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FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND YOUTH AFFAIRS
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Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into the cessation of the Music
for Colleges course

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Submission on

Inquiry into the Cessation of the Music for
Colleges Course

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I write this submission based on my experience as a tertiary trained, specialist flute teacher with experience over almost 30 years in three different states and territories, now teaching in Canberra.

My greatest concern over the decision to cut the Music for Colleges course at the ANU SoM is the impact that it will have on the serious students of classical music who wish to pursue it as a career via tertiary studies. Unfortunately many schools in Canberra, both public and private, do not offer classical music as a senior course, nor do they have the capacity to offer students the opportunity to play in chamber groups and larger ensembles. This situation is even worse for string and classical vocal students, with virtually no in-school ensemble opportunities available.

While organisations such as the IMP and Music for Canberra are able to offer some large ensemble performance opportunities for truly gifted and talented young musicians in the territory, the lack of availability of high quality theoretical courses is problematic. In my experience, even the courses that are offered often lack the rigour of many of their equivalent in other states and are poor preparation for tertiary study. This is where the H-course is invaluable.

Currently I teach a year 12 student who has been fortunate enough to secure a place in the highly competitive Music for Colleges programme. He is a very talented and hard working young man who is interested in pursuing classical flute performance and related activities as a career. As a student at ██████████ College he is unable to study classical music at a senior level, as it is not offered. The school also does not offer any sort of classical ensembles in which he would be able to participate.

Without the H-course he would be at a distinct disadvantage, as the various conservatoriums or schools of music around the country require a substantial level of assumed knowledge of music theory/aural training to be able to confidently participate in their degree courses. Without the H-course he would depend on teachers like myself in a private setting to train him in the aural and theoretical skills he would need, unlike most of his peers across the eastern seaboard. This is excessively costly for something that students in, for example, NSW would obtain automatically through the Music 2 and even the Music 1 course. It is also difficult as a private instrumental teacher to do this well with limited time. As well as a strong academic background, the H-course also offers students the opportunity to work and perform in chamber ensembles with other equally gifted and motivated students with the support of highly-skilled professional tutors, an opportunity that is not available to most public school students.

Music performance is a highly specialised and very competitive field, and the decision to study it at a tertiary level cannot be undertaken on a whim but requires many years of preparation in order to even obtain a place at any of the top tertiary institutions. The H-course offered at the ANU provides ACT students with the background to be competitive at a national level. Without it I feel that the opportunities for these most gifted of students are limited. I personally know several students who, on completing the H-course, have gone on to win places at the Queensland, Sydney and Melbourne Conservatoriums.

Many of the best and most talented young musicians are seriously disadvantaged without the H-course, and if the arts and music are truly valued in the ACT, and seeing young Canberrans excel on the world stage, it makes sense to reinstate this outstanding course.