

INDEPENDENT REVIEW INTO THE MURRAY CONSERVATORIUM

- **DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE**
- **REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION**

6 October 2025

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Background

A review of the Murray Conservatorium will be conducted from October 2025, with the intention to complete a comprehensive interview, investigation and fact-finding process culminating in a Report with Findings and Recommendations in December 2025.

The following pages present information on the Terms of Reference, requirements for participation, and participating in the Review.

Updated and additional relevant information will be provided throughout the Review period.

The formal interview and submission process commences Monday 3 November 2025. Anyone wanting to provide information and/or participate in the interview and review process will be able to do so.

Please direct queries to Review Team Leader Kel Watt, as per his contact information above.

Contributing to the Review

This document contains **draft Terms of Reference**, below.

It represents an opportunity for all stakeholders to understand the scope of the Review before it commences and affords all interested parties the opportunity to request additional or expanded Terms.

It is our intention to accept all reasonable and relevant requests.

Conducting the Review in good faith to support all views

The inclusion of all matters raised in a public letter to the Conservatorium Board on 14 September 2025 should be regarded as a sign of good faith in our firm's professional conduct. It is a demonstration that the Review is being conducted in a manner that will benefit all stakeholders and interested parties.

Preliminary and preparatory work, including conversations with internal and external stakeholders representing supporters *and* critics of the Conservatorium's operations, has helped shape the draft Terms of Reference.

We are grateful for these early demonstrations from all people in the music community, regardless of their views, that they are eager and willing to contribute to this project's scope and goals.

Contributing to the Terms of Reference and Review processes

The opportunity to contribute to the Terms of Reference and general approach of the review team remains open from 6 October 2025 until 1 November 2025.

These draft Terms, along with information on participating in the Review will be presented at public meetings on Friday 24 October and Saturday 25 October in Albury. Open Q&A sessions will immediately follow.

The opportunity to contribute to the Terms of Reference and Review processes will remain open for seven days following the meetings.

Contributions will be accepted until 11:59 PM on Saturday 1 November 2025.

Final Review documents

Final Terms of Reference, along with confirmation of interview processes, how to make submissions, and other matters will be published and distributed from Sunday 2 November 2025.

Draft Terms of Reference

Principles, scope and conduct

The Review of Murray Conservatorium will focus on:

- Leadership and management competency of Board members, staff, and teachers
- Organisational culture, business and administrative processes and operations, financial strategy, and alignment with NSW Government Department of Education Funding Guidelines

This Review will:

- actively engage with key stakeholders across schools, community organisations, parents and students
- deliver a safe and supportive environment for participants and contributors
- provide confidentiality as requested or required
- produce a Report encapsulating findings and recommendations, and be evidence-based
- be conducted by external experts with proven experience in music education, performance, and governance in a regional setting, and community consultation

Concerns and criticisms outlined in a letter addressed to the Conservatorium Board on Sunday 14 September 2025 will be incorporated into interviews and fact-finding efforts.

Specifically, the Review will consider and include, but not be limited to:

1. Working with independent legal advisors and independent HR advisors review and assess:
 - Recently completed (last five years) Reviews for effectiveness, implementation and shortcomings in practice
 - Existing operating and administrative documents, and identify gaps and shortcomings
2. Examine the factors affecting workloads, including:
 - systems, resources and processes
 - opportunities to better support the work being undertaken

- changes in community expectation of, and engagement with, the music community and broader public, including methods of engagement such as social media, email, branding, advertising and promotions
 - Conservatorium functions, hours of work, including additional responsibilities, hours of expected availability, functions, duties and associated workload of teachers and staff
 - support systems and processes currently available, and identify gaps and shortfalls
 - training and professional development needs for teachers, staff and Board members
 - current staffing resources, including workforce profile, capability requirements, adequacy of staffing levels, adequacy of qualifications, adequacy of accreditations such as WWVP, supplementary or alternative labour options, attraction and retention issues and the use of volunteers, trainees/cadets or interns.
3. Examine and report on workplace culture and provide advice on any systemic and institutional issues.
 4. Examine any claims made in relation to inappropriate conduct and behaviours and provide advice on:
 - best practice responses to such complaints
 - whether referral of such complaints should be made to any other authority
 - what support services should be provided to complainants.
 5. Examine and report on the existing workforce policies and complaints management practices to ensure their relevance and appropriateness in achieving satisfactory outcomes for all parties.
 6. Provide findings and recommendations for further improving workforce culture
 7. The Review should consider requirements demanded by relevant federal, state and local governments interacting as a stakeholder, and other relevant authorities.
 8. Establish a factual record of circumstances relating to the request to borrow the Ruth Whyte bequest piano in August 2025.
 9. Establish a factual record of matters relating to how a person qualifies for membership of Murray Conservatorium and attendance at an Annual General Meeting (AGM).

Requirements for participation

Principles

All participants, stakeholders and interested parties have a right to expect the Independent Review will be conducted fairly, safely and honestly.

Regardless of their views and opinions, everyone wishing to contribute to the Review will be provided with channels and opportunities to do so.

All parties have the right to expect that processes implemented during the Review will:

- ensure all participants are treated equally
- maximise and encourage participation
- ensure the highest quality of factual, evidence-based and useful information will be elicited
- establish an environment that maximises contributions to the Review's conduct and its outcomes.

Not providing public commentary

A condition placed upon all participants is that there is to be no public commentary, including, but not limited to:

- Posts on social media
- Statements to media outlets
- Speeches, statements or reflections upon individuals and the Review process at public events
- Publishing comments in blogs, newsletters and through other channels.

There will be a zero-tolerance policy on this requirement, ensuring no individual or organisation may claim doubt about what commentary is acceptable or unacceptable.

This requirement is in place from 6 October 2025.

Why this requirement is in place

Experience shows that, intentional or not, providing public commentary is the most likely way to harm or derail a fair process.

Watt Advocacy & Communications uses this requirement throughout many investigations and reviews conducted over more than a decade to help ensure Review processes and outcomes meet the principles identified above.

It also respects the contributions and requests from stakeholders made thus far, included external stakeholders who signed a letter to the Murray Conservatorium Board on 14 September 2025 requesting a Review.

Public comment, media statements and social media posts (for example) can be used to intimidate participants, discourage involvement, and undermine confidentiality goals.

It is inappropriate for accusations, speculation and allegations to be part of a public commentary running alongside the Review. They should be raised directly with the Review team for their consideration and investigation.

Watt Advocacy & Communications has many years of experience and expertise in investigations and reviews. The expectations and principles we are applying in the Review are regarded as best practice, and experience shows they help to deliver the highest quality and most useful processes and outcomes.

Removal from the Review

If someone wishes to make public comments and undermine the fair process, established by attempting to influence opinion or perceptions of reputation (good or bad), they will self-eliminate from the Review.

Any person choosing to breach this requirement will no longer be a participant in the review.

Any person discovered to provide public statements ‘anonymously’ will be excluded if they are identified.

If asked to make a public comment

Any participant asked to make a public comment should provide the following statement, or words to the effect:

It is a requirement of my participation in the Independent Review into the Murray Conservatorium that I do not make any public comment, including online and to media queries.

The Independent Review team can provide a copy of the principles and rationale for this requirement, and how it underpins a confidential and fair process.

Please direct your questions or requests to the Independent Review team via email Admin@WattAdvocacy.com or call Review Team Leader Kel Watt on 0411 707 489.

What you can expect from the Review to ensure you can contribute

The Review will be conducted using a combination of:

- face-to-face meetings and activities at venues including:
 - the Conservatorium
 - public meeting spaces
 - rented office or meeting venues
 - office and meeting spaces of relevant stakeholder organisations
 - other relevant locations in the region.
- Online meetings
- Online surveys
- Online submissions
- Hard copy document submission to a Review Team member in person or via PO Box 5181, Braddon ACT 2612
- Electronic submission via email to Admin@WattAdvocacy.com
 - Subject line must include “Submission to Murray Conservatorium Review”

Please note:

1. We do not meet at a private residence unless it is for an exceptional circumstance. Requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
2. We do not meet with minors unless it is with a parent or guardian. A request for a private online meeting that is recorded and conducted with the permission of a parent or guardian will be considered upon request.

Your contributions and submissions

The Review interview and investigation process will focus on fact-finding and evidence-based contributions. Hearsay and rumour will not be accepted as evidence. Participants may be asked to support their contributions with a Statutory Declaration.

Confidentiality and privacy

- Confidentiality is guaranteed and a cornerstone of our processes.
- Every verbal and written request for confidentiality will be respected.
- Any participant may request a signed Confidentiality Agreement from us to deliver greater confidence when speaking with a Review team member and making a submission.

All Review documents, including the Final Report, will allow contributors to have their names redacted or excluded upon request.

All contributors will be listed in alphabetical order in the Final Report, unless they have asked for their name to be withheld. Their names will not be aligned with the provision of information or submissions without their knowledge and requested approval beforehand.

Identifying and personal details, such as contact numbers and residential address, will be redacted and/or removed from documents.

Please contact the Review team about confidentiality and associated matters.