

**Submission
No 23**

INQUIRY INTO THE CULTURAL AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES IN VICTORIA

Organisation: MVA

Date Received: 28 January 2025

Submission to the Inquiry into the Cultural and Creative Industries in Victoria

Executive Summary

Musica Viva Australia wishes to respond to point 5 of the Inquiry's Terms of Reference:

whether the Revive policy and relevant state government policies and spending provide sufficient support and impetus to rebuild and sustain Victoria's cultural and creative industries following the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the sector.

As a leader in the fields of chamber music producing and touring, music education and emerging artist development, Musica Viva Australia encourages the Victorian Government to consider increased investment in the cultural and creative industries.

Arts organisations in Victoria are under considerable pressure – still dealing with the multi-faceted impacts of COVID-19 on audience behaviour and the arts workforce, plus the more recent inflationary pressures impacting wages, venue hire and touring and travel costs.

This submission highlights three areas where we consider there are significant gaps in government investment and cross-portfolio collaboration and where particular attention is needed to support COVID-19 recovery:

- **Music Education for children**
- **Pathways for Emerging Artists**
- **Support for venues and performing arts presenters.**

MVA's recommendations to the Victorian Government include:

- Investment in professional performing arts organisations will enable existing successful arts education programs to be scaled up for increased reach and impact across VIC and the leveraging of additional private sector income.
- Consider it a cross-portfolio priority to fund music education, to ensure that best-practice is shared between the Creative Industries and Education sectors, to support professional artists and arts organisations, and so that harmonisation of funding and service delivery is achieved.
- Set a goal of ensuring that all primary school students have access to at least an hour a week of quality music education, provided year-round, and ideally by a specialist teacher.
- Investment in ongoing professional development for classroom teachers is essential to ensure that all VIC students receive quality music and arts education at school.
- Schools in regional VIC and schools for students with disability require additional funding and resources to ensure equitable access to music and arts education for all.
- Investment into vocational pathways for emerging artists and young people is vital to ensure an ongoing and healthy pipeline of creative sector workers for the Victoria's Creative Industries.

- Strategic funding is necessary to support programs like Strike A Chord due to the gap in existing competitive arts funding to support programs for emerging artists.
- Emerging artists are vital to replacing the creative workforce lost to other sectors during COVID-19 and should be a focus for future government investment.
- Ensure that investment into the arts is increased over time in response to inflation, the employment market and other cost pressures.
- Advocate for federal tax incentives such as the [40% tax offset](#) modelled by Live Performance Australia to encourage increased private sector investment in the cultural and creative industries.
- Increase financial support for venues with an explicit goal of increasing affordability for presenters, which in turn will increase occupancy and levels of performance activity, and contribute to presenter sustainability and to the performing arts ecology as a whole.

About Musica Viva Australia

Musica Viva Australia (MVA) is the world's largest platform for chamber music, presenting tours featuring the greatest works and artists of our age. We are also one of Australia's leading providers of music education in schools and a champion for Australian composers and emerging talent. MVA is a national touring and producing organisation with 60 staff based around the country, including 14 staff in Victoria. MVA receives core funding through the National Performing Arts Partnership Framework, and project funding through Creative Victoria to deliver the Melbourne International Chamber Music Competition and Strike A Chord, a national secondary schools chamber music competition.

Activities in Victoria: 2024 Snapshot

- Musica Viva Australia In Schools: 78 schools performances across metro and regional Victoria, reaching 12,982 students and over 120 teachers.
- More than 370 students and teachers from two low ICSEA/disadvantaged Victorian schools participated in our comprehensive three-year Music Education Residency Program, including a groundbreaking program with Furlong Park School for Deaf Children.
- Professional Development: 69 teachers enrolled in seven MVA Professional Development courses.
- Mainstage: 8 concert performances reaching over 6900 audience members.
- Strike A Chord High School Chamber Music Competition: 333 audience members attended finals with an additional 993 streaming the performance live online. 44 Victorian ensembles from metro and regional Victorian schools entered the novice and main competitions. The grand prize winner, Fitzi Trio, featured members from both Victoria and NSW.
- 18 Victorian High School ensembles (11 regional, 7 metro) received free coaching from a professional musician as part of the Strike A Chord Coaching program.
- Musica Viva Australia's CEO, Artistic Director, and Director of Emerging Artists are all based in our Victorian office in Southbank on Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung/Boonwurrung Country.

In response to point 5 of the Inquiry's Terms of Reference: *whether the Revive policy and relevant state government policies and spending provide sufficient support and impetus to rebuild and sustain Victoria's cultural and creative industries following the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the sector*, Musica Viva Australia encourages the Victorian Government to consider increased investment in the cultural and creative industries.

Stagnant government funding coupled with steep cost base increases and changed audience behaviour since COVID-19 mean that arts organisations are facing impossible pressures. Without additional investment, there are considerable risks to Victoria's creative life and the opportunities available to its people, to community engagement and cohesion, to tourism and cultural diplomacy, to the telling of First Nations stories, and to Victoria's reputation as the cultural force of the country.

This submission highlights three areas where we consider there are significant gaps in government investment and cross-portfolio collaboration and where particular attention is needed to support COVID-19 recovery:

- **Music Education for children**
- **Pathways for Emerging Artists**
- **Support for venues and performing arts presenters.**

Music Education for children:

As Australia's largest and most trusted provider of music education in schools, MVA brings the social and educational benefits of music education to students and teachers across Victoria, regardless of geographic or financial circumstances.

The **Musica Viva Australia In Schools (MVAIS) program** provides breadth of access to almost 200,000 students and teachers per year in metro, regional and remote areas around the country. Using music as the primary tool to teach creativity and engage students in learning, MVAIS develops culturally and musically diverse performance programs that link music to other curriculum learning areas including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures, Science, Drama, Languages, Asian Studies, and Literacy. By 2028 MVA aims to reach more than 250,000 students annually.

Access and equity are a priority for the program. MVA's Equal Music Fund applies government and philanthropically funded subsidies each year to support students who would otherwise not be able to experience music education or live performance. This provides free or heavily subsidised performances to schools rated low on the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) and supports touring to regional and remote areas where the travel costs would otherwise be prohibitive. MVA also offers tailored performances and resources to support students with disability and their teachers.

MVA's **Music Education Residency Program** offers depth of access for the students who will benefit most from the opportunity, through quality sequential music lessons as part of a three-year evidence-based model delivered in disadvantaged schools. In these residencies, MVA works in partnership with school leadership to co-design programs that include weekly classroom and

instrumental lessons for students, professional development for all teachers and access to the MVAIS performance program and resources. When the residency ends, the school will have become self-sufficient in music instruction, ensuring that generations of children receive the educational and intrinsic benefits of music.

A significant element of Musica Viva Australia's service delivery is the support of teachers through **Professional Development**, including online and face-to-face workshops. Additionally, our unique online resource platform provides a whole term's worth of curriculum-aligned activities to enhance the live performance experience and deepen educational learning outcomes for students. These resources are tailored to generalist teachers who may have had little or no music teaching training and may lack confidence in delivering music education to their classes if not for such accessible and rich material.

Quality Music Education – Impact and Gaps

MVA's position is that access for children and young people to creativity and arts education is the most significant priority for government investment. The evidence is compelling and comprehensive that quality music education supports engagement at school, social cohesion and inclusion, teamwork, wellbeing, confidence and self-esteem; as well as language and literacy skills, spatial reasoning, verbal and memory skills and academic achievement (Music Education, A Sound Investment report, Collins, Dwyer & Date, 2019). The same report however, found that a large proportion of Australian primary school students have little or no access to music education.

Musica Viva Australia supports the definition of [quality music education](#) developed by Music Education: Right from the Start, a collaborative initiative led by Alberts I The Tony Foundation. This work outlines the need for quality music education to be an **ongoing, sequential learning experience** in order for both permanent positive cognitive development and deep musical learning and appreciation to occur.

In Victoria, general classroom teachers in government primary schools are responsible for teaching all key learning areas of the curriculum, including music. However, successive reviews and reports, most recently the Fading Notes report (Collins & Hocking, 2023) have highlighted the nation-wide deficiencies in pre-service teacher training in music. The same report found that generalist classroom teachers in Victoria receive only six hours of music teaching during their pre-service training (the lowest level nationally), which results in a large proportion of primary school teachers lacking confidence to deliver music education.

Recommendations:

- Investment in professional performing arts organisations will enable existing successful arts education programs to be scaled up for increased reach and impact across VIC and the leveraging of additional private sector income.
- Consider it a cross-portfolio priority to fund music education, to ensure that best-practice is shared between the Creative Industries and Education sectors, to support professional artists and arts organisations, and so that harmonisation of funding and service delivery is achieved.
- Set a goal of ensuring that all primary school students have access to at least an hour a week of quality music education, provided year-round, and ideally by a specialist teacher.

- Investment in ongoing professional development for classroom teachers is essential to ensure that all VIC students receive quality music and arts education at school.
- Schools in regional VIC and schools for students with disability require additional funding and resources to ensure equitable access to music and arts education for all.

Pathways for Emerging Artists:

MVA's suite of Emerging Artist Programs builds a pathway of interconnected opportunities for students, teachers and training institutions that illuminate different ways to be a musician and build a healthier and more vibrant professional music sector. Emerging Artist Programs focus support for students at critical junctures in their development to deliver a seamless pathway from *seeing* to *being*.

As students enter secondary education, MVA's focus on access and equity continues, but the need shifts from broad provision of music education for all, to the identified need for an accessible vocational training pathway which will nourish a sustainable cultural sector into the future.

MVA's **Strike A Chord program** is a chamber music coaching program and competition for high school musicians nationally. Established in 2020, Strike A Chord aims to foster a love of chamber music among young people and provide an opportunity for students to work hard to achieve a goal with their friends, improve their instrumental/vocal skills and, most importantly, have fun while making music. Each year, twelve groups from around the country are selected to perform at the Grand Final at the Melbourne Recital Centre. There are numerous cash and development prizes available to groups at all levels throughout the competition, and all groups receive feedback from the judging panel.

MVA extends this training pathway through to tertiary students through our partnerships with universities such as Monash University and ANAM, through which we connect world-class musicians with aspiring early career musicians for coaching, workshops, masterclasses and mentorships. Other Emerging Artist activities include the quadrennial **Melbourne International Chamber Music Competition**, and **FutureMakers**, an intensive two-year program for exceptional emerging artistic leaders.

Gaps and opportunities in Emerging Artist pathways

Currently, focused pathways for aspiring musicians only exist within specialist secondary schools, the majority of which are private, high fee schools in capital cities. This leaves a void for the significant proportion of students attending government high schools, most particularly for those in regional and remote areas.

Additionally, traditional music training pathways tend to focus on the singular pursuit of excellence as measured through the lens of elite professional performance. While this is the goal of some exceptional young performers, many others have the potential to find meaningful and highly-skilled roles in other areas of the arts, including as music teachers, arts journalists, production staff and arts managers. Building a pipeline that nurtures all these possible pathways for passionate young people is vital to ensuring a sustainable cultural sector in the future.

The Strike A Chord program:

- Provides a vocational training pathway for outstanding young musicians from secondary school to tertiary music studies, leveraging MVA's long-standing partnerships with conservatoria and universities around the country.
- Offers access to high-quality instrumental and vocal tuition to young people who could not otherwise access it, including First Nations students and those in regional and remote areas.
- Inspires and supports young artists through bespoke coaching and access to professional performers and performances.
- Engages the families and networks of participants, who represent the full cultural diversity of Australian society, to build a stronger appreciation of the value of music in our communities.
- Strengthens the skills of music teachers around the country through in-school coaching, professional development and access to specialist resources.

The Victorian Government seed funded the inception of Strike A Chord and currently supports the project through Creative Victoria with \$300,000 per year over 2022-2025, however ongoing support is uncertain and the ongoing viability of the program is at risk.

There are currently no competitive funding programs, state-based or federally, for which Strike A Chord is eligible. Arts funding programs tend to focus on professional artists and outcomes for audiences, and educational programs focus on curriculum-based activities. Strike A Chord's cohort of high school aged young people are at risk of missing out on a critical intervention into their creative futures without targeted support for this program. Young people will lose this program's vital training, mentorship and guidance towards a fulfilling vocational pathway. The Australian creative sector will lose a key mechanism for improving equity and access in our communities, resulting in a diminished pipeline of innovative young people for the sector in the future.

Recommendations:

- Investment into vocational pathways for emerging artists and young people is vital to ensure an ongoing and healthy pipeline of creative sector workers for the Victoria's Creative Industries.
- Strategic funding is necessary to support programs like Strike A Chord due to the gap in existing competitive arts funding to support programs for emerging artists.
- Emerging artists are vital to replacing the creative workforce lost to other sectors during COVID-19 and should be a focus for future government investment.

Support for Venues and Performing Arts Presenters:

Longitudinal research such as Creative Australia's [Audience Outlook Monitor](#) has identified numerous changes in audience behaviour and sentiment towards the arts since COVID-19 began in early 2020. For example, COVID-19 accelerated the decline of sales of subscription packages, which provide performing arts companies with guaranteed bookings in advance, in favour of more single tickets, often booked precariously close to the performance date.

The most recent Audience Outlook Monitor research identified the growing impact of cost-of-living pressures on the disposable income of many Australians, impacting spending on entertainment and cost sensitivity in ticket pricing. Many Australians are having to make tough decisions about their spending and are looking for free or cheap forms of entertainment.

The same inflationary pressures are impacting performing arts presenters and venues, with significant increases in costs such as flights, petrol, accommodation and freight while federal and state funding levels have generally remained stagnant.

Many of the venues that MVA works with, such as Melbourne Recital Centre, Arts Centre Melbourne and Fed Square are also experiencing cost pressures, which are being passed on to presenting companies and small ensembles in the form of significantly increased hire charges. Many venues are under pressure to increase the proportion of commercial bookings, meaning that the presenters like MVA who rely on them are less able to access dates within the timeframes needed for artistic planning.

Recommendations:

- Ensure that investment into the arts is increased over time in response to inflation, the employment market and other relevant cost pressures.
- Advocate for federal tax incentives such as the [40% tax offset](#) modelled by Live Performance Australia to encourage increased private sector investment in the cultural and creative industries.
- Increase financial support for venues with an explicit goal of increasing affordability for presenters, which in turn will increase occupancy and levels of performance activity, and contribute to presenter sustainability and to the performing arts ecology as a whole.