

NON CONFIDENTIAL

SUBMISSION TO:

**SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE
ON MENTAL HEALTH**

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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SUBJECT**

**THE TERMINATION OF
THE MASTERS OF ART AND DRAMA THERAPY COURSE
AT EDITH COWAN UNIVERSITY WESTERN AUSTRALIA
IN 2007**

SUBMITTED BY STUDENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Students studying for the Masters of Art and Drama Therapy were informed that the program would be cancelled with no further intake of students from this year and complete closure by the end of 2007. This information was relayed to the students by the Head of the School of Contemporary Arts within the Faculty of Communication and Creative Industries three months after the start of the academic year. Subsequently the students were informed that the Faculty Dean would meet with the postgraduate students the following week. This meeting was then cancelled with a message from the Dean's Office saying that the Dean did not feel it was within her responsibilities to address the students of this Masters program.

The Masters program is the longest standing Art Therapy course, and the only Drama Therapy course in Australia. No meetings were undertaken by ECU with ANATA, the Art Therapy Professional Association, prior to this decision.

The closure of the program means there will be no accredited courses in Art and Drama Therapy in Western Australia.

Given the predicted increases in Mental Health Issues within the community and the shortfall of skilled professionals to work in these areas, the decision appears to be ill considered. As a community we trust educational institutions to provide courses that are relevant to our community. We believe that this decision has been made on biased financial considerations without any due regard for the needs of the wider community of Western Australia.

ART AND DRAMA THERAPY

Art and Drama Therapy are unique forms of psychotherapy in which art, image making and drama play central roles within therapeutic relationships.

The journey that began with Freud and Jung and continued with pioneering psychotherapists and psychoanalysts who understood how far reaching art, imagination and personal insight could illuminate the more allusive and troubling aspects of human experience, are the fundamentals of Art and Drama Therapy.

There is a substantial discourse on the impact and value of the use of imagery within the psychotherapeutic relationship. The image created through art, music, drama and dance tell the story of self-identity that encourages ownership, choice and change.

THE TERMINATION OF THE MASTER OF ARTS (ART AND DRAMA THERAPY)

The termination of the current MA Art and Drama Therapy Courses at Edith Cowan University was announced to the student body on May 20th 2005, three months after the current first year students started their first semester.

No discussion was undertaken with the Australian National Art Therapy Association prior to this decision.

No new intake of students will be accepted from the end of 2005.

The ECU executives responsible for the course closure are:

- ECU Vice Chancellor, Ms Millicent Poole,
- Executive Dean of Communications & Creative Arts (CCI), Professor Robyn Quin,
- Head of the School of Contemporary Arts (SOCA), Associate Professor Domenico de Clario.

Executive Dean of CCI, Professor Robyn Quin has refused to personally address the students preferring such communication to be handled by the Head of School, Associate Professor Domenico de Clario.

The reasons given for the course closure are that the Masters Course is financially unviable and that student numbers are declining. Both reasons we find unreasonable and difficult to substantiate which will be explained further in this document. This shows very poor insight given the disturbing increase in the statistics of mental health problems within the community. "The Australian Medical Association saying that by 2013, 100,000 people will be affected by bipolar disorder - a 6% increase - and by 2011 the number with schizophrenia will increase by 10% to 41,000." (Subiaco Post, June 18, 2005)

THE FINANCIAL ARGUMENT

The University contends that the Masters Courses are loss making entities which therefore have to be terminated.

Many courses within the campus are loss making. The MA Art/Drama Therapy program however only makes a paper loss. Associate Professor Domenico de Clario informed the student body that the course made a loss of \$30,000 last year and a projected loss of \$60,000 this year. We contend that these shortfalls can be accommodated within the University budgeting strategy, and do not require a course closure.

As we understand the University levies a University administration and building cost that equates to over fifty five percent. As the course is amongst the highest Masters by Course Work fees we pay in excess of most other students to the general running of the University. (Refer to Appendix 2) The profit margin of the course is compromised by the increasing surcharges the University has taken for its administrative, faculty and school disbursements over the last few years. The shortfall figures quoted by Associate

Professor de Clario can be attributed to University budgeting strategies as the student numbers have not declined and show a long term trend of increase in numbers. The students have been told that with dwindling enrolments the course is not viable financially and that there is a substantial loss to ECU. This is erroneous on several counts, i.e. enrolments have been on the increase. Course fees generated in 2001 were in the order of \$140,000 derived from student intake numbers and course fee figures. That figure had risen to in excess of \$350,000 in 2004. Student intake has been stable at 21 for the combined course for the last two years.

Student contact hours are two and a half days a week with first year part time one and a half days a week for the first year. Second year hours are one full day a week with two days spent away from the University in a work placement with negligible cost to the University. The placement hours are 80 days or 700 hours of experiential art or drama therapy with client groups.

MASTERS COURSE DEMAND

The University contends that student numbers have been falling and that the course demand in Western Australia has been fulfilled. They also contend that as there is no undergraduate program in Art or Drama Therapy there is no identifiable student body to undertake Art and Drama Therapy Masters Courses.

1. As previously stated the current student population is 42 divided equally between years one and two. Interest in the MA Art/Drama Therapy program, and art and drama therapy generally, is increasing and is continuing to attract students from overseas and the Eastern States of Australia, as well as local interest. (Refer to appendix 1)

Postgraduate students have worked professionally as teachers, nurses, artists, psychologists, and occupational therapists amongst others. As a growing profession, with increasing awareness in the community of its benefits, the continued demand for accredited training should be assured in every state in Australia.

2. Another reason the University has given for discontinuing the program is the non-existence of an undergraduate course, which would supply the course with students. Most students, however, who undertake either course have previous degrees and professional experience working within the community. The desire to complete the course in the main comes from a perceived need in the community derived from grass roots involvement. The age group of most students in the program range from late twenties to early fifties with an average age of 35.

To illustrate this point it is noted that there is no undergraduate course for Art or Drama Therapy anywhere in the world. It is consistently a Masters program. Candidates for the program are generally professional people who have experience in among other areas, creative arts, social work, psychology,

education, nursing and occupational therapy. The University seems unable to address world's best practice in relation to the course.

- 3 The MA Art/Drama Therapy program at Edith Cowan University has a high reputation both overseas and in other states of Australia. The unique position of the MA Art/Drama Therapy program in its association with the School of Contemporary Arts, enhances its standing within the cultural life of the community and is a working reflection of the effects of integrating arts and culture within ailing elements of society. This view is endorsed by the major arts funding bodies (ArtsWA and the Australia Council) and supported by the large health and welfare organisations (Ruah, Mofflyn, Mission Australia etc). We also note that Art Therapy has been used in certain Western Australian schools for the past fifteen years.

Students are attracted to the ECU program based on the reputation of the staff who run it, its location within an arts faculty and the status of the course within the field of art and drama therapy. The University does not adequately advertise the program and interest is usually through word of mouth and industry recommendation. The University has not conducted community interest research and has therefore no basis on which to state that the demand for Art and Drama Therapy courses has been sated.

MASTERS OF ART THERAPY AND DRAMA THERAPY

John Henzell the Co-ordinator of the Master of Arts/ Art and Drama Therapy Program is a leading member of the Art and Drama Therapy Profession. He was a founding member of the British association for Art Therapists and is a passionate advocate for our profession having spent forty years working in Mental Health Hospitals and Universities in Britain. He came back to Western Australia to take over the Masters Program and has markedly increased its reputation.

The Art Therapy course is unique in Australia in that it is housed within the School of Contemporary Art, giving it an artistic and creative focus.

The Dramatherapy Course is the only one of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere. The Art Therapy course is unique in Australia in that it is housed within the School of Contemporary Art, giving it an artistic and creative focus. In combination, these courses afford students of both therapeutic modalities a rich cultural and artistic base from which to extract and develop their therapeutic strategies.

Face to face relationships are integral to the Art/Drama Therapy program. An expectation for the course to be run online, for example, is completely inconsistent with the humanistic tenet of its syllabus. Contact hours have been compromised in order to preserve the teaching quality of the course.

The Western Australian Masters in Art Therapy course is accredited by ANATA and is recognised overseas in the United Kingdom, America and Asia. We have overseas students from Singapore and the UK and several students from interstate including

three from Victoria in first year. The Masters in Drama Therapy is close to achieving this accreditation having only commenced at ECU three years ago. There are a number of overseas students from Spain, Israel and Germany who are enrolled in this year's intake of Drama Therapy candidates.

Should this program be discontinued there will be no Art Therapists graduating from Western Australia with a recognised accreditation to assist the growing needs of the community with mental health and other problems in the future. It also goes without saying that should the program be discontinued there will be no further Drama Therapy graduates, not just in Western Australia, but nationally. Potential students will have to seek training at overseas institutions, severely damaging the viability of this innovative and developing field.

World-wide the Art and Drama Therapy Profession reaches people suffering the effects of many damaging circumstances. Issues addressed by these creative therapies include: depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, neurosis, substance abuse, gambling addiction, sexual abuse (both perpetrators and victims), family violence, children with behavioural problems, self esteem, body image including anorexia and obesity, disabilities both genetic and acquired, burns, oncology, palliative care, bereavement, victims of war, crime and torture, forensic, refugees, stolen generation aboriginal issues, and those people recently affected by the tsunami in the Indian Ocean region.

Art Therapy and Drama Therapy also assist in the counselling of the staff who co-ordinate these areas of trauma.

These creative therapies are a gentle non-intrusive form of therapy that encourage ownership, choice and change. They encourage self-esteem and self-acceptance and a willingness to be a constructive part of society in whichever way this is expressed. All the figures indicate a growing number of people that would benefit from Creative Therapies given the opportunity.

THE CHANGES THIS COURSE CLOSURE WILL EFFECT

If the Master of Arts/ Art and Drama Therapy program is closed it will have a dramatic effect on the availability of professional therapeutic staff working with clients in mental health and other associated areas in the future, particularly in Western Australia. One in five people in Australia will be diagnosed at some point in their lives as suffering a mental illness and all government figures show the trend that this figure will increase. Staff shortages in these areas of the health industry already exist, and the shortage of qualified professionals is increasing.

The course curriculum is one that provides the students with the criteria to fulfil necessary experience in Art and Drama Therapies and ECU currently provides this. Thanks must go to John Henzell and his small team of professional Art and Drama Therapists. As art and drama therapists in training we mirror the art world in which we inhabit in the School of Contemporary Art. We surround ourselves with artists working publicly, yet we take art into the private lives of people, giving them an opportunity to create art that is not exhibited but has a profound power and influence and is of no less importance.

The professions of Art and Drama Therapy have evolved over the last 50 years, originating in Britain and America and now extending through Australasia. The number of practitioners has grown to beyond several thousand professionals who are engaged in lively discourse within the profession. It also boasts an established base in experience, publication and research.

Therapies do not spring up overnight but are developed over decades as to their scope and best teaching practises. Art Therapy has such a background of over fifty years. We are now also witnessing the emergence of Drama Therapy, which has been used effectively in the USA and the UK. ECU has not appreciated the potential of the course for the wider community, and that is to its discredit.

A LETTER FROM:

The Australian National Art Therapy Association.

ANATA - this professional registration body for Australian Art Therapists is very concerned that the professional status of education of Australian arts psychotherapies is being eroded by the closure of the two Edith Cowan University courses.

In my role as the President of ANATA I have had a series of communications sent to me as letters, emails and web communications. Most of these letters indicate the excellence of the ECU study programmes in drama and art therapies. They acknowledge the ECU course is a strong programme and that the closure is occurring due to economic need and that the courses have to close as they had not included other therapeutic modalities - courses in sound and colour.

The first question ANATA has is, "How has the student fee structure and disbursement of fees percentages worked against the course delivery?" Is it true that as the students are stating that more than 50% of the student fee is spent on administration? This seems a critical issue in course delivery.

Another key concern ANATA has relates to the erosion of the training in psychotherapies that the closure will bring about. ANATA has very clear guidelines that the MA courses are arts psychotherapy training programmes. ANATA also has worked with the four universities to ensure that the training standard and guidelines are adhered to as fully as possible so that national and international registration can occur for art therapists.

ANATA has also been charged with the task of examining the feasibility of an new Australian and New Zealand Association for Practitioners of Arts Psychotherapies. This possible new association will enable a broader more professional status for Art Psychotherapists. The latest ANATA newsletter heralds the four courses across Australia; the four Heads of Schools have seen fit to fund the new refereed National Journal of Art Therapy to be launched in November. The affiliation between ANATA and ECU (and the other three MA courses) has been so rewarding that ANATA is obliged to ask for some response from ECU.

It seems that this decision to close the courses has been driven by economic imperatives. It seems to me that a needs analysis of the future intake would indicate there is a healthy growth in our field of professional endeavour.

Dr Tarquam McKenna
AATR – Professional Art Therapist
President ANATA

CONCLUSION

We believe it is in the interests of the community at large and ECU in particular to continue the Art and Drama Therapy program. The profession is a lively and dedicated community, which strives to work for better outcomes for individuals and by consequence their society.

We believe the course will increase in reputation and its graduates become even more in demand as practitioners of a gentle and compassionate therapy. We live in a society where levels of mental health issues are growing at high rates. However, the numbers of professionals available and willing to work in this area is not increasing.

As postgraduate students we are in many cases introducing and setting up programs for both government and non-government organisations in Art and Drama Therapy. This is an indication of the demand and desire for this form of therapy.

Our clients are the most marginalised part of society and we are asking you to be a voice for them by endorsing the reinstatement of the course at ECU after 200.

Thank you.

APPENDIX I

Art and Drama Therapy Staff

One full time staff member.
One Fractional staff member
3 main Sessional staff members
12 visiting practising lecturers

Student Numbers

Art Therapy Second Year	- 15 students
Drama Therapy Second Year	- 6 students
Art Therapy First Year	- 15 students
Drama Therapy First Year	- 6 students

Approximately one third of students are part time.

APPENDIX 2

Fee Structure

The cost of the Master of Arts/ Art and Drama Therapy Program with reference to the 2004 ECU Course Fee Schedule (CODE Q84 and Q82) is \$19,200 each with overseas students paying close to \$40,000. Overseas students must also pay for their relocation in a new country.

In 2001 course fees amounted to approximately \$140,000 with fees now reaching nearly \$400,000 (calculated from student intake figures).

There are only three Master courses currently offered at ECU that pay higher fees than we do for Art and Drama Therapy:

- (708) Master of Medicine (Sports Medicine) \$20,700
- (U52) Master of Midwifery - by coursework \$21,000
- (Q81) Doctor of Psychology \$27,900

The average Master and Doctorate courses vary from \$9,600 to \$18,800 including computer sciences, health and business management.

- A Master of Medicine (708 - Family Medicine) = \$12,000,
- Master of Medicine (N01 - Geriatric Medicine) = \$12,000
- Master of Medicine (732 - Palliative Care) = \$13,000
- Master in Psychology (Q80) = \$16,800.

We note that there is no allocated Federal funding for Postgraduate Courses by course work.