Ausdance National Education Committee
ACARA dance curriculum review July 2021

Key feedback from the *Ausdance National Education Committee
This submission responds to the different elements of the curriculum consultation:

- *Introductory elements* – the rationale, aims, organisation of the learning area, key connections and key considerations.

- *Curriculum elements* – the level descriptions, achievement standards, content descriptions and content elaborations.

The comments below are provided mainly with reference to the F–6 curriculum, the identified focus of the current review.

In the introduction to the Learning Area under '*The Australian Curriculum: The Arts* comprises five subjects' there is a statement: 'Dance practice integrates choreography, performance, and appreciation of and responses to dance and dance making' (p.1).

The last part of this sentence appears repetitive and seems at odds with the integration and overlay of making and responding in all of the components (choreography, performance, appreciation).

Suggestion: 'Dance practice integrates choreography, performance and appreciation within dance making and responding'.

The proposed revised Rationale and Aims for The Arts are much improved (p.2).

Organisation of the learning area with Content structure, Band level descriptions, Achievement standards, Content descriptions and Content Elaborations is clear.

Core Concepts (p.5)
The proposed Core Concepts 'learning by making and responding; learning as artist and as audience', are located as 'the big ideas, understandings, skills and processes that are central to The Arts curriculum'. These Core Concepts are crucial, as teachers have been working with 'making and responding' as strands since the introduction of the arts curriculum. Therefore, these, as well as any explanatory diagram, need to be foregrounded prior to the former four 'threads' now proposed as new strands (p.4).

The Core Concepts are clear for a teacher who is not a dance specialist, and we suggest they are placed earlier in the document. This section requires clearer and stronger articulation. Whilst the proposed revised strands show interrelatedness between aspects of making and responding, they appear messy and unnecessarily cluttered. If the intent is that these Core Concepts are overarching principles that can be applied across all of the workings of the Arts curriculum, there needs to be stronger articulation as to how they are interrelated concepts.

Whilst it might be useful, at times, to separate and consider in isolation, the principle behind their inclusion is for there to be more continuum in nature. Although they are mentioned in the next page, clarity and rationalisation here would help with understanding of the new inclusion of these Core Concepts. Are they an iterative process and can this be shown more

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clearly through a revised diagram? They do not act in isolation and while the crossover between the strands may be attempting to show this, a generalist may not realise this.

The diagram
We appreciate the efforts of trying to visually represent (Figure 1: Relationship of the core concepts to the content strands, p.6) but believe this figure still falls short of being helpful. If the idea behind the Core Concepts is to act as overarching/underpinnings, then this figure does not yet adequately represent this. Nor does it match the text which shows the overarching Core Concepts as 'equal', with artist and audience not necessarily embedded within the making and responding Core Concepts.

One suggestion could be to delete the light blue circle and just have the dark blue but include Learning as artist and as audience in the dark blue. This may act more functionally to indicate that the core concepts are overarching the strands. This could reduce the potential to privilege one concept over the other and provide equal weighting to each of the concepts.

More consideration should be given to the inter-relationship of Making and Responding, and artists and audience, as well as their additional inter-relationship (making / responding / artist /audience).

The inclusion of responding in the definition of Making and vice versa would help establish this crossover e.g. students explore and make dance works and throughout this process respond by reflecting, evaluating and refining their work. Likewise with the artist and audience, it would be important to acknowledge how the identities of audience and artist crossover.

Rationale (p.17)
Paragraph 3 states:
'Digital technologies enable wide viewing of dance on screen, presenting diverse dancing bodies and identities from across the world that inspire experimentation with movement to express individuality and community through dance'.

Technologies offer opportunities in making dance and exploring space beyond conventional theatre, and also allows access to works to respond, reflect, evaluate, interpret space. This statement needs to extend opportunities for all components and core concepts to engage in technology-based dance activity.

Suggestion:
Digital technologies enable wide viewing of dance on screen, enhancing access to learning experiences for choreography, performance and appreciation. Dance on screen presents diverse dancing bodies and identities from across the world that inspire experimentation with movement to express individuality and community through dance. Technology may also be used in the exploration of choreography through use of dance software and editing programs; in performance technology might be used as a production element or for documentation processes; in appreciation technology may be used for a range of critical viewing learning experiences.

Paragraph 4 states:
'In dance, students work collaboratively and individually to recognise and represent their thoughts and feelings'.

Suggestion:
In dance, students work collaboratively and individually to recognise and represent their own and others' thoughts and feelings.

Paragraph 4 states,
'Active participation as dancers, choreographers and audiences promotes lifelong benefits for students' health, wellbeing and social inclusion'.

Suggestion:
This could include other benefits such as artistic, creative, cognitive, aesthetic and cultural.

Proposed new Content Description Strands (p.4)
In the current curriculum, Content Description coding does not show the interrelated nature of Making and Responding but rather delineates between them. The interrelationship is shown through the proposed model (with the 4 strands) which appear to scaffold pedagogy rather than achievement standards for assessment.

The threads used to organise content in the current curriculum have been refined and recognised as 4 strands. As the 'What has changed and why' document states: 'Like the threads in the current curriculum, the revised strands 'reflect stages of a creative or artistic process' (ACARA 'What has changed and why?' p. 3).

Expanding the former 2 strands to be replaced by 4 new strands (the former 'threads') appears contradictory to the aims of the curriculum review which was to:

a. *refine and reduce the amount of content across all eight learning areas of the Australian Curriculum F-10, with a priority on the primary years, to focus on essential content or core concepts.*

b. *improve the quality of content descriptions and achievement standards by removing ambiguity and unnecessary duplication, and ensuring consistency and clarity of language and cognitive demand.*

Instead, the proposed changes appear to be an expansion rather than a refinement to show essential content. This revision introduces more ambiguity and duplication, particularly for F-6 teachers (non-specialist), which could cause confusion.

The proposed strands appear to be a teaching/pedagogical framework, rather than what students need to achieve (and therefore are likely to be assessed on).

These 4 strands are to 'reflect critical aspects of artistic and creative processes'. If these are to illuminate 'how students learn as artists and as audiences through the interrelated artistic and creative practices of making and responding', the descriptions of each strand (p. 4) have shifted considerably from the former 'threads' and require improved coherence.

These four terms could be streamlined by only using one word for each:

Strand 1: 'Connecting' can be subsumed in the concept of 'Exploring'; thus we suggest **Exploring** as the key term.

Strand 2: We appreciate the need to include the terms 'practice and ideas' but suggest they would all be subsumed into **Developing**.

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Strand 3: 'Creating' is intrinsic to each of the strands and we are concerned that 'Sharing' has shifted from former Thread 3 to the new Strand 4. In addition, we believe that communicating is a part of sharing. Thus, we suggest **Sharing** as the key term for Strand 3.

Strand 4: We are concerned about the lack of interpreting and critical reflection as essential practices in these strands. This seems an oversight, as the capacity to consider working in dance contextually and for students to interpret theirs and others works in term of contextual significance is important in establishing a solid foundation and sequential progression across F-10 for all three dance components (choreography, performance, appreciation).

How a learner interprets existing repertoire through the three concepts and draws upon dance works for making and responding purposes as artist and audience is fundamental to dance transitioning beyond movement to an artform. Thus, rather than this strand headed 'Sharing and communicating' we suggest **Reflecting** as a key term for this strand, which captures the current fourth thread 'Responding to and interpreting artworks'.

Stages of a creative or artistic process

Suggestion
The table below is suggested as a framework to 'reflect stages of a creative or artistic process' (ACARA 'What has changed and why?' p. 3) and as such, may be used flexibly and iteratively as a guide for F-6 generalist teachers as well as 7-10 specialists.

Strand	Learning as artists and as audiences through the interrelated artistic and creative practices of making and responding
Exploring	• Exploring stimuli to make connections between movement and ideas • Investigating elements of dance • Exploring different types of dance • Experiencing works, perspectives, practices and contexts for dance across times, cultures and communities
Developing	• Using fundamental movement skills with processes for working safely • Improvising and developing movement vocabulary and structures • Fostering creative skills and practices to develop movement vocabulary • Manipulating movement ideas, interpreting, arranging or reimagining
Sharing	• Selecting and refining movement ideas individually, with a partner, in groups and as class member • Combining and applying technical/physical and expressive skills including differentiating between style-based techniques • Rehearsing, refining and planning performances • Performing with intent
Reflecting	• Reflecting on and evaluating performances • Responding to feedback • Sharing ideas or information about the works or performance with audiences • Interpreting intentions within contexts and from different viewpoints

The Content Descriptions using the suggested Strand headings will require refining with aligned Elaborations (pp. 63-76)

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The Key Connections section is helpful for both primary and secondary teachers. The introduction of Content Descriptions in each band focusing on connections between The Arts and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curriculum priority is welcome. However, we have concerns about appropriate resourcing to support understanding for teachers and students.

The Viewpoints section is clear.

Key considerations section:
Appreciation is missing from the list of definitions. Working definitions of making, responding, artist, audience would be helpful here as a reminder of these key concepts.

The definitions of Choreography and Performance (and appreciation, if included), could employ the concepts of making, responding, artist and audience to help reinforce their overarching contribution to the learning experience.

Types of Dance
'They also consider how dance can communicate and challenge ideas about issues and concepts such as sustainability'.

'Sustainability' is offered as the only example here, but there can be many other significant issues that could be included.

In general, the curriculum starts to gain clarity from a structural perspective when the Strands, Content Descriptions and Elaborations are described on Pages 64 –78. This provides the best understanding of how the various components interrelate. We think there would be benefits in addressing this earlier in the curriculum, even if the detail remains later.

Curriculum elements – the level descriptions, achievement standards, content descriptions and content elaborations.

The use of the capitalised heading CURRICULUM ELEMENTS in the Table of Contents could be confusing, as 'elements' is used within the curriculum for each arts subject.

The Dance **achievement standards** remain clear and succinct. However, there remains concern that the F-6 area has a general arts achievement standard as an option, meaning students could just be exposed to one arts area in F-6.

The Ausdance National Education Committee appreciates the work undertaken for the proposed Curriculum revisions with the intention of decluttering the content through improving the clarity of structure, and refining the content descriptions and achievement standards. Committee members look forward to working further with ACARA on next steps.

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