



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND YOUTH AFFAIRS
Mr Michael Pettersson MLA (Chair), Mrs Elizabeth Kikkert MLA (Deputy Chair)
Mr Mark Parton MLA

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into the cessation of the Music
for Colleges course

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To Whom It May Concern:

The second page of this document is the letter that I sent to the ACT Government last year when the cancelation of Music for Colleges Course was confirmed. It still stands as a clear statement of the importance of the course to the Canberra music community. I am the current Music for Colleges Course Jazz convener at the School of Music.

As a way to highlight the impact the cessation of this course has already had I would like to share two things.

Firstly is an interaction I had with a year 12 student from last year (2018) who is now a first year undergraduate at the School of Music. His statement to me was that quite simply his ability to specialize in the subject area of his strength (music) is the only thing that enabled him to obtain the ATAR he required. He felt that without this opportunity he would not have been able to succeed to the level that he did in year 12 and he was highly disappointed that this opportunity was no longer available to current students.

The second thing that I would like to share is the level of disappointment I have experienced from highly qualified and experienced music teachers from around Canberra. I have received direct correspondence from five separate schools expressing their exasperation at this decision. They all communicated to me that they had a cohort of students that had been preparing for the course and that since the announcement these students were highly disappointed. The five schools are; Canberra College, Lyneham High School, Trinity Christian School, Daramarlan College and Canberra Girls Grammar School. I am also the Director of Bands at Radford College and can inform you that a number of students from that school were actively seeking to participate in the H course this year. These students have been left with a feeling of abandonment.

My personal belief is that whilst understanding that the events that led to this decision were not straight forward that ultimately the community of Canberra will be hurt greatly by it. Music is always at the core of the cultural and creative life of any community and one of the clearest and most supportive pathways to this core has been stripped away. A Government that is community minded and interested in the wellbeing of its city will see the folly of this decision and reinstated this program as one of the shining lights its cultural development.

Kind regards

Ben Marston



I would very much appreciate the opportunity to appear before the Committee if it would be deemed appropriate.

Letter from 2018

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter to plead with members of the ACT Government to reconsider withdrawing the funding to the ANU School of Music H Course. For the last eleven years I have been the convener of the Jazz component of this program. In my role, I have witnessed profound change in the lives of young Canberran musicians. Students come to the program with various levels of passion in music, but without fail every single student who complete the Jazz H course leaves with a spark that helps keep the fire of music making alive in this city, and later even the world.

This spark is ignited by both the finest music educators in the city but also by the simple fact that we bring together many of the young musicians in Canberra who are like-minded. What then occurs is truly miraculous to watch, as students inspire one another, sharing their creativity and becoming a new generation of musicians. My experience in teaching these students is that students flourish individually and collectively when we point them towards various musical directions and promote creativity.

The unique structure of the H Course within the ACT Education system allows this amazing environment. To let this slip away would be both a tragedy and short-sighted. If we remove the pathway of the H Course, I believe we will see a sharp decline in the number of students pursuing music beyond their initial passion. We will no longer see the flourishing of our impressively disproportionate number of international performers, national award winners, music teachers, community group participants or local professionals that ensure the Canberra music scene remains alive, active and healthy. These are just some of the direct results of H Course.

As a graduate of the ANU pre-tertiary program (the former incarnation of the H course), a path which led me to my career as a performing musician, composer and educator who proceeded through the Canberra School of Music, I feel strongly qualified to make these remarks. As a performer I have collaborated with some of Australia's finest musicians, produced albums to national acclaim, toured the country and been nominated for a Freedman Fellowship. As an educator, in addition to my role at the ANU I am also the Director of Bands at Radford College and esteemed as a trumpet tutor and band leader throughout the city.

That the ANU School of Music H Course is a highly valuable program within the Canberra music community cannot be doubted. Its loss would see the music community receive a critical blow, particularly as it has only recently begun to rebuild itself since the crisis in the tertiary sector. Furthermore, the ability of the city to meet the arts goals that the government desires will be greatly diminished as the quality and number of musicians decline. We will all be the worse if the program is defunded and allowed to die.

I thank you for the opportunity to share my concerns. Please contact me if I can provide more insight to help you reverse the decisions that have been made.

Yours Faithfully,

Ben Marston
BMus, MMus

