

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF HEADS OF TERTIARY MUSIC SCHOOLS
RESPONSE TO THE WEST REVIEW
OF HIGHER EDUCATION FINANCIAL AND POLICY

1. GENERAL COMMENT

The Arts do not feature in The West Review and The Committee is overwhelmingly silent on arts related issues. This is in spite of the fact that the arts are a very important contributor to the nation's economy and a significant source of export dollars. The Australia Council estimates that in 1997 the value of the total supply of cultural goods and services will be greater than \$15 billion.

Whilst acknowledging that the report is a general one and that none of the academic disciplines get specific mention, the implementation of this review's recommendations will effect the Arts and Music specifically.

2. EQUITY

The Committee's quest for Equity and interest in 'providing universal, publicly funded access to post-secondary education' and lifelong learning is commendable.

However, the current prejudicial hierarchy of academic disciplines with, for example, Science as one of the most favoured attitudinally and financially, and Music as one of the least, can distort notions of equity as musically oriented individuals may experience higher education in inadequately resourced facilities with poor equipment and minimal access to research grants and, in a new funding model, be paying higher fees than Science students.

Will this be equitable?

3. TECHNOLOGY

The most contentious role for technology advocated by the West Committee is to reduce teaching costs in Higher Education as a 'teaching infrastructure is expensive to maintain'.

NACHTMUS supports the role of Technology in increasing access to higher education and developments in information technology such as interactive multimedia which can be used to support active learning and enhance aspects of education and training in music and be applied in creative music making contexts.

However, these technological developments cannot and should not replace the musician in particular teaching contexts such as the one to one instrumental or vocal lesson.

4. RESEARCH

The Review acknowledges that Research is an area of activity in which there is the greatest opportunity to gain marginal increase in revenue. It is also acknowledged that 'the current allocation of funds between fields of research implies that certain priorities do exist, though they are implicit rather than an outcome of an open process.'

Given that the concept of 'national priorities' and being more responsive to the vocational needs of the community are important themes in this review, will this mean less funding for the visual and performing arts, where the post-graduate employment record is one of the poorest?

How does creative arts work really fit in with 'national priorities' when personal expression is such an important part of its output?

If priorities are to be explicit it is to be hoped that the equity issue takes into account the diverse talents of its educational constituency and supports research in all disciplines including the visual and performing arts which have largely been ignored.

5. RELATIONSHIP AND INTERFACE WITH TAFE SECTOR AND PRIVATE PROVIDERS

NACHTMUS supports the Review's call for increased interface and financial integration between all sectors of higher education for the purposes of maximising learning opportunities for music students.

For this reason Cross Sector Collaboration is a focal discussion point for NACHTMUS.

The Unified National System (UNS) of university education implemented the integration, through amalgamation, of the complete range of music specialisms with the introduction of music conservatoriums into this system.

Despite obvious advantages to Universities of amalgamation with music schools and the adaptation by music conservatoriums in particular to this sector's culture, there is uniform agreement that the reforms associated with the Unified National System have caused inequities for music and its specialisms.

It is of concern that this receives no attention or specific mention in the Review.

6. FUNDING

As yet there is little acknowledgment and formal recognition of specific funding needs for music educators within institutions themselves or in current systems of funding.

NACHTMUS would prefer a combination of the student centred and performance based funding models.

7. THE NEXT TWENTY YEARS

There is a need to recognise that a strong and viable music education culture as part of Australian Universities must be funded at levels appropriate to the requirements of the discipline. Music currently provides enormous social, cultural and economic benefits at both local and international levels.

NACHTMUS recommends that an Arts and Humanities Advisory Group to the Federal Government be established to assist in the formulation of policies and educational recommendations in these important areas including **Music**.

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