualifications should dance teachers have?

Who issues teaching qualifications?

What will be economic impact on dance industry generally & particularly in rural & regional Australia

Observations on ACARA's current curriculum introduction

Wider industry impact

CDE contend that without in-depth industry involvement there will be a slow but inevitable erosion of both dance standards for the *1,000,000+ students and the economic viability of the *20,000+ small businesses conducted by dance studios around the nation. Government assertions of interest in small business, particularly women in rural and regional locations will be meaningless if roll-out of dance curriculum by ACARA starts before an in-depth economic impact analysis pre-study is brought into focus. [*CDE estimates].

Diversity

We believe that the ACARA curriculum development and introduction is premature. It lacks the intent to construct top level (dance) industry-wide frameworks. It should not introduce contractors in development and production (now in progress) without adequate consultation and dance society/industry engagement in establishing an agreed framework for whole of industry.

Coupled with growing industry perception that government has an agenda of establishing competing delivery mechanism from the traditional private providers, the opportunity of "win-win" by working in balanced partnership towards improving dance education and teaching standards for all will be lost to the broader community.

The slow but inevitable contraction within a one-size-fits-all framework will detract from, educational outcomes for all dancers, whether in private or public tuition anywhere in Australia, will be the opposite of intention; a diminishing access to qualified and experienced teachers and standards.

Why intervene without due analysis in an industry that has been responsible for the success that dance is enjoying in the public arena, which has survived without "help" from government to this point in time!

Addressing Dance teacher demand shortfalls.

We observe that that when any curriculum is introduced, there will be an extremely high shortfall of qualified teachers, whether drawn from the school teaching professions or dance teaching professions.

There seems to be no planning or, worse, interest in leveraging existing and substantial dance training skills of studio teachers to adequately address this shortfall to ensure dance-in-schools enjoys a successful public acceptance.

Both of these professional resources will need significant and urgent upskilling if the implementation phase is to gain wide public acceptance as to availability of teachers and the quality of the curriculum and teachers themselves:

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We note that the new training package for Community Dance includes “Skills Set” purporting to provide a regular teacher with the skills to teach dance. **It would seem appropriate to also provide a complementary “skill set” to give dance teachers skills enough to teach at various levels in the school curriculum.**

We suggest it will be easier to adequately upskill a qualified (TAE) dance teacher in classroom education needs than the obverse of a general teacher being upskilled in dance where the core competencies have to be performed and therefore learnt while their bodies are at an early age. They really should have an advanced dance skill learnt at the traditional studio!

Best Practice standards.

This observation is at the heart of the suggestion that CDE, working with ACARA in partnership so that **students can be offered the best dance training irrespective of trainer whether in public private tuition.** After all, this applies to the established inclusiveness of the regular school curriculum, why not dance?

Our group see that the lack of genuine consultation to date has locked out our voices, when in fact the private studios could assist schools in training partnership where qualified teachers could supervise qualified dance teachers.

Our opinion of continuing down the exclusion track where sectional interests override the needs of the real stakeholders, namely dance students, will lead to a ‘dumbing down’ of dance standards and opportunities for young people.

CDE industry participation with Government:

We see that our exclusion from planning and recent forums was a missed opportunity for airing joint opportunities to help the promotion and propagation of dance to all by working together in partnership with government.

This will not be achieved while ACARA and the department permit a closed-door and a dance society opaque. We re-iterate that we support the concept of dance-in-schools but want a serious step change in our relationship with government for exchanges of ideas, contribution and constituency of steering committees commensurate with our significant position in the dance curriculum sector planned by ACARA.

Rather than rushing into a poorly constructed project with potential for negative long term implications for Australian youth and Australia’s current high creative and artistic international standing in dance, we respectfully suggest that ACARA needs to pause and re-design the whole programme from core concepts by:

- Defer writing curriculum (the next phase).
- Seek input from a better-balanced group of industry expertise
- Do an adequate and transparent industry needs analysis
- Conduct an economic impact analysis on dance training outlets
- Provide industry agreed benchmarks for portability of learning outcomes.
- Provide equi-handed upskilling courses & skill sets for both teaching professions
- Provided templates and set precedents for training partnerships between schools and dance studios

Grand summary

Outcomes of the present plan will be perceived as tainted by non-transparency & serving sectional interests. At present an initiative, which CDE supports in principle, will go the way of other initiatives where good intentions were overwhelmed by bad implementations.