



Joint Select Committee on Arts and Music Education and Training in New South
Wales

INQUIRY SUBMISSION – July 2024



WESTERN SYDNEY
CREATIVE

BACKGROUND

Western Sydney University (WSU) is a modern, forward-thinking, research-led university, located at the heart of Australia's fastest-growing, culturally and linguistically diverse, and economically significant region, Western Sydney. Boasting 11 campuses – many in Western Sydney CBD locations – and more than 200,000 alumni, 49,500 students and 3,500 staff, the University has 13 Schools with an array of well-designed programs and degrees carefully structured to meet the demands of future industry.

The University is ranked in the top two per cent of universities worldwide, and as a research leader, over 85 per cent of the University's assessed research is rated at 'World Standard' or above. Western Sydney University has been named number one in the world for its social, ecological and economic impact in the latest Times Higher Education (THE) University Impact Rankings.

WESTERN SYDNEY CREATIVE

In 2019, Western Sydney University launched the Western Sydney Creative (WSC) decadal strategy, establishing a new and exciting opportunity for the arts and culture of our region. The strategy outlines the University's long-term commitment to the arts and cultural sector, including championing, celebrating and investing in the local in order to assist in the growth and maturation of the region's arts and cultural landscape nationally and internationally.

The Western Sydney arts and cultural network currently delivers events and cultural activations to over four million people annually, our strategy therefore recognises the significant and vital role that the sector plays in the economic, social and civic development of the region but understands that it faces significant challenges that need to be met with imagination, scaled commitment, investment and long-term vision. At this historic juncture following the COVID-19 pandemic and its profound impact on the employment and revenue within Western Sydney's cultural and creative sector, the University is stepping up to these challenges and has identified, but is not limited to, the following key areas:

- I. Women in the arts: Gender inequality and exclusionary practices;
- II. Recognising, respecting and investing in Indigenous Australian arts and culture;
- III. Ensuring students in Western Sydney have regular equitable access to a tertiary visual and performing art education;
- IV. Ensuring equitable investment in arts and culture in Sydney's West and to under-served communities; and
- V. Local, national and international institutional partnerships to expand and enhance cross-cultural participation, promote diversity and reflective of Western Sydney's multicultural community.



WESTERN SYDNEY CREATIVE

FEMINISM, ACTIVISM, AND IDENTITY

Save the date for a series of Wednesday lunchtime talks presented by Western Sydney Creative and the School of Humanities and Communication Arts in association with the exhibition *Women (seen)*

→ **13 March** Raquel Ormella
→ **27 March** Kirtika Kain and Savanhdary Vongpoothorn
→ **10 April** Countess Report - Melinda Rackham and Elvis Richardson
→ **1 May** Marian Abboud and Vicki Van Hout

Talks will be held in Lecture Theatre EA.G19 at 12pm. More details to come.

Women (seen) is on display at The Margaret Whitlam Galleries, The Whitlam Institute, Building EZ, Parramatta South Campus until 26 April.

Western Sydney Creative & the School of Humanities and Communication Arts lunchtime talks in association with the exhibition *Women (seen)*, 2024.

Addressing the needs of Western Sydney:

1. *Ensure that students in Western Sydney have access to place-based high quality tertiary arts education.*

The rising costs of living, and the affordability of public transport must not be a barrier to residents accessing educational opportunities in Western Sydney. Any review must ensure that appropriate provisions are in place so that students regardless of their age, geographic location or social and economic status are not disadvantaged in pursuing careers in the creative sector.

2. *Support arts and cultural organisations in Western Sydney to work in partnership with education providers to make arts-based learning a core part of education.*

Support arts and cultural organisations in Western Sydney to collaborate with educational institutions to make arts-based learning an essential part of the core curriculum. These partnerships can enhance students' educational experiences, fostering creativity, critical thinking, and cultural awareness.

3. *Develop targeted funding programs for arts education.*

Develop a comprehensive investment model that acknowledges and supports the significant contributions of small to medium arts organisations as key providers of visual and performing arts education in the region. These organisations often have deep connections within the community, offering accessible and culturally relevant programs that large institutions may not.

4. *Build a body of evidence and practice to understand how the arts improve equity for students.*

To effectively integrate arts into education and ensure equitable outcomes for all students, it is crucial to build a comprehensive body of evidence and practice. Up-to-date data and research can inform policy decisions and investment strategies, ensuring that resources are allocated where they can have the most significant impact. This approach will help demonstrate the role of the arts in improving educational equity, fostering an inclusive learning environment, and supporting student success across diverse demographics.

5. *Uphold the right to cultural participation*

Secure for every child and adult in Western Sydney the right to education and cultural opportunities that ensure active participation in cultural and artistic life. This includes guaranteeing that young people have unimpeded, place-based access to the arts by revitalising the music and performing arts scene, fostering local talent, and ensuring the sustainability of venues and nightlife tailored to the diverse youth of Western Sydney.

6. *Promote careers in the arts and culture industries*

Promote careers in the arts and creative industries to young people and diverse communities in Western Sydney by developing career pathway awareness programs, launching educational campaigns, establishing industry partnerships and placements, organising talent showcases, investing in supportive infrastructure, and offering financial incentives and grants.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

In a contemporary environment that values innovation, collaboration, empathy, agility, critical thinking, and problem-solving, the arts represent the logical conduit for cultivating these essential capacities and skills. This submission contends that creativity and innovation are fundamental to 21st-century economies, underscoring the necessity of fostering an innovative and agile workforce through enhanced visual and performing arts education, particularly in Western Sydney.



Arts & Cultural Exchange Club Weld Lunchtime Concerts, Western Sydney University featuring Jerrah Patson, Jonathan Yung, Nina Gotsis, Patrick Li, Sienna Acquaro, Charbel Nehme, Kate Field & Adoni.

A recent study by Western Sydney University, titled **The State of the Arts in Western Sydney (2023)**, revealed a significant gap in qualifications and skills in the creative arts sector in the region. This deficiency is primarily attributed to the limited availability of performing and visual arts tertiary education courses and facilities. Currently, Western Sydney is home to only three institutions offering tertiary education in creative arts, starkly contrasted with 17 institutions in Eastern Sydney.¹

The scarcity of institutions providing creative arts education restricts students' opportunities to pursue formal training, resulting in lower skill levels and limited career opportunities in the region. This disparity undermines Western Sydney's efforts to position itself as a center for growth and economic opportunity, as a well-developed creative sector is crucial for attracting investment, fostering innovation, and creating jobs. To overcome these challenges, it is essential to expand educational facilities, enhance funding and resources, foster community and industry collaboration, and promote awareness and accessibility.

Establishing more institutions, developing targeted funding programs, fostering partnerships with local arts organisations, and implementing training programs will help build a vibrant and skilled creative arts sector in Western Sydney, positioning the region as a hub for growth, innovation, and economic development.

¹ Itaoui, R., Merrillees, D., & Gerace, G. (2023). *State of the Arts in Western Sydney*. <https://doi.org/10.26183/tvye-5r23>

WSC@WESTERNSYDNEY.EDU.AU

[@westernsydneyuncreative](https://www.instagram.com/westernsydneyuncreative)



WESTERN SYDNEY
CREATIVE