

For Immediate Release:
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Australia's Performing Arts
**WE ALL
PLAY
A PART**

MEDIA RELEASE

Queensland leads the nation in nurturing artistic talent and creative thinking

Leading arts producers and presenters today called on Australian Governments to adopt the successful Queensland model for arts in education.

“Adopting Queensland’s long term commitment to arts education for school children would return a handsome dividend around Australia – both in artistic skills and in creative thinking for the 21st century economy,” the Chair of Australian Major Performing Arts Group Derek Young said today.

Mr Young was speaking at the launch of the We All Play a Part at Queensland Ballet’s Thomas Dixon Centre. “We believe it is a national priority to extend this commitment to other states.”

Orchestras around the country remark on the number of Queenslanders in their ranks while both the Australian Youth Orchestra and leading choir organisations note the high level of participation in Queensland compared to other states. Queensland provides teachers, musical instruments and resources so that every student has access to arts in education in the public and private systems.

Michael Gow, the writer of the seminal Australian play *Away* and now the artistic director of the Queensland Theatre Company is a specialist in developing Australian talent.

“Australia has a number of young performers such as Kate Miller Heidke and Georgina Symes who are a constant reminder to us about how we all play a part in nurturing talent, allowing them to realise their dreams on the international stage” Michael said.

Mr Young said arts producers and presenters know the range and depth of talent in Australia was extraordinary. “However too many children miss out on the opportunity to explore their potential because of the lack of specialist teachers, instruments and resources, and high quality national curriculum.”

The major arts companies reach more than 700,000 students in schools every year, while venues, commercial producers and specialist touring companies also partner with schools and education agencies.

Research conducted by the Australia Council for the Arts over the last five years has demonstrated how involvement in the performing arts improves academic outcomes¹. International research has also uncovered the importance of arts in developing skills for flexible and imaginative thinking. As the Prime Minister told the 2020 Summit this year “Our ambition should be to create and to foster a creative imaginative Australia because so much of the economy of the twenty-first century is going to require that central faculty”.

¹ Hunter, M., et al, 2006, *Education and the Arts: Research Overview*, Australia Council for the Arts

Imogen Page of Kenmore State High School is just one player in the Queensland education arts revolution. Imogen and fellow students are working with Opera Queensland to create an opera to tackle important youth issues.

“We were presented with the challenge of bringing the classical tradition of opera to an issue that we as young people faced every day,” Imogen said.

“It was great to be involved in a project that can make a difference while at the same time encouraging students to think differently.”

Queensland Minister for Education and Training and Minister for the Arts, Rod Welford, attended today’s launch and highlighted the benefits of arts education for students.

“I’m a strong supporter of arts education because of its positive benefits for other areas of learning. Participation in the arts boosts the confidence and creativity of our students,” Mr Welford said.

“Educators and music industry professionals regard our world-renowned instrumental music program as the finest and most extensive in the country.

“The program was introduced to our state schools over three decades ago and now boasts more than 400 instrumental music instructors teaching in excess of 50,000 state school students in almost 800 schools across Queensland.”

Debbie O’Shea, a teacher in the northern Brisbane suburb of Sandgate, has been working with Musica Viva Australia and has delivered musical education to teachers and students for 27 years. Debbie knows first hand how the performing arts can assist students in the classroom.

“Music has changed the face of the school, opening doors for children that they never knew existed. I have seen life changing results from children that people have just given up on. It’s why I stay in my job” Debbie said.

“As an educator I have seen how music and the arts can build creative thinkers, taking students in directions they would never have expected.

“Involvement in music and the arts improves students’ ability to interact with others, stimulates creative teamwork and improves their behaviour in the class room,” Debbie said.

ENDS

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For radio news editors:

Pre-recorded radio interview grabs are available at:

www.mediagame.com.au

Additional media collateral can be downloaded at:

www.weallplayapart.com.au



About the We All Play a Part Campaign

The We All Play a Part campaign aims to highlight the role that all Australians play in the local and global success of Australia's performing arts industry. Visit the website www.weallplayapart.com.au to register as a supporter and receive updates on future events.

The We All Play a Part campaign is an initiative of the Australian Major Performing Arts Group (AMPAG), in association with Live Performance Australia (LPA) and the Media and Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA).

Also supporting We All Play a Part are the following campaign partners: the Australian Children's Music Foundation (ACMF); the Australian Performing Arts Centres Association (APACA); and the Australian Network for Art and Technology (ANAT). This is first time such a broad coalition of representative bodies from the arts have come together for an advocacy campaign.

Major themes for the campaign are: Nurturing Talent; Building Stronger communities; Participation and Enjoyment; and National Pride.

Interviews may be arranged with national and education ambassadors upon request:

Foundation Ambassadors:

Vladimir Ashkenazy, Conductor and Pianist

William Barton, Musician and Composer

John Bell AM, Actor and Director, Artistic Director Bell Shakespeare

Brendan Cowell, Actor Writer and Director

Richard Evans, CEO Sydney Opera House

Michael Gow, Playwright, Artistic Director QTC, and Chair of Playwriting Australia

Leah Purcell, Actor Writer and Director

Craig Pearce, Script writer and Executive Producer

Brett Sheehy, Artistic Director Melbourne International Arts Festival

Richard Tognetti, Musician and Artistic Director of Australian Chamber Orchestra

Don Spencer OAM, Musician and founder of Australian Children's Music Foundation

Louise Withers, Producer – currently Executive Producer Billy Elliot The Musical

Education Ambassadors:

Debbie O'Shea, Teacher and Musica Viva In Schools

Rachael Walsh, Principal Dancer with Queensland Ballet

Imogen and Nicky Page, Opera QLD education

Georgina Symes Actor, a 2008 Emerging Artist with QTC