

A hubba hubba music club

If you've ever considered moving to the country to be an independent music teacher then this may be the deal clincher for you.

by MERRYIN SPENCER

Music Hub is a new program to actively encourage recent graduates of major music institutions to relocate to regional and remote areas, set up a music school or take over from an operating business. The program fosters a supportive, high calibre teaching network in regional and remote NSW that also helps to cultivate creative community music making. It is run by highly respected and charismatic musician, performer and teacher, Mark Walton, who mentors a number of music teachers and their students across the state.

Benefits for the teachers are many: the opportunities to network, develop business skills and further grow their technical skills. Advantages to the community include the fostering of an active music scene and introducing the next generation to the possibilities of a career in music.

Music Hub currently supports eighteen highly skilled teachers in communities across the state and they are providing an excellent service. According to the Music Hub Teacher Survey in July 2007, in last year's exam results 22% of students were placed in the A+ range, with 1 in 5 students participating in group ensemble work.

One of the unique features of Music Hub is its innovative use of technology. Teachers utilise the videoconferencing facilities through the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) and the latest tool of choice is Skype, which is being used for video lessons with students and teachers. Mark says he is very excited about the flexibility and ease of this free network. "This is going to have a profound effect on what I am able to achieve with the Music Hub program in the future," he said.

There are also opportunities to get together in person. Early this year the program hosted its inaugural conference in Orange, bringing music teachers together from across the state to form new support

networks and exchange ideas. "It was a unique opportunity for the teachers to discuss many important issues and I found it wonderful to see all of the teachers I visit individually in the same place," Mark said. The conference facilitated the realisation of a shared mission, many new friendships were formed and it is hoped that there will be more student / teacher exchanges in the future as a result.

Running their businesses in rural and remote areas, music teachers need to cultivate solid skills in administrative, marketing, organisational, time-management and bookkeeping. Music Hub not only supports the development of these skills by providing resources and professional development opportunities, but it also does it in collegial support network, which helps reduce the feeling of isolation. Music Hub teachers are known as unique cultural identity in their community and have the chance to pursue self-directed goals or study as a result of their involvement in the program.

It's a viable career option for new graduates from major music institutions in metropolitan areas. Based on informal feedback from teachers, Music Hub teachers can earn around \$50,000–60,000 annually with affordable housing, low transport costs, great lifestyle, less competition and a supportive community. Plus, Music Hub teachers tend to become multi-skilled.


Leisa Kenny, based in Young and Cowra, is a young teacher who believes her skills have diversified as a result of teaching in a regional area. Her list of instrument expertise now includes saxophone, clarinet, flute, trumpet and recorder. Her student numbers exceed 90 and over 77% of her students also participate in ensembles. Like other Music Hub teachers, she places great emphasis on student progress and delights in student achievements. Deanne Milner, based at Orange, says she what she wants most is for her students to maintain a love of music into the future.

January

4 – 20 January

 **Fibre Works** An exhibition featuring local and interstate textile artists and their contemporary approach to old and new aspects of textile and fibre manipulation. The Mechanics Institute, **MORUYA**
Tel 02 4474 1000

8 – 18 January

 **NIDA Summer on Tour.** Short courses in dramatic writing, acting techniques, screen acting, video making and more. NIDA graduate Bridie Carter from *McLeod's Daughters* will teach courses in **BYRON BAY**
Tel 02 9697 7626

9 – 13 January

 **Parkes Elvis Festival** Parkes comes alive to the sounds of hip-swivelling Elvis impersonators and fans alike. Elvis street parade, talent quests, memorabilia displays, concerts and markets. **PARKES**
www.parkeselvisfestival.com.au

11 – 13 January

 **Thredbo Legends of Blues Festival**
A mix of the best Aussie blues talent available. **THREDBO** Tel 1800 551574



The Sax in the City ensemble performed at the Mungindi Music Festival in October. Photo: Carly Sorrensen

"I want them to improve on their instrument, to experience and enjoy playing music," she comments, adding her students are growing in confidence all the time.

Leisa and Deanne have both been involved in a diverse range of community music activity as a result of their involvement with Music Hub. "I have really enjoyed the process of teaching students and the impact it's had on my community," Leisa told me, and Deanne comments that the vibrant and supportive community has had a great impact on her work and that her 50+ students have improved significantly in her time there.

For Mark, the biggest outreach activity recently has been the Mungindi Music Festival in the state's north. "This is the second Festival I have directed in Mungindi and it is truly the most extraordinary thing I have ever been associated with," he told me. He describes with delight the small, dusty inland border town transformed by over 300 musicians and hundreds of visitors over the October long weekend. "Musicians of the calibre of Don Burrows come to play in the most unlikely of concert venues to enthusiastic audiences that performers normally dream about." A feature of the long weekend was the Sydney Youth Orchestra Philharmonic playing in the centre of a huge wheat field — the sort of experience that

gives young talented musicians a taste of life in a regional area. "Hopefully some will be captivated by this taste of country life and hospitality and consider making a career as a community musician in a country town," said Mark.

Hopefully they will. ■

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The Music Hub project was developed by Orana Arts but reaches far across the state, into the Central West, Upper Hunter, Mid North Coast, Eastern Riverina, North West, Far West, West Darling and South East regions. Website www.oranaarts.com/musichub

Music Hub has been made possible with a grant from the Australian Government's Regional Arts Fund and more recently the FRRR/ANZ Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal.



**Australian Government
Regional Arts Fund**

January

11 January — 21 February

👁️ *Recent Acquisitions 2004 - 2007*
Bathurst Regional Gallery guides present a selection of recent acquisitions from the collection. **HILL END** Visitor Information Centre Tel 20 6337 8206

17 — 20 January

🎭 *Illawarra Folk Festival* Music, singing, poetry, yarn spinning, dancing, children and youth events that celebrate our rich cultural heritage. Over 500 international, national and local performers. **BULLI**
Website www.illawarrafolkclub.org.au

18 January — 16 February

👁️ *Zero Boy* (title TBC). Three photographers — Bronwyn Wright, Angela Tarlinton and Eryca Green. **BEGA** Valley Regional Gallery Tel 02 6499 2187

19 — 28 January

🎭 *Telstra Country Music Festival*
A ten day celebration through one of the broadest and most exciting musical styles around. Visitors can expect to select from around 2,500 events representing Country Music. **TAMWORTH** Tel 02 6767 5300